MIMESIS OF SEXUALITY: A SELECT LITERARY STUDY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHIES BY TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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DECLARATION

by the Ph.D. Research Scholar

I hereby declare that the Research Thesis entitled, '**Mimesis of Sexuality: A Select Literary Study of Autobiographies by Transgender Individuals'** which is being submitted to the National Institute of Technology Karnataka, Surathkal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature is a *bonafide report of the research work carried out by me.* The material contained in this Research Thesis has not been submitted to any University or Institution for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to *certify* that the Research Thesis entitled '**Mimesis of Sexuality: A Select Literary Study of Autobiographies by Transgender Individuals'** submitted by **Tanupriya, (Reg. No. 155076HM15F07)** as the record of the research work carried out by her is *accepted as the Research Thesis submission* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the question of transgender sexuality via the conceptual frames of 'corporeality', 'mimesis' and 'performance'. The study examines the intricacies in the construction of hijras and FTM transsexual 'corporeality', 'identity', and 'subjectivity' in terms of appearance and 'performance' through select transgender autobiographies. The queries that are examined during the course of this research are: How does culture shape transgender identity? What are the factors that contribute to transgender identity? Is the transition from a cisgender to a transgender identity vividly depicted in transgender narratives? The objectives determined for this research are: To understand the factors that contribute identity of being a trans from the perspective of transgender individuals. Interpreting the socio-cultural relationship between the trans 'body' and the 'self'. To analyse the construction of transgender identity in India and the West. The methods employed in this research include, analysis and interpretation of primary, secondary, and tertiary resources in the fields of gender studies, sexuality studies and transgender studies.

This research finds that, in order to construct an identity and corporeality, hijras and FTM transsexuals undergo a series of mimetic processes which showcases a separate identity claimed on the basis of corporeal and performative significations. It is further found that 'gender performativity' and 'imitative' acts adopted by hijras and transsexuals contribute in the construction of transgender embodiment as transgender individuals undergo 'corporeal', 'physical', and 'psychological' changes during the process of identity formation. This research concludes that the processes of embodiment and beautification further deliver the idea of the performative dimension of the body, which emphasizes how performance is a 'citational precedent' of 'the embodied gesture of the body'.

Keywords: Hijras, Trans Sexuality, Transgender, Gendered Mimetics, Gender, Body, Cultural Construct.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Construction is neither a single act nor a casual process initiated by the subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of reiteration.

Judith Butler, 1993

1.1 DIFFERENTIATING 'SEX' AND 'GENDER'

'Sex' and 'gender' are the fundamental terms on which discourses of any identity either constructed or essentialist is built. Thomas Laqueur, American sexologist and historian in his study *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, states "sometime in the eighteenth-century sex as we know it was invented" (Laqueur 1990: 149). He further mentions that the earlier model of sex was, 'one-sex model' (where anatomy and biology were ideologically insignificant) that moved to 'two-sex model' of sexual difference. It implies that from antiquity to Middle Ages, women's anatomy was not seen inherently distinct from men's. Later, a representation of 'two-sex' view of sexual difference was produced by British doctor Walter Heape. In this context, Toril Moi, an American feminist theorist in her work *Sex, Gender and Body* explains this shift from 'one-sex' to 'two-sex' as a turning point where "biological sex is pictured as *pervasive* in the nineteenth century" (Moi 2005: 11). It is after this encounter with the 'pervasive picture of sex', "the need for something like the sex/gender discussion is born" (ibid: 12). The 'two-sex model' gave rise to essentialism where man and woman emerged as two different kinds. This picture of sex was opposed by majority of contemporary gender theorists. In the context of two-sex model, gender is "a barricade thrown upon against the insidious pervasiveness of sex" (ibid: 15).

In the eighteenth century, the naturalization of binary gender categories and the dichotomous frame of gender emphasized the anatomical differences between 'men' and 'women'. It further marked the distinction between 'nature' and 'nurture', 'biology' and 'culture' debate. Gilbert Herdt in the "Introduction" to *Third Sex, Third Gender* mentions, "the contemporary paradigm of sexed and gendered differences was firmly established as a western ideology by the late nineteenth century" (Herdt 1994: 21-81). 'Sex' does not just reflect the sexual identity of an individual. It also connotes to the intimate relationship between individuals. Hence, the sexual intercourse between members of the opposite sex is seen as 'natural' and sexual intercourse that is homosexual in nature is seen as 'unnatural'. Another important aspect that needs to be focused on is 'behavior' which is defined on the lines of gender 'normative' and gender 'non-conforming' nature. The compatibility with the cultural expectations leads to gender 'normative' behavior whereas culturally incompatible behavior is seen as gender 'non-conforming'. There had been various debates regarding the culturally constructed nature of gender, which gender theorists including Simone De Beauvoir and Judith Butler agree. In her treatise *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir states that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" (Beauvoir 1949: 8). With this observation, De Beauvoir makes it apparent that one 'becomes' a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion. In Butlerian terms, 'sex' is seen as the name one gives to the language through which one speaks and comes to know one's desire, while 'gender' denotes the cultural practices that enable these desires to be played out.

Robert Stoller, an American psychoanalyst, formulated the notion of 'gender identity' and also provided an explicit contrast between 'sex' and 'gender' which was further appropriated by feminists. After Gayle Rubin linked cultural polarity of gender to the cultural dominance of heterosexuality in her essay "The Traffic in Women" (1975), theorists began to deconstruct the categories of 'female' and 'male' arguing that the very existence of alternative sexual persuasions serves as an intellectual challenge to the bipolar framework of gender. Early poststructuralist feminist theorists further appropriated sex/gender distinction and their critique has two major objectives i.e., to

avoid biological determinism and to develop a fully historical and non-essentialist understanding of 'sex'. In keeping with these developments, feminist theorists have been careful to distinguish between the terms 'sex' and 'gender' designating the former as 'anatomical' identification and the latter as a 'cultural' construct. Gender theorists further challenged the dichotomy by demonstrating how gender and the related category of sexuality can be plurally constructed. Further, approaches to 'sex' and 'gender' evolved to be seen with twin paradigms of 'sexual essentialism' and 'social constructionism'.

1.2 'ESSENTIALIST' AND 'CONSTRUCTIONIST' CONTINUUM

The 'essentialist' approach to sex and gender supposes that there is an underlying fixed essence that cannot be changed. 'Social constructionism' is of the view that argues that identities are constructed socially and there is no underlying fixed essence to it. 'Social Constructionism' (SC) challenges and refuses 'sexual essentialism', and Jeffrey Weeks in his work *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, And Modern Sexualities* notes that "SC rejects forms of thinking which reduce any sexual phenomenon to some central core or 'inner truth'" (Weeks 1985: 8). 'Sexual essentialism' reduces to a universalized and biologically centered understanding of sexual identities or sexuality. 'Sexual essentialism' is the belief in the unchanging, innate character of sexuality such that its biological basis is viewed as "uncontaminated by cultural influences" (Jackson and Scott 1996: 11). Social Constructionism "challenges the eternal, universal or natural status of gender and sexuality" (Vance 1992: 133). Sexual essentialism was "the first way of thinking about sexuality" (ibid), and it was the established way of thinking. Human sexuality manifests itself in biological, physical, emotional, social and spiritual ways. The very word 'sexuality' is relatively recent in language. "According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first recorded use of 'sexuality' appears in 1836. It was used by the eighteenth-century poet William Cowper (1731-1800) to build his poem on plant's sexuality and the implied meaning to 'sexuality' was the quality of being sexual or having sex" (Bristow 1997: 3). This example explains that sexuality has not always belonged to an exclusively human domain. Will Roscoe argues that "evidence of multiple

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genders in North America offers support for the theory of social constructionism, which maintains that gender roles, sexualities, and identities are not natural, essential, or universal, but constructed by social processes and discourses" (Roscoe 1998: 210). Many contemporary social constructionists especially those influenced by Postmodernism such as Carol Vance assert that:

> Sexuality in this analysis is removed from its pedestal as the expression of the 'natural', the animal within, that which is untouched and uncontaminated by culture and necessarily rebellious in opposition to 'civilisation' and order. Such romantic conceptions are discounted in these more radical or thorough going social constructionist writings. Such writings assert that sexuality itself is constructed by culture and history (Vance 1992: 135).

Social constructionist theorists follow aspects of the work of the post-modern writer Michael Foucault. Foucault applied social constructionism to 'sexuality' and argued that 'sexuality' is a 'cultural construct' that was only meaningful within a particular society's discourse. Social constructionists followed Foucault's rejection of sexuality as 'simply natural', his refusal of sexuality as 'simply expressions' of a biological drive, and his insistence on the cultural, historical character of sexual identities. Stevi Jackson in his study "Theorizing Gender and Sexuality" adds that social constructionism sets up "biological essentialism as its nemesis, and these writers do not refuse the status of the body. The body is not emptied of meaning, nor is it a passive surface that is entirely socially shaped, as in the work of gender theorist such as Judith Butler" (Jackson 1998: 142). The 'body', according to Butler is not natural, a material entity but a discursively regulated 'cultural construction' while gender is 'performative' that produces 'constative sex'.

The debates between sexual essentialism, social constructionist and queer theory frameworks have revolved around the issue of the stability of identities. The essentialist/constructionist continuum reflects the sex/gender distinction where 'sex' and

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'gender' are understood as binary opposites. 'Sex' in this view is seen as 'biological' and 'natural', and 'gender' as 'social' and 'cultural'.

The discourses about 'sex', 'gender', sexuality', 'gender identity', historical, and contemporary debates regarding 'essentialism' and 'constructionism', and gendered identities are located broadly in the academic field of gender studies. There are various perspectives to approach gender, and studies on gender are pertinent to numerous disciplines, but are not limited to literary theory, film theory, theatre studies, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, history, and sociology. These disciplines differ in their perspectives to understand gender from various dimensions. Gender studies incorporate methods and approaches from a wide range of disciplines, and it is an interdisciplinary area that covers the debates related to masculinity studies, women studies, queer studies, and transgender studies. It includes studies on 'woman', 'man', and 'LGBTIQ' (gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, intersexed and queer) and is often studied together with the inquiry on sexuality. Francis-Cranny in *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates* elaborates, "In sexuality studies, the focus is upon sexualities that are, upon sexual object choice and desire rather than upon sexed identities, i.e. gender" (Cranny 2003: 7-9, 17-33). Though transgender studies fall under the umbrella term 'gender studies', gender studies in the past was dominated by the discourses of women and their marginality. In the present, 'sexuality studies' has become more balanced in its approach and is also focusing on its analysis of both 'gay' and 'lesbian' agendas, as well as 'trans' and 'intersex' debates. The transgender phenomenon has also focused on the fields ranging from "musicology to religious studies to digital media; a theme in the visual, plastic, and performing arts; and a matter of practical concern in such fields as public health, plastic surgery, criminal justice, family law, and immigration" (Stryker 2006: 3).

1.3 TRANSGENDER STUDIES AS A DISCIPLINE

"Transgender studies is born of sexuality studies and feminism, and like its "evil" sibling, queer theory, has much to offer both" (Stryker 2004: 212). In *The Transgender Studies Reader I*, which is a collection of critical essays, Susan Stryker defines transgender

studies as, "a field that documents the "subjugated knowledges" of and about transgender persons, knowledges that have buried, devalued, or erased" (Stryker 2006: 12-13). It also develops theories of 'embodiment', 'sexuality', and 'gender', as well as 'legal', 'social', and 'political' theories concerning the regulation of gender expression and embodiment. Most important is Stryker's insistence that transgender studies, "far from being an inconsequentially narrow specialization dealing only with a rarified population of transgender individuals, or with an eclectic collection of esoteric transgender practices, represents a significant and ongoing critical engagement with some of the most trenchant issues in contemporary humanities, social science, and biomedical research" (ibid: 3-4). Transgender studies as a means to decipher the transgender discourse about sexuality are concerned with discourses that:

> …disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and make visible the linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood (ibid).

The critic Stephen Whittle, in *The Transgender Studies Reader* explains, "A trans-identity is now accessible almost anywhere, to anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed with at birth, or who has a gender identity at odds with the labels 'man' or 'woman' credited to them by formal authorities" (Whittle 2006: xi). The term 'transgender' has multiple and contested meanings as it assimilates a principle of diversity rather than uniformity, moving from dichotomy to continuity where it is not so easy to categorize individuals into male-female binary. Critic Jason Cromwell (1999) mentions that, the term 'transgender' moves away from a physically based definition (sex of the body) and encompasses a more social definition whereby a transgendered identification may refer to people living as 'social men' or 'social women'

who may, or may not seek sex-reassignment surgery. The term 'transgender' relates to a diversity of practices that call into question traditional ways of seeing gender and its relationship with sex and sexuality.

'Transgender' is a concept of the 1990s and was an umbrella term for individuals who dismantled the essentialist notion that sex and gender are binary congruent categories. 'Transgender' was used as a blanket term used for individuals who chose to shift away from the gender assigned at birth, "people who cross over (trans-) boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender" (Stryker 2008: 1). She further defines it as "the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place" (ibid). There is also an extensive medical and psychological literature on the transgender phenomenon which treats it as pathological, personal and considers it as a deviation from the social norms of binary gender expression. This condition was termed as 'gender identity disorder' by the American Psychological Association (APA) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders- IV* (DSM). In *DSM-V* it was later classified as, 'gender dysphoria' which defines as, "the distress which may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender, and one's assigned gender" (2013: 451).

To understand trans identities, transgender embodiment, and sexuality, it is essential to understand the mimetic aspect of the transgendered embodiment that links the construct of sexuality, gendered performativity, and trans-identity construction. This research is focused on the various approaches to trans-mimesis and analyzed the question of transgender sexuality through a mimetic purview. The social construction of transgendered embodiments is considered as mimetic and imitative in nature, and it is essential to examine the gendered modes of representation from the perspective of social interactions to understand the transgender individuals' experience in a heteronormative social context. It is also necessary to understand why certain constructions are considered more imitative than other gendered social constructions. It also brings in the purview of cultural constructions as it is the culture that associates these mannerisms, behaviors, and

attitudes as masculine or feminine. Mimesis, as an imitative act forms an important designation in transgender embodiment due to their non-conformity with the compulsory binarism. Gender, is thus constructed based on the repeated performances of social norms in order to abide by the heteronormative aspects that present themselves as natural. The repetition of acts have the power to distinguish those who conform to the established binary gender categories, from the non-conforming ones to the gender norms.

In order to study the sexuality of trans identities to understand their mimetic construction, it is necessary to trace the history of transgender identities, which are a part of history and have various identities under its rubric.

1.4. CONTEXTUALIZING 'TRANSSEXUALITY' AS A PART OF HISTORY

Early research on sex transformation traces back to European origins and in the late nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, sexologists, Krafft-Ebbing, Havelock Ellis, and Magnus Hirschfeld investigated different areas of sexual deviation. Early research on 'transsexuality' was closely connected with 'homosexuality'. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was one of the self-declared 'homosexuals' and coined the term 'urnings'. He understood 'urnings' as 'third sex', and by 1878, he produced a dozen books about the phenomenon now termed as 'homosexuality' and 'transsexuality'. The conflation of 'homosexuality' and 'gender dysphoria' continued in the works of Magnus Hirschfield, who was a self-avowed homosexual and a legal reformer. In 1897, he founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, an organization aimed at helping homosexuals and other individuals whose sexual differences were considered pathological. He defined and coined the term 'transvestism', and published a key work *The Transvestites: An Investigation of the Erotic Desire to Cross Dress* in 1910. His most important theoretical contribution to the study of gender and sexuality was his concept of 'sexual intermediaries', the idea that every human being represented a unique combination of sex characteristics, secondary sex-linked traits, erotic preferences, psychological inclinations and culturally acquired habits, and practices.

Sexologist Krafft-Ebing's major work, *Psychopathia Sexualis* was published in 1886, and he believed that there is no such thing as 'benign sexual variation'. "Everyone who departs from reproductive, monogamous, male-dominant heterosexuality is described as criminally insane" (Califia 1997: 13). Havelock Ellis's ideas were in stark contrast to Ebing's views, and Ellis supported Hirschfeld who sought the decriminalization of sodomy and other sexual-minority conduct. Instead of using the term 'transvestism', he coined the term 'sexo-aesthetic inversion' as a separate category that included cross-gender identification and cross-dressing.

In the year 1989, psychologist Ray Blanchard proposed that the male-to-female transsexuals and the heterosexual cross-dressers (later termed as a transvestite) both experience sexual attraction to the idea of being or becoming women and this was considered as controversial. He theorized that this unusual sexual interest or 'paraphilia' was the driving force behind their behavior. In his study "The Classification and Labeling of Nonhomosexual Gender Dysphorias," he termed the unusual sexual interest as 'paraphilia autogynephilia' which means "love of oneself as a woman" (Blanchard 1989a: 315-34). He formally defined 'autogynephilia' in his study "The Concept of Autogynephilia and the Typology of Male Gender Dysphoria" as "a male's propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female" (Blanchard 1989b: 616-23). According to Blanchard's formulation, heterosexual cross-dressers were men who were sexually attracted to women and who had a 'paraphilic' sexual interest that made them episodically impersonate the objects of their attraction. 'Autogynephilic' transsexuals, were men who were also sexually attracted to women, but whose 'paraphilic' sexual interest made them go farther and permanently change their bodies to become the objects of their attraction.

The term 'transsexual' was coined and publicized in the early 1950s by Harry Benjamin and David Cauldwell when news about Christine Jorgenson's (male-to-female) sex change, through surgery and hormones, triggered in American newspapers. Jorgenson's sex transformation was highly publicized by the American media even when Meyerowitz

(1998) states that news about 'sex change' and 'sex transformation' had appeared in newspapers and magazines since the 1930s. The concept of 'sex change' and 'sex transformation' existed much before the term 'transsexual' was executed in medical discourses. The term 'transsexual' was popularized only after Jorgenson's sex change surgery which was a widely read and published headline during that time. The publication of Jorgenson's autobiography *Christine Jorgenson: A Personal Autobiography* in 1967, came as a reply to a storm of hysterical press coverage about her sex change.

Harry Benjamin functioned as a gatekeeper into the transsexual milieu, and he published *The Transsexual Phenomenon* in 1966. Richard Green and John Money published *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*, which is considered a classic work in the emerging field of gender science. In the preface, Benjamin credited Christine Jorgenson for focusing attention on "the problem of transsexuality as never before" (Green and Money 1969: viii). *Conundrum* (1974) by Jan Morris (male to a female), appeared a decade later after Jorgenson's autobiography. In her autobiography, Morris credited Jorgenson with the liberalization of public attitude towards the medical treatment of 'transsexuality'. Jorgenson's autobiography was a turning point for transsexuals, and Bernice Hausman in his essay "Body, Technology and Gender in Transsexual Autobiographies" mentioned the impact of Jorgenson's autobiography on transsexuals. Mario Martino, a female-to-male transsexual, in his autobiography *Emergence,* mentions that "as Marie, she was the first in her town to buy Christine Jorgenson's autobiography when it came out in 1967" (Quoted in Hausman 2006: 336). The autobiography, in a way, validated individual's desire and helped to identify themselves as transsexuals (transman or transwoman), hence allowing individuals to come in terms with their identity, and construct their identity as 'transsexuals'. In 1977, Mario Martino published *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography*, the first female-to-male autobiography, didn't gain much readership and popularity like Jorgenson's and Morris's autobiography. Perhaps, the possible reason could be, "transsexuality was no longer such a shocking idea or because public had much less interest in the phenomenon of biological females becoming men"

(Califia 1997: 38) as the "gender transition from female-to-male allows biological women to access male privilege within their reassigned genders" (Halberstam 1998: 143). In this context, Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* describes the gripped and rigid structure of masculinity and mentions:

> We have little trouble recognizing it, and indeed we spend massive amounts of time and money ratifying and supporting the versions of masculinity that we enjoy and trust; many of these 'heroic masculinities' depend absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities (ibid: 1).

Halberstam also mentions that 'female masculinities' are seen as rejected shreds of the dominant masculinity so that male masculinity may appear to be a 'real' thing. But, one should remember that 'heroic masculinity' has been produced by, and across both male and female bodies. Extending her arguments to 'tomboyism', she describes it as an extended childhood period of 'female masculinity'. Another female gender variant role for lesbians who are comfortable with their masculinity is "butch" (Halberstam 1998: 120). Gayle Rubin in "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries", states "Butch is the lesbian vernacular term for women who are more comfortable with masculine gender codes, styles, or identities than with feminine ones" (Rubin 1992: 467).

Theorists Judith Halberstam and Jay Prosser, in their works *Female Masculinity* (1998) and *Second Skins* (1998) provide an extensive analysis of female-to-male (FTM) autobiographical narratives. Their perspective to approach 'FTM transsexuality' is different, as Halberstam's perspective to understand 'FTM transsexuality' is from the perspective of a 'lesbian feminist', whereas Prosser establishes 'FTM transsexuality' from an 'FTM transsexual' perspective. To interpret and provide clear differences between identities, Halberstam formulates a 'masculine continuum' based on lesbian and transgender masculinities, i.e. "Androgyny - Soft Butch - Butch - Strong Butch - Transgender Butch - FTM not Masculine - Very Masculine" (Halberstam 1998: 151). Martino's autobiography provides differences between butch and FTM transsexual, as to

disentangle his identity as an FTM transsexual from butch. Mario explains, "A butch is the masculine member of the lesbian team" (ibid: 141). Another transsexual autobiography *Dear Sir or Madam* by Mark Rees also explains the difference between a butch and FTM transsexual which further marks the boundaries of transsexual masculinity.

Transsexual autobiographies marked the establishment of an official discourse regulating the self-representation and provided an orientation to other individuals who identified themselves as transsexual after reading autobiographies by transsexuals. Earlier, to undergo sex reassignment surgery, clinicians or the medical practitioners demanded a personal history before carrying out the operation, and the success in obtaining treatment depended on "their ability to convince doctors that their personal history matches the officially sanctioned etiology" (Bolin 1988: 64; Green 1987: 7-8). So, the published accounts became the "guide-books" (Hausman 2006: 337) for transsexuals to obtain desired medical treatment. But, transsexual autobiographies cannot be just considered as the part of the repressive structure of "official" (ibid: 339) transsexual experience, as they enable others to form an identity as transsexuals. Bernice L. Hausman in "Body, Technology and Gender in Transsexual Autobiographies" situates the importance of transsexual autobiographies and shows the effect of writing an autobiography on transsexuals. He mentions:

> Mario Martino writes in *Emergence* that, as Marie, she was the first in her town to buy Christine Jorgenson's autobiography when it came out in 1967. In her autobiography *Conundrum,* Jan Morris discusses the emotional significance of finding Lili Elbe's autobiography. Nancy Hunt writes in *Mirror Image,* "I can remember only once when my life has been altered by the printed word (ibid: 336).

Bolin (1988) and Stone (1991) suggests that "in transsexual stories, the truth of the transsexual experience, are about sexuality" (Quoted in Hausman 2006: 339). Hence, it is important to study transsexual autobiographies to understand the aspects of their

sexuality. Michel Foucault also stresses how sexuality is written in or on the 'body', he deconstructs the notion that sexuality is a transparent face of life. "If sexuality is inscribed in or on the body, then it is texts and discourses (literary, medical, legal and religious, for example) which make the sexual into something that is also *textual*" (Purvis 2006: 435). Sexuality and textuality are linked, this is to propose that "sexual is conceived in relation to words, sign systems, discourses and representations" (ibid: 436). It is within and against the careful reading of texts that sexualities can be re-written or re-conceived. 'Transsexual' is considered as a medical term, but 'transgender' has evolved to be an all-inclusive term for gendered identities that subvert and disrupt the normative links that are seen to exist between sex, gender, culture, and desire in an essentialist framework.

1.5 EVOLUTION OF THE TERM 'TRANSGENDER'

The first usage of the term 'transgender' is generally attributed to Virginia Prince (1912-2009), a self-identified heterosexual cross-dresser and a southern California advocate for freedom of gender expression. In 1952, Prince and a group of transvestites published a newsletter *Transvestia: The Journal of American Society for Equality in Dress.* It existed only for two issues, and was the first overtly political transgender publication in the history of the United States. Prince and her transvestite movement had another identity category to distinguish from, as Christine Jorgenson burst onto the scene with news of her successful genital transformation surgery also called as 'sex-reassignment surgery' (SRS). Jorgenson's fame due to the successful sex transition was a watershed event in transgender history. It brought an unprecedented level of public awareness to transgender issues, and it helped define the terms that would structure identity politics in the decades ahead. Christine Jorgenson was originally identified as a 'hermaphrodite', or 'intersexed', with a rare physical condition in which her femaleness was masked by maleness. But she was soon relabeled as a 'transvestite', in the older sense developed by Hirschfield, in which the term referred to a wider range of transgender phenomenon. This difference in usage is due to the efforts of Virginia Prince in the 1950s and '60s, partly in response to

Jorgenson, to redefine transvestism as a synonym for heterosexual male cross-dressing. Harry Benjamin, a German, promoted the word 'transsexual' to distinguish people such as Jorgenson, who sought surgical transformation, from people such as Prince, who did not.

Virginia Prince used the term 'transgender' in the context to explain the identities that fall somewhere between 'transvestite' and 'transsexual'. Prince defines 'transsexuals' as individuals who undergo surgeries to change their sex and claim membership in a gender other than the one assigned by birth. 'Transvestite' can be defined as individuals who occasionally cross-dress, and 'transgender' are individuals who associate themselves to a gender other than the one assigned at birth and undergo a transformation and establish social gender through the public presentation of 'self'. Prince did not use the word 'transgender' in its contemporary all-inclusive sense. The earliest documented use of the word 'transgender' do not distinguish cross-dressing or living full time without surgery from transsexual identities.

In Leslie Feinberg's usage, the term 'transgender' had a completely different meaning; it is an adjective rather than a noun. For Feinberg, it was a political alliance between all individuals who were marginalized or oppressed due to their difference from social, political and economic backgrounds. 'Transgender' in this sense was a pangender umbrella term for an imagined community encompassing identities such as, 'transsexuals', 'drag queens', 'butches', 'hermaphrodites', 'cross-dressers', 'masculine women', 'effeminate men', 'sissies', 'tomboys' and other identities of third kind willing to be interpolated by the term, who felt compelled to answer the call to mobilization. In the wake of Feinberg's pamphlet, a movement did indeed take shape under that rubric. It has gradually won new civil and human rights for transgender individuals and has influenced the tenor of public debate on transgender issues for more than a decade.

Feinberg's call for a 'transgender liberation' in *Transgender Liberation* (1992) movement followed another publication that laid an important cornerstone for transgender studies, i.e. Sandy Stone's 1991 "The Empire Strikes Back: The Posttransexual Manifesto". Stone

wrote against a line of thought in 'second-wave feminism', common since the early 1970s and articulated most vehemently by feminist ethicist Janice Raymond, who considered 'transsexuality' to be a form of false consciousness. 'Transsexuals', according to this view, failed to analyze the social sources of gender oppression properly. Rather than working to create equality by overthrowing the gender system itself, they internalized outmoded 'masculine' or 'feminine' stereotypes and harmed their bodies to appear as 'men' and 'women' they considered themselves to be. In this view, transsexuals were the visible symptoms of a disturbing gender system. Stone sought to combat the anti-transsexual moralism embedded in certain strands of feminist thought by soliciting a new corpus of intellectual and creative work capable of analyzing and communicating to others the concrete realities of sex transition. To a significant degree, Feinberg's 'transgender' came to name the ensemble of critical practices called for by Stone's "The Posttransexual Manifesto".

Another identity that came into the canon was 'androgyne' which was not defined earlier. Earl Lind, a self-described 'androgyne', 'hermaphrodite', and 'fairie' in New York used the pseudonyms Jennie June and Ralph Werther and wrote two autobiographical works, *Autobiography of an Androgyne* (1918) and *The Female Impersonators* (1922). The first was meant for doctors and the second for the general public, but both were intended to help the suffering androgyne. 'Fairie' then, was a common working-class term for men who are engaged in receptive sexual activity with other men. The publisher of the autobiographies Dr. Alfred Herzog mentioned that he brought them into print as androgynism was not understood, and therefore androgynes suffered immensely due to it. Dhishna Pannikot, an Indian critic in her study "Corroborating Androgynous Culture and Psyche in Malayalam Travel Writings", explores the less explored area, i.e. androgynous culture in Malayalam travel writings concerning *Penhchanta* a novel by K.A. Francis. She mentions that in the narrative *Penhchanta*, androgynous people are alienated by the society and hence they suffer 'double castration'. They are the most deprived group of human beings in society. Apart from the Western identification of 'transgender', there is

a community of individuals in South Asia, commonly known as 'hijra' community which is a part of the continent since time immemorial.

1.6. 'HIJRAS' AS A PART OF 'CULTURAL' HISTORY OF INDIA

Hijras are a heterogeneous group and are described in literature alike as 'eunuchs', 'androgynes', 'transsexuals', 'intersexed' and 'gynemimetics'. As a heterogeneous community with diverse identities, they are also denoted as the ones who are 'emasculated', 'impotent', 'castrated', 'effeminate', 'sexually anomalous' or 'dysfunctional'. In India, transgender individuals are accorded the status of 'third gender' by the Supreme Court of India and define 'transgender' as:

> …an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not conform to their biological sex. TG also takes in person who does not identify with their sex assigned at birth, which includes *hijras*/eunuchs who, in the writ petition, describe themselves as "third gender" and they do not identify as either male or female (Writ Petition (Civil) No. 604 2013: 9).

'Eunuch' is the term used in translation to the term 'hijra' which has Urdu origins. The term 'hijra' is used all over South Asia to define a category of people called as "Neither Man nor Woman" as defined by American anthropologist Serene Nanda, which is also the title of her work. Hijras are defined as:

> *Hijras* are not men by virtue of anatomy appearance, and psychologically, they are also not women, though they are like women with no female reproduction organ and no menstruation. Since *hijras* do not have reproduction capabilities as either men or women and claim to be an institutional 'third gender' (ibid: 10).

According to "Writ Petition (Civil) No. 604 of 2013" by Supreme Court of India:

> "Transgender" in contemporary usage, has become an umbrella term that is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including but not limited to pre-operative, post-operative and non-operative transsexual people, who strongly

identify with the gender opposite to their biological sex; male and female (ibid: 10).

'Third Gender' is used to refer to hijras in India. Originally, the term 'third gender' was introduced in 1975 by M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies to denote transgender individuals. They used the term to draw attention to the ethnographic evidence that gender categories in some cultures could not be adequately explained with a two-gendered framework. This evidence had profound implications on feminist and gender theorists as well as for social movements and political activists in the United States, as it allowed them to think outside a dichotomous gender system. 'Third gender' then, began to be applied to behaviors that transcended or challenged male-female codes or norms. It was also applied to societies that seemed to provide institutionalized intermediate gender concepts and practices. In India, the term 'third gender' came to practice after the verdict of the Supreme Court of India on April 15, 2014 and recognized the transgender individuals as 'third gender.' Gilbert Herdt, an American cultural anthropologist, challenges the prominence of sexual dimorphism in the Western sex and gender discourse. His work *Third Sex, Third Gender* (1994) is a collection of essays that analyses the social and cultural context of gender identities, drawing on the studies of the American Indian *berdache*, Indian 'hijras', 'hermaphrodites' in Melanesia, and 'third gender' in Indonesia. Europeans also described gender variant natives with the French word *berdache,* derived from the Persian root. Will Roscoe (1998) identifies that there is no single concept of *berdache* among the Native Americans; rather he notes that "the diversity of their languages, ideas, and culture resulted in the use of many different terms for *berdache*. He classifies male *berdache* as a third gender and female *berdache* as a fourth gender" (Roscoe 1998: 71).

In India, the term 'transgender' covers a plethora of other culturally affiliated terms which are used as variations to describe a community of people known as 'hijras'. Hijras*, aravanis, jogappa, khusra, kojja, kinnar, napunsaka, akwa* are the variations of their names. *Aravani* refers to transgender communities in Tamil Nadu and is considered a

dignified term for transgender individuals as compared to derogatory terms such as *ali, ombodh, pottai, kattawandi* etc. The term *aravani* means one who worships 'Lord Aravan'. The term *aravani* does not have direct significance or relation with the sex/gender binaries and has more of a religious-cultural background. Moreover, the term is widely used across Tamil Nadu and does not have any significance in the West, north Indian states, and neighboring south Indian states. Individuals of third kind in Tamil Nadu are also referred to as *thirunar, thirunangai* is for transfeminine people and *thirunambi* for transmasculine people. While the role of 'hijra' is gradually recognized, the role of masculine 'third gender' role is notably absent in South Asian cultures. "Women who never marry are exceptionally rare throughout rural India. Among Hindus and Sikhs, both sexes popularly consider it an unfortunate and demeaning eventuality for a woman to remain unmarried" (Phillimore 1991: 331). Walter Penrose in "Hidden in History" mentions that "one exception to this pattern is the *sadhins*, who live in northwest India among the *gadhhi*, a pastoral people who inhabit the foothills of Himalayas" (Penrose 2001: 7). "They are committed to celibacy and chastity for life, and their "only renunciation is of marriage and by extension sexuality…" (Phillimore 1991: 332). They retain their female names and are referred to as females, but they do men's chores and dress like men. Like *sadhins*, some Buddhist nuns, called *jomo*, continue to live with their families rather than in a monastic setting (ibid: 342).

In southern parts of India, mostly Karnataka, 'transvestite' males and females serve as devotees of Yellamma, a goddess of skin disease who is believed to have the power to change the sex of individuals (Bradford 1983: 307-10). *Jogappas* are her male devotes who wear female clothing, and *jogamma* are her female attendants who dress as men. Bradford notes that they are regarded as 'divine' rather 'queer' and it is impossible to say 'homosexual' in Kannada, (the native language of the region) (ibid: 311-12). In Telangana, *siva-satis* are a community of transgender individuals and *siva-satis* are males who are considered as possessed by or married to the gods, particularly Lord Shiva. They have a feminine gender expression and cross-dress as women during religious rituals and festivals. They are also referred as *kojjas*, and they also use other self-referential terms

that cut across both Hindi and Telugu linguistic contexts namely, the terms "*koti*, *panti*, and *naran*" (Reddy 2006: 45).

> Pantis were individuals who looked like men and dressed and acted like men, as did some kotis; but only pantis were the penetrators in sexual encounters. Kotis on the other hand, claimed to be more "like women" in the things they desired and engaged in, defining this construct both in terms of sexual (receptive) performance and in terms of gendered acts outside the sexual realm (ibid: 46).

There is a range of koti identities, and Reddy mentions them as koti 'family' (ibid: 52) in her ethnography on hijra identities in Hyderabad. She mentions about the variations in the hijra identities based on dress, such as, *catla* (sari wearing), *kada-catla* (non-sari wearing). "The koti family has at least five members or identities, hijra, *zenana*, *jogin*, *siva-sati*, *kada-catla koti* differentiated based on idealized asexuality, dress, kinship patterns, religion, respectability and the centrality of the body to their understanding of self" (ibid).

In northern states, koti identities are referred as *khusras* and *jhankas* in Punjab, *khadra* in Sindhi and *pavaiyaa* in Gujarat. *Jhankas* are men who sometimes dress as women, but they do not undergo emasculation operation. *Jhankas* are also called as *zenanas* in literature. The term *zenana* referred to the female domain and was used to refer to that part of Muslim households that was set off for women, as opposed to the *mardana*. In addition to a spatial connotation, this term was used to refer to an individual or group of individuals, different from, but related to hijras. *Zenanas* do not physically emasculate themselves, but they follow the female sartorial style. *Kinnar* is yet another term used for hijras in colloquial Hindi. The alternative word for hijras in Urdu is *khawaja sara*. It could be inferred that each of these identities is both spatially and temporally specific.

1.7 EARLIEST DEPICTIONS OF 'HIJRAS'

'Hijras' wear female clothing to perform the social role of a female. According to the Indian mythological texts, hijras are believed to be endowed with the power to confer

fertility on newlywed and bless newborn infants. This role is seen as traditional and as a part of rituals, although at least half of the hijra population engages in prostitution. Hijras are represented in scholarly literature as either 'eunuch-transvestites' (Vyas and Shingala 1987) or 'institutionalized third-gendered individuals' (Nanda 1990) or 'men minus men' (O'Flaherty 1980). As the representative 'third sex' of India, Western discourses on alternative gender and sexuality have also focused on hijras. In such references, the hijra becomes, either an "interstitial gender occupying the liminal space between male or female" or "a 'drag queen' who [is] a hero(ine) in a global resistance" (Morris 1994:16). The recent anthropological body of literature that situates hijras explicitly within the larger sociological framework of sexual difference is the 'ancient', 'medieval', and the 'contemporary' history in India. The first domain of literature about hijras' relates to the analysis of ancient Indian texts ('Brahmanical', 'Buddhist', and 'Jain'). It addresses the history of the 'third sex' and 'sexuality' in India. This periodization ranges between the Vedic (CA 1500BCE) and the eighth century and further from the eight century until the establishment of British rule in eighteenth century respectively. Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai categorised the Vedic to eighth century period as ancient, and eighth to eighteenth-century period as medieval in their work *Same-Sex Love in India* (2000). Sweet and Zwilling in their study "Like a City Ablaze': The Third Sex and the Creation of Sexuality in Jain Religious Literature" mentions that "the category of third sex has been a part of the Indian worldview for nearly three thousand years" (Sweet and Zwilling 1996: 362). They elucidated the category variously referred in Sanskrit (Hindu) and Pali (Buddhist) texts as *kliba, pandaka, trityaprakriti*, or more commonly as *napunsaka* providing historical evidence for a pre-modern (and pre-Islamic) concept of sexuality and the category of sexual thirdness in India.

Serena Nanda in her ethnography *Neither Man nor Woman* states that "notions of hijra, found in classical Hinduism, were divided into four categories: the male eunuch, the hermaphrodite, the testicle voided, and the female eunuch" (Nanda 1990: 177). Hijras of India are believed to renounce sexual desires by undergoing a sacrificial emasculation, i.e., an excision of the genitalia which is dedicated to Bahuchara Mata. Only a minority

of them are born as 'intersexed' or people born with ambiguous genitalia. When one desires to be a part of the hijra community, a few willing hijras' take part in an initiation rite called *nirvan* in which the scrotum, testicles, and penis are removed. While neither castration nor *nirvan* rites necessarily mean renouncement of sexuality or sexual desire. It merely means renouncement of male penetrative sexual performance. It is believed that the act of *nirvan* socially bestows sacred powers to some hijras as a result of the transmutation of sexual energy. Representations of hijras in rituals, rites to passage ceremonies, folktales, mythology, urban legends, and folk art have allowed them to create a culturally significant, institutionalized, and marginalized space within Indian societies. Gayatri Reddy in her ethnography *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating the Hijra Identities in India*, mentions that "with more than five million hijras, this community has gained a new sort of notoriety". Scholars researching LGBTQ issues have put them forward as "an ideal case in the transnational system of 'alternative' gender/sexuality" (Reddy 2006: 2).

According to Zwilling and Sweet (1996), individuals belonging to third nature, transposed genders, sexual masquerades abound in the Hindu mythological and folkloric narratives. Even in early Vedic/Puranic literature, third natured individuals are found mostly among Jains, a minority religious community which has an ancient history and a distinct corpus of literature. The speculations on the nature of third-sexed individuals were elaborated through constituting "the single richest source for knowledge of the third sex, as well as for speculations on sex and gender, to be found in India from the ancient to medieval periods" (Zwilling and Sweet 1996: 363). By a "pan-Indian acceptance of a third sex", they argued that this category has "served as a focal point for speculations that ultimately resulted in the formulation of an idea of sexuality" for the Jains (ibid: 365).

There were three distinct views on the essential characteristics by which an individual could be assigned the genders, i.e. *purusa*, (male) *stri*, (female) and *napumsaka* (impotent) by the third century CE. The first view was 'Brahminical' which described gender by the presence or absence of certain primary and secondary characteristics. This view was also endorsed by 'Buddhists' and they assigned gender by the presence or

absence of procreative ability, and impotent individuals were seen as individuals of the third kind or *napumsaka* category. The third view offered by 'Jains' rejected both these Brahminical and Buddhist views for differentiating masculine and feminine markers. "The Jain system of thought is the only Indian system to differentiate between the term "biological sex" and *dravyalinga* (material [sexual] mark), distinguished by primary and secondary sexual characteristics, and "psychological gender," or *bhavalinga* (mental [sexual] mark), referring to the psychic makeup of a particular individual" (Sweet and Zwilling 1996: 359-84). Given this additional marker of gender assignment in the Jain literature, determinations based on primary and secondary sexual characteristics alone were deemed insufficient. After the fifth century CE, Jains rejected the second marker of the Brahminism/Buddhist gender assignment. It was the criteria of reproductive ability as prepubescent, and postmenopausal women would not be characterized as a woman by this criterion. In the late canonical as well as the early exegetical Jain literature (from approximately the fifth century CE, there appeared a fourth sex (the masculine *napumsaka* or *purusanapumsaka*). The difference between the feminine *napumsaka* and the masculine *napumsaka,* with their similar physical appearance, was their sexual practice. Merely being receptive partners in sexual intercourse shows their feminine characterization, and both penetrative and receptive nature shows the masculine characterization. Penetrative behavior determines their masculine characterization.

According to Zwilling and Sweet (1996), *napumsakas* in Jain texts went from being characterized by and through their desire exclusively for men in the early canonical period (fourth century to the fifth century), to being characterized by their desire for either men or women. A differentiation was made between masculine *napumsakas* (*purusanapumsaka*) and feminine *napumsakas* (*pandaka* or *kliba*) in the late canonical period, to ultimately being characterized by the desire for both men and women in the exegetical literature. Jains maintained the separation of sexuality and sexual object choice from biological sex and gender and identified third sex sexuality as primarily hyperlibinal and bisexual.

The term 'hijra' is an Urdu word, used widely in India only after the arrival of the Mughals in the sixteenth century. It is also mentioned that it is difficult to see the explicit relation to the terms used in Sanskrit and Pali texts which refer to the 'third sex' before this period, namely, *trityaprakarti, kliba,* and *napunsaka*. Wendy Doniger in his lecture on "Third Nature in the *Kamasutra*: The Asymmetry of Male and Female Homoeroticism" (2003), mentions that the term *kliba* is explicitly not the same as 'third nature' or *trityaprakriti,* inspite of Richard Burton's elision of this difference in his translation of the *Kamasutra*. The meanings of the Sanskrit/Pali terms themselves vary widely; the terms *kliba* ranges in meaning from 'eunuch' (a translation that, Doniger dates only from the Turko-Persion influence of the ninth century) to someone "who was sterile, impotent, castrated, a transvestite, a man with mutilated or defective sexual organs, a hermaphrodite, or finally, a man who produced only female children" (Doniger 2003: 11). With all this wide ranges of meanings assigned, Zwilling and Sweet's assertion that hijras are the contemporary representations of the ancient *napunsakas,* would be difficult to defend. But, it would not be wrong to say that, a body of literature in India devoted to delineating the nature of sexuality and erotic interactions with people of a third nature in texts existed even before the fifth century.

References to individuals of 'third sex' are harder to find during the medieval period of Indian history from the eighth to eighteenth centuries. Explicit references to eunuchs in South Asia, however, increased with the arrival of Muslim rulers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Several researchers have noted that the courtly traditions of eunuchs in the Islamic world, especially in the Mamluk Sultanate and Ottoman Empire, as well as in the (non-Islamic) Roman, Byzantine, and Chinese empires have been documented. In much of this secondary literature, the framework for the social history of eunuchs emphasizes one of three aspects, eunuchs' political, religious, or slave status. Historian Shaun Tougher in "In or out?: Origins of Court Eunuchs" notes "the predominant focus of the historical study of the eunuch tended to be "their place and function at royal and imperial courts" (Tougher 2002: 143). The presence of eunuchs is noted in the court systems of various empires as political advisors, powerful administrators, and

chamberlains, as well as trusted generals and guardians of the *harim*, or the inner female domain. The past literature focuses on the role of eunuchs in Islamic empires, which include Delhi sultanate and the Mughal Empire.

Shaun Marmon, in *Eunuchs And Sacred Boundaries In Islamic Society,* gives a fascinating account of the position of eunuchs in the Islamic religious sphere, focusing on the sacred societies of eunuchs at the tomb of Prophet Muhammad in Madina and at Ka'ba in Mecca- societies that have endured from the mid-twelfth century to the present day. "In 1990, the societies at Mecca and Madina were the only surviving societies with seventeen eunuchs still serving in Madina and fourteen in Mecca" (Marmon 1995: ix). One of the most interesting aspects of this account in the present context is the apparent discomfort engendered by these holy eunuchs and the shift in explanations of their presence over time. Mamluk historians such as al- Sakhawi in the fifteenth century, emphasized the history of the eunuch societies and their traditional occupation as the guardians of the prophet's sanctuary in Madina. These accounts primarily debate the origin of their royal patronage, rather than the incongruity of their occupation as influential and revered figures. The French traveler Francois Bernier wrote, in *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1656-68), that the eunuchs in the past were the most trusted servants of the Mughal rulers. It is due of their uniqueness of gender that they were allowed to move freely between the *mardana* (the men's side) and the *zenana* (the women's side). They guarded the women of the *harim*, cared for their children and were the loyal servants in that era. The reason for eunuchs to be appointed in the high office in the mosque was to guard the treasures stored there, their lack of progeny guarantying their honesty and fiscal responsibility.

Indrani Chatterjee in her study "Alienation, Intimacy and Gender: Problems for a History of Love in South Asia" (2002), argues that slavery is central to the historical understanding not only of social hierarchy but also of same-sex desire in the Indian history. In much of the medieval Indian Perso-Urdu poetry, paradoxical relations inherent in the linguistic trope of slavery served as the normative framework for the language of

desire. In such poetry, the 'free' author/lover speaks as the 'slave' of his beloved, who is often an 'idealized/slave,' much as the author is always a 'free' adult male, but the colonial accounts rendered all homosexual relations as criminal. "Discourses of active and passive sexual activities were reinterpreted as masculine and feminine or natural and unnatural propensities. Gradually the lens of gender and sexuality displaced the lens of slavery in the language of the colonized" (Chatterjee 2002: 67). This sexualization of discourse of love with slaves (including eunuchs) as the silent subjects of this unnatural transformation resulted in an epistemic shift in the discursive understanding of homoeroticism, social hierarchy and embodied difference in eighteenth and nineteenth century India.

Colonial literature mostly focused less on hijras as 'slaves' or the 'third sex' than on their status as one of the scores of castes/tribes in India. They were stratified according to gender and religion. They focused much on the reproduction than on its ambiguous gender-slave status. While caste was undoubtedly the primary category in the colonial imagination, hijras were classified and registered along with other 'criminal castes'. It was a new category of being in the discourse and polity of colonial India. Following the promulgation of the criminal tribes' act (act 27) of 1871, called for the "registration, surveillance and control of certain tribes and eunuchs, hijras were officially included under this rubric of dangerous outlaws" (Srivastava 2001: 4).

Under Act 27, eunuchs were "deemed to include all persons of male sex who admit themselves, or on medical inspection clearly appear to be impotent", (Collection of Acts passed by the Governor-General of India in Council of the Year 1871), a classification that allowed them for the registration, surveillance and ability to arrest such individuals. This category included individuals who: (a) "are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castrating children, or of committing offenses under section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, or of abetting the commission of any of the said offenses"; (b) "appear dressed or ornamented like a women, in a public street or place"; or (c) "dance or play music or take part in any public exhibition, in a public street or place or for hire in a private house"

(Collection of Acts passed by the Governor-General of India in Council of the Year 1871) (Quoted in Reddy 2006: 26-27). R. Tolen in "Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman: The Salvation Army in British India", notes that the construction of this colonial category and a criminal case involved the detailed elaboration of "a body of knowledge defining the nature, habits and classification" of individuals so classified (Tolen 1991: 106). The view that crime is inborn was embedded and passed on to succeeding generations, as was caste affiliation. The propensity for crime and its subsequent codification was written onto the bodies of the so-called criminal castes. In the case of hijras, as the criminal tribes' act indicates, this labor was both sexual (Article 377 of the Penal Code, which prohibits sodomy), and asexual or work/occupation related, that is, dancing, singing and relating to public rules of habiliment. Hijras remains intact as a part of cultural history and society despite the efforts of British colonials to eliminate individuals whom they called "a breach of public decency" (Nanda 1990, Preston 1987). As hereditary castes, their bodies and their labor were to be regulated, surveilled, and controlled in effect made into what Foucault (1995) would call as 'docile bodies'.

During the colonial rule, three views regarding the naturalness of hijras and their subsequent status as potential recruits to the community were approved. The first focused on hijras as 'naturally' impotent men, as mentioned by K. Bhimbai in *Pavayas in Gujrat Population: Hindus*. However, it is not clear from these accounts whether this condition was sufficient for recruitment, or whether it merely signaled the necessary prior condition for emasculation operation that signified real membership in the hijra community. The second view which W. L. Preston defines in "A Right to Exist: Eunuchs and the State in Nineteenth Century India" relates to those "males born with congenital malformation" (Preston 1987: 371-87). The last category as put by R.V. Russell in *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* is of individuals seen as potential recruits who were characterized as "artificial eunuchs" (Russell 1916: 207). It includes those who "mutilate themselves in the performance of a religious vow, sometimes taken by the mother as a means of obtaining children" (ibid).

More recent literature on hijras focused on issues of their sex/gender ambiguity, engaging hijras in debates relating to binary gender categorization, cross-cultural understandings of gender fluidity, and the construction of sexual categories. Besides such literature enlist the hijra as one more actor in the global drama of subversive sexuality. C. Epple in "Coming to Terms with Navji Nadleehi: A Critique of Berdache, 'Gay', 'Alternate Gender', and 'Two-Spirit'" notes that "along with the *kathoey* of Thailand, *xanith* of Oman, *berdache*/ two spirit of native America, *f'afafine* of Polynesia, and among a host of other third genders, these institutionalized categories represent an alternative to the duality of the Anglo-European two-gender system" (Epple 1998: 267-90).

1.8 TRANSGENDER STUDIES IN INDIA

There are various myths and folklore linked to the hijra community in India that gives them a supernatural status. Hijras in India also have social roles to perform. This inheritance of power of the hijra community is the result of various portraits of hijra characters depicted in Islamic mythology, Hindu mythology such as *puranas*, and popular Indian epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

Hindu mythology makes references to queerness, the idea that questions the notions of maleness and femaleness. There are portrayals of male-to-female and female-to-male transgender individuals. It also mentions creatures that are ambiguous like *makara*. *Makara* is neither fish nor an elephant but a combination of both. It is also the emblem of *Kamadeva*, the god of lust and desire. *Yali* is a combination of a lion and an elephant. It is a mythical creature seen in Hindu temples, often sculpted onto the pillars. It has been widely used in south Indian sculptures. As Devdatt Pattnaik in *Shikhandi and other tales they don't tell you,* mentions that "there are also many words in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Tamil such as *kliba, napunsaka, mukhabhaga, sanda, panda, pandaka, pedi* that suggest a long familiarity with queer thought and behavior" (Pattnaik 2014: 12).

The celebration of queer ideas in Hindu stories, symbols and rituals are in stark contrast to the ignorance and rigidity that is seen in Indian society. Pattnaik talks about the relevance of mythology and questions:

> When the queer is pointed out in Hindu stories, symbols and rituals (Why does Krishna braid his hair like a woman's plait and wear a nose ring like a woman? Why does the Goddess take on the masculine role of a warrior, with a female companion by her side, as she rides into battle on a lion? Why is Shiva half a woman but Shakti not half a man?), they are often explained in metaphysical terms (ibid: 31).

The role of hijras deeply rooted in Indian culture and epic tradition cannot be overlooked and the confusion regarding their birth and appearance remain ambiguous. This ambiguity in appearance is a part of various Hindu mythologies. In Hindu mythologies, rituals are an important vehicle to transmit the Hindu world view, and it contains numerous examples of androgynes, impersonators of the opposite sex, and sex change, both among deities and humans. These mythical figures that are a part of Indian culture explain the power of hijras to maintain a significant place for themselves in Indian society in "an institutionalized third gender role" (Nanda 1990: 20).

Lord Shiva is one of the Hindu gods and ascetic with whom hijras identify. His most powerful symbol is the phallus or *lingam,* and he is worshipped for his aniconic *lingam* form. He also appears in many erotic and procreative roles. *Lingam* is an abstract representation of Hindu god Lord Shiva, his most powerful symbol, an object of worship. *Lingam* is always represented alongside the *yoni*, the symbol of female genitals or *shakti*, female creative energy. In traditional Indian society, the *lingam* is seen as a symbol of energy. One of the most popular forms of Lord Shiva is *ardhanarishwara*, or half-man or half-woman, which represents the union of Shiva with his *shakti* (female creative power) and this union of *lingam* and *yoni* portrays the indivisible two-in-oneness of male and female. Vinay Lal in his study "Not This, Not That: The Hijras Of India And The Cultural Politics Of Sexuality" makes an important point concerning the lacanian reading

of the phallus and mentions, "herein lies one explanation for the ironic potency of the hijra; it is only when the penis is removed that the phallus effectively functions as a sign of generativity, that is as the receptacle of the goddess's gift of fertility" (Lal 1999: 132).

Other deities portrayed in Hindu mythology that take on sexually ambiguous forms are Vishnu and Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu) that could be interpreted in androgynous way. The story of Shiva's attraction to Vishnu's Mohini form (the most beautiful woman) is narrated in three mythologies or *puranas* which date between 850 and 950 AD. The *puranas* or mythologies were written in Sanskrit, and they chronicle stories of gods, kings, and sages. There are many stories in which the battles between *devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons) are vividly presented. The words *deva* and *asura* are also symbolic of *devic* (good*)* and *asuric* (bad) qualities that dwell within the human psyche. One of them is the story of Shoorpakasura later known as Bhasmasura. Unaware of the fact that Bhasmasura can use the power against him, Lord Shiva granted him the boon to reduce anyone to ashes with his mere touch on the head. He tries his powers on Lord Shiva himself. Lord Shiva managed to reach lord Vishnu to seek a solution to his predicament. Lord Vishnu transformed into Mohini and distracted the Bhasmasura with her bewitching beauty. As Mohini, she told him that she would marry him if he could match his dance steps with hers. As Bhasmasura imitated the disguised lord Vishnu move by move, she touched her head during the dance. Deluded Bhasma blinded by desire, copied the dance steps and was immediately burnt up and turned into ashes.

Shiva then noticed the beautiful and captivating Vishnu's *avatar* (transformation) Mohini. Vishnu also assumed the Mohini avatar to trick the *asura* (demon) during the *samundra mathan* or the churning of the ocean. The story of *samundra mathan* appears in the *Mahabharata* and *puranas* and explains the origin of *amrita*, the nectar of immortality. Vishnu assumed the Mohini avatar (incarnation) and allures to trick the *asuras* into giving her the *amrita* (immortal nectar), and then poured *amrita* down the throats of *devas*.

In another Hindu mythology, Krishna takes on a female form to kill a demon called Araka. His strength came from his chasteness as he has never set eyes on a woman. Krishna took the form of a beautiful woman and married him. After three days of marriage, there was a battle in which Krishna killed Araka, and then he revealed his true form to the other gods. When hijras tell this story as a part of their cultural history, it is mentioned that, when Krishna revealed himself he told the other gods that "there will be more like me, neither man nor woman, and whatever words come from the mouth of these people, whether good (blessings) or bad (curses) will come true" (Nanda 1990: 21).

The story of Shikhadini (female) from the epic *Mahabharata*, who transformed into Shikhandi (male) and her transformation is referred to as a female-to-male transsexual according to modern queer vocabulary, as her body undergoes specific change genitally. This story includes a cluster of motifs associated to rebirth, a girl raised as a boy, the cross-dressed girl, same-sex marriage, her desire to be a man to satisfy her wife, lent manhood by a *yaksha* and later permanence of the change granted by *Kubera*, king of *yaksha*.

The epic *Mahabharata* also includes an episode in which Arjun, the son of Pandavas is on an exile, and he assumes an identity of a eunuch-transvestite and performs rituals during weddings and childbirth that are now performed by hijras.

From the oral traditions of hijras, there is another instance from the epic *Ramayana*, where Lord Ram promises hijras immense power in *kaliyuga*. In *Ramayana*, King Dashratha of Ayodhya ordered lord Rama into exile for fourteen years in the forest. Lord Rama obeyed his orders and left the palace with his younger brother Lakshman, and his wife Sita. So, the residents of Ayodhya were grieved, and they started following them to the forest. He turned around and asked men and women of Ayodhya to return to the kingdom. Men and women obeyed the orders and returned. Hijras being 'neither men nor women' didn't move from their place. Seeing their devotion, Lord Rama granted hijras the boon to confer blessings on people during auspicious inaugural occasions like childbirth and weddings. This boon is the origin of *badhai* (money offered to hijras when

they perform during child birth or marriages) in which hijras sing, dance, and offer their blessings.

From the oral retelling of the Tamil *Mahabharta*, is the story of Aravan who was blessed with powers from goddess Kali as he offers his blood to goddess Kali to ensure the victory of the Pandavas in the Kurukshetra. On the night before the battle, Aravan expresses a desire to get married before he dies in the battle, but no woman would be willing to marry a man who was doomed to die in a few hours. Lord Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu) then assumed the form of a beautiful woman called Mohini and married him. In South India, hijras claim Aravan as their progenitor and call themselves as *aravanis*. The *aravani* temple is located in the village Koovagam and is devoted to the deity Kothandavar. During the festival, the *aravanis* enact the story of the wedding of Lord Krishna and Lord Aravan, followed by Aravan's subsequent sacrifice. They mourn Aravan's death through ritualistic dances and by breaking their bangles.

Several esoteric Hindu practices also involve male transvestism as a form of devotion. Male devotees worship Radha, lord Krishna's beloved by imitating feminine behavior including simulated menstruation, and some even castrate themselves to be an equivalent female identification of Radha. These practices depict the existence of multiple gender variant roles in the mythology such as Shikhandin, Lord Krishna's avatar of Mohini and Arjuna in *Mahabharata* and the role of eunuchs in the Islamic courts in the Mughal era. It is through these practices and oral retelling of the mythology that hijras construct a descent for their identity and community which is based on both Hindu and Muslim, religious and historical identifications.

The Hindu aspects of hijras' religious identifications include the devotion to Bahuchara Mata (the goddess of the hijra community), and a few practices which are akin to Hindu women's rituals. These traditional practices and religious identifications construct and give meaning to hijra identities.

The worship of goddess Bahuchara Mata and mythological stories of multiple gender variations in ancient Hindu texts give hijras a measure of mythological and historical legitimization. "The deities worshipped by the hijras are always Saivite, revering Shiva as the Supreme Being. He also notes that even Muslim hijras worship these deities" (Preston 1987: 376). It is also through the emasculation that hijras believe themselves to become the vehicle of the goddess' power (Nanda 1990: 24-5). The *nirvan* operation symbolizes the transformation that the hijras undergo to become hijras.

Another ritual of the female role is performed at the time of guru's (hijras' head in the clan) death where *celas* (disciples of a hijra *guru*) behave as Hindu widows at the death of the husband. They behave like Hindu widows, where they break all their bangles, remove their jewelry and wear a white sari for the period of mourning.

Although hijras gain their legitimacy from the Hindu goddess Bahuchara Mata, they also make certain identifications and enact certain practices seen as explicitly Muslim. It includes daily Muslim rituals, and the importance of mosques and festivals, elements that can be seen as part of Islamic doctrine. Muslim practices of daily customs including, circumcision, *namaz* (daily prayers), burial customs, and clothing are practiced by the hijras who join the Hyderabadi communities. They are expected to be circumcised sooner even though they have planned the *nirvan* operation later. It was compulsory, as a quintessential marker of Muslim (male) identity (Reddy 2006: 103).

One of the most significant Muslim practices as accounted by Reddy and particularly secretive practice in the hijra community is performed at the time of death of a hijra (ibid: 107). The *celas* (disciples of hijra *guru*) of a *guru* mourn like Hindu widows but rituals performed for the deceased replicate those performed at the death of a Muslim man- whatever the natal-religious status of hijra- including the washing of the corpse, the 'viewing', prayers from the Qur'an and a burial in the Muslim cemetery (ibid). The Muslim practice of worshipping at mosques and participation in Muslim festivals is also significant. Hijras also take part explicitly in Muslim events, for example, in Hyderabad, Reddy states one major public event the *pir panduga* (or Muharram), a ten-day mourning

ritual which is the annual commemoration of the seventh-century martyrdom of two Muslim saints, Hussain and Hassan. Hijra identities can be seen through borrowing and identifying practices from either Hindu or Muslim, but their traditions include practices from both religions. As one hijra declared in the ethnographic accounts of Reddy, "hijras have no jati (caste/class) or *dharam* (religion) (Reddy 2006: 105). There is a significance of hijra depictions in the above-mentioned mythologies and Indian texts as they are a marker of their presence and existence in the past.

1.9 HIJRA REPRESENTATIONS IN LITERATURE

Representations of hijras are found across a range of texts written by cisgendered authors. The texts range from the colonial legal acts, to ethnographies, to travelers' accounts, to postcolonial fiction, from the hijras literary constructions. The earliest text is a non-fictional account by Zia Jaffrey who wrote *The Invisbles: A Tale of Eunuchs of India* (1996) on the lives of hijras in India. She goes on a journey to explore the lives of hijras and the reasons for the subject to be a taboo in India. Another important ethnographic study in this respect is *Neither Man Nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (1990) by Serene Nanda, on the hijras in India. It conglomerates the history, traditions of hijras and actual conversations, and interviews conducted by her in Hyderabad city. It gives a critical analysis of her discussions with the hijra community. Apart from recounting narratives of hijras, other representations of hijras can be found in the novel, *Delhi: A Novel* by Khushwant Singh, first published in the year 1990. It portrays the story of a journalist (an autobiographical figure) which is concentrated on a hijra character, Bhagmati and his relationship with Bhagmati. Similarly William Darlymple's *City of Djinns* (1994) centers on the accounts of eunuch history during the British Raj, and eunuch dancers that he had encountered. There are depictions of the eunuchs in the Mughal courts in earlier times and elucidates the dual traditions of eunuchry in Hindu and Muslim religions. Gayatri Reddy's *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*, published in 2005, is an ethnography that creates the portrait of a community of hijras in Hyderabad. She brings into purview the issues of caste, class, religion and regional identities, and

practices that underlie the hijra understandings of their identity and differences. Another novel *Narcopolis* (2012) by Jeet Thayil, focuses on the opium dens in Bombay and also tries to present the life of Dimple, who is a eunuch prostitute, working in the opium dens. *Narcopolis* is the debut novel of the writer, set in Old Bombay, which has its concerns on opium and its influence. The novel was shortlisted for Booker prize in 2012. Mahesh Dattani's radio play *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, first broadcasted in 1999, is one of the famous radio plays that represent the plight of eunuchs in the society which was published in 2013. Mahesh Dattani gives the hijras of India a voice, to articulate their feelings and predicaments in English theatre, through his play *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. The story of a hijra is focused in the play, who secretly marries the son of a Minister and had to bear dire consequences. The role of police, politicians and society, as a whole is questioned in the play. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), by Arundhati Roy, the main character in the novel is a hijra called Anjum who joins the community as a child and leaves the community home at the age of forty-six. Devadutt Pattnaik's *Shikhandi and other tales they don't tell you* (2014), and Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's *Same-Sex Love in India* (2000), depict various and less explored mythological narratives about queer and individuals of 'third' kind. The publication of Vidya's autobiography *I am Vidya* (2007), marked the beginning of autobiographical narratives by hijras' in the genre of autobiographies.

1.10 STUDIES ON TRANSGENDER AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

The practice of writing autobiographically has a history extending before Greeks and Romans in antiquity that extends beyond Western culture. The first book-length autobiographical narrative in the West is acknowledged to be the *Confessions* of St. Augustine which was written around 397 C.E. Later, for the next thousand years, most autobiographical writing was done by religious men and women as a form of devotion in the service of spiritual examination. The eighteenth century comprises a vast and complex network of autobiographical discourses among the French encyclopedias, British diarists, American adventurers, and others. In the nineteenth century, life

narratives began to integrate into the literary canon of the United States and twentieth-century life narrative became a dominant form in the West. The forms of writings multiplied, and many kinds of autobiographical narratives emerged on distinct themes such as, immigrant narratives and narratives of exile, narrative of ethnic identity through autobiographical acts, 'testimonies' that inscribe a collective 'I' which voiced stories of repression, prison narratives, narratives of childhood, 'bildungsroman', 'autopathographies'- narratives of illness and disability, coming-out narratives by gay, bisexual, lesbian, and transgendered subjects, narratives of sports figures, military heroes and other public figures, narratives of the life-cycle and aging, particularly in women's life (Smith and Watson 2001: 107-8).

In India, autobiographies and autobiographical studies gained impetus only in the 1990s. Indian autobiographical impulse was seen in the expression of the kings and the royalty, mostly in Sanskrit and Prakrit. It is only after the Indian encounter with the British education system that autobiography as a genre, in its modern sense flourished. By the end of the eighteenth-century autobiography came to be accepted as "an independent and respectable mode of expression" (Sinha 1978: 45). Autobiographies in India were written in different regional Indian languages; there are autobiographies of political figures, like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Rajendra Prasad. There are famous autobiographies of writers including Rabindranath Tagore's in Bengali, Harivanshraya Bachchan in Hindi, Sivaram Karath in Kannada and so on. A large number of women have written autobiographies in all Indian languages which include cinema actors, and novelists like Nayantara Sehgal and Amritha Pritam. Autobiographies by women emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and in 1921, Sunity Devee's, *The Autobiography of Indian Princess* came. Her work is regarded as the first autobiography by an Indian woman following the modern concept of the genre. Other pre-independence women autobiographies are Cornelia Sorabji's *India Calling* (1935) and Krishna Hutheesing's *With No Regrets* (1944). Post-independence era saw the publication of numerous women autobiographies such as Savita Devi Nanda's *A City of Two Gateways* (1950), Brinda Maharani's *The Story of Indian Princess* (1953), Nayantara Sehgal's

Prison and Chocolate Cake (1954) and *From Rear and Set Free* (1961), and Kamala Das's *My Story* (1976).

Women autobiographies are a part of Indian English Writings and literary canon, and in the twenty-first century emerged the phenomenon of hijra autobiographies which was the first of its kind in India. Writing as a medium, and autobiography as a genre, was used by hijras to depict their social life, surgical transformation, and experiences of their 'body' as a 'male' and 'female'.

The primary focus of reference in this research is on hijra autobiographies from India followed by FTM autobiographies published in the West. The select autobiographies are:

> Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Red Lipstick: The Men in my Life* (2016) and *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015)

> A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me* (2010)

> Vidya's *I am Vidya* (2007)

> Max W. Valerio's *The Testosterone Files: My Hormonal and Social Transformation from Female to Male* (2006)

> Dhillon Khosla's *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey through Womanhood* (2006)

> Matt Kailey's *Just Add Hormones* (2005)

> Jamison Green's *Becoming a Visible Man* (2004)

Vidya's *I am Vidya* (2007) is the first hijra autobiography published in India. Vidya's autobiography is the first ever published account by a hijra describing her personal experiences of being a hijra and of being a part of the hijra community. It depicts her struggles with her sexuality, social norms, and coming into terms with her identity as a woman. Though the autobiography was first written in Tamil, it has been translated into English, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, and Assamese. Vidya is also referred to as 'Living Smile Vidya', and is the founder-director of *Panmai* Theatre. Vidya is the first transgender woman in India to receive British Council's Charles Wallace Award 2013 for

her excellence in theatre. She is involved with theatre since 2004. Through her autobiography, she has provided a literary space and set a literary canon i.e., hijra autobiography which described her journey of social and physiological transformation. *Nannu Avanalla Avalu* (2015) is a Kannada movie based on the autobiography of Vidya, directed by B. S. Lingadevaru. It has also won two awards in the 62nd National film festival.

After the publication of Vidya's autobiography, hijra autobiography as a literary genre encouraged hijras to write about their lives. A. Revathi's autobiography, *The Truth About Me* (2005) was first written in Tamil and was translated by V. Geetha to English. Revathi's book *Unarvum Uruvamum* (Feelings of the Entire Body), which is in Tamil, is a collection of real-life stories of the individuals' belonging to the hijra community. She cites a very prominent Tamil Dalit writer Bama as one of her inspirations. *The Truth about Me* is about her everyday experience of discrimination, ridicule, and pain. She shared her personal experiences about being a hijra and of doing sex work for a living. Her other prominent work *A life in Trans Activism,* was also published in 2016 which accounts her life, lives of hijras and also mentions a few narratives of transmen.

Another example for this new wave in writing autobiographies is the activist, Hindi film actress, and dancer from Mumbai, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi who wrote two autobiographical accounts in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Her autobiography *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* was first published in Marathi and later translated into English by R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi in 2015. In her autobiography, Laxmi talks about her experiences as a child, as a homosexual man, a drag and later as a hijra. Her recent autobiography *Red Lipstick: The Men in my Life* (2016), deals with her struggles of being a boy and behaving in a girlish manner. It further deals with existential questions such as "Is Laxmi both a man and a woman? Or, perhaps, neither a man nor a woman" (Laxmi 2016: 1)? In her other autobiography *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* she writes, "Hijras are normal people, just like others. We're not extraterrestrial. We have emotions, just like ordinary human beings and perhaps more sensitive than them" (Laxmi 2015: 125). In 2017, the first transgender

college principal Manobi Bandyopadhyay also published her biography *A Gift of Goddess Laxmi*.

The published accounts of female-to-male transgender individuals or *hijrins* are still not a part of the Indian literary canon; the female gender variants hence remains as an unexplored subject. There is an invisibility of female gender variance, and most anthropological and literary works draw attention to hijras with some exceptions.

There are many autobiographies written by transsexuals in the West. But the autobiographies chosen for this research are by female-to-male transsexuals. In India, there are no published accounts of female-to-male autobiographies which provides a very narrow space about discussing their identity. Aboim (2016) mentions, "trans-men have also received less attention from the part of 'Trans Studies' when compared to their female counterparts, which have gained far more visibility" (Aboim 2016: 226). Literature explicitly focused on the experiences of transmen that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These studies include the one by Jamison Green (2004), Aaron Devor (1997), Henry Rubin (2003), and Jason Cromwell (1999). The earlier published autobiographical accounts of female-to-male autobiographies can be roughly traced as Mario Martino's *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (1977), Raymond Thompson and Kitty Sewell's *What Took You So Long* (Memoir) (1995), Mark Rees's *Dear Sir or Ma'am* (1996), Jamison Green's *Becoming a Visible Man* (2004), Matt Kailey's *Just Add Hormones* (2005), Max W. Valerio's *The Testosterone Files* (2006), Rico Adrian Paris' *Transman - Bitesize: The Story of a Woman Who Became a Man* (2005), Dhillon Khosla *Both Sides Now* (2006), and Thomas Beatie's *The Story of One Man's Extraordinary Pregnancy* (2008).

These autobiographies are the contemporary transsexual narratives, and autobiographies of Jorgenson, Rees, Martino, and Thompson, could fall under the first wave of transsexual autobiographies, as the trend of transsexual autobiographies began from these autobiographies. They were analyzed by theorists such as Jay Prosser, Bernice Hausman, and Judith Halberstam who had worked extensively in the field of female masculinity.

These autobiographies are responsible for the formation and setting up of the transsexual discourses and can be considered as classics in the context of transsexual autobiographies. The autobiographies selected for this study were chosen after a careful reading of other female-to-male autobiographies, including the ones mentioned above. Few commonalities have been traced between these four autobiographies. The first being that these autobiographies were published in the twenty-first century and showed a linear pattern of transition. Jonathan Ames in *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs* (2005), compares transsexual autobiographies (of both FTM and MTF trans people) to a classic literary model, the *bildungsroman,* or coming-of-age novel. He states that he sees a basic outline of transsexual memoirs in three acts, "first act: gender-dysphoria childhood; second act: the move to the big city and the transformation... [third act] the sex change" (Ames 2005: xii).

Jamison Green's *Becoming a Visible Man* (2004) is an artful and compelling inquiry into the politics of gender. Jamison Green combines candid autobiography with informed analysis to offer unique insights into the multiple challenges of the female-to-male transsexual experience, ranging from encounters with prejudice, and strained relationships with family, to the development of an FTM community, and the realities of surgical sex reassignment. In the same genre, Max W. Valerio's *The Testosterone Files: My Hormonal and Social Transformation from Female to Male* (2006) describes the subjective experiences in the FTM body. It addresses the issue of transition and choice of a male name. Valerio's opinions on gender, identity, and self-perception comprises the core of this intensely personal and absorbing narrative. Another FTM autobiography is Dhillon Khosla's *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood* (2006). It is a vivid and compelling account of a man's search for wholeness which led him through multiple, complex, and life-threatening surgeries, that transformed him not only physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. Khosla discusses his identity as a woman earlier and the mannerism in his identity as a man in the present. A similar FTM autobiography is, *Just Add Hormones* (2005) by Matt Kailey that answers all the questions about life as a transsexual and presents his life as a straight woman for the first

forty two years of his life. The most remarkable aspect of all these autobiographies is that, at the core, they are very personal statements and narratives which sums up their life before and after the surgical transition.

1.11 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The area of transgender studies is so diverse that one needs to explain its scope and periphery. This is an academic study to the core and the aim of this research is to discuss transgender sexuality in the light of select transgender autobiographies. This research also hopes to contribute to a better understanding of transgender lives and their existence in the present. While discussing the manifestation of transgender experience through select autobiographies, this research focuses on specific objectives. They are:

- To understand the factors that contribute identity of being a trans from the perspective of transgender individuals.
- Interpreting the socio-cultural relationship between the trans 'body' and the 'self'.
- To analyse the construction of transgender identity in India and the West.
- To understand the relevance of gender performativity for trans individuals.

1.12 RESEARCH METHODS

The methods employed for this research are Autobiography Method, Discourse Analysis and Textual Analysis. Autobiography is an established genre in literature that attempts to project the life of authors. In the history of writing English autobiography, the crucial transformation of the genre was in 1967 from a search for the 'person', to a search for providing a convincing reading. It has shifted to a search for an interpretation of how an individual could be located within a particular social and cultural milieu. Mary Evans mentions that "Autobiography demonstrates the way in which individuals are perceived and judged both within the culture and by those with more distance from it" (Evans 2007: 37). Further, she gives an example of "the feminist 'project' of using autobiography to uncover the hidden lives of women" (ibid). Autobiographies depict the inner journey of the 'self' and the inner struggles of the person. It establishes a coherent and individual

identity to the person depicted. The social upheaval got expression not only in poetry and fiction but also in the autobiographies. The autobiographical genre has gained new meaning over the years and opened up new vistas of knowledge for all though it is most often known for its use by women to uncover their secrets and sufferings from patriarchy.

For this research, the autobiography of transgender individuals is specifically chosen. This research will employ autobiographical method as the primary method of investigation. The first feature of research on autobiography is the establishment of the relationship between author, subject and culture. The second feature of the studies on autobiography is closely aligned to the recognition of the boundaries of the work. It locates, as Mary Evans mentions in "Auto/Biography as a Research Method", "The question of many silences within autobiography is raised here: what is not said, what cannot be said, and what we can never know" (ibid: 43).

Discourse analysis is another important research method that will be employed in this research. Discourse analysis is concerned with producing an analysis or 'explanatory critique' (Fairclough 2001: 235-6) of how and to what purpose language use is invested through the deployment of specific textual features in order to facilitate the knowledge of its effects. The term discourse itself means multiple meanings like the Derridian notion of deconstruction where every signifier refers to other words/signifiers in an endless postponement of meaning. Hence, one travels along the path of meaning-making. This research will use the research traditions such as conversational analysis, ethnomethodology, discursive psychology, and critical discourse analysis.

Another important research method is textual analysis. Textual analysis constitutes an important part while analyzing a text. There are four major approaches to textual analysis: rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis, and performance studies. The purpose of textual analysis in this research is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages in the texts.

1.13 RESEARCH GAPS

After a review of primary, secondary and tertiary resources in the field of gender studies, transgender studies and sociology, the following research gaps have been identified:

- Transgender sexuality through the conceptual framework of mimesis, performance and corporeality remains as a less explored area.
- Studies conducted to understand hijras' sexuality through their autobiographies in relation to other gender identities is scant.
- Transgender sexuality is studied more from a scientific perspective than from a critical literary approach.

This research intends to mend the above gaps through research methods that include-investigation and discussion of select autobiographies, analysis of autobiographies to understand the mimetic and performative construction of identity, and critical analysis through literary and gender theories in the concerned area.

1.14 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Every research has a set of constraints that it would try to overcome. This research encounters a few constraints during its process. For this study, select hijra and FTM autobiographies are chosen that are translated into English. The study deals with translated works and the depiction is limited to the extent to which it has been represented by the translators. Moreover, the study will not deal with translation theories even though it focuses on a few translated autobiographies. This suggests that the study is limited to select autobiographies of hijras and FTM transsexuals and would focus on studying their sexuality through their writings. The present study deals with hijra and FTM transsexual identities from different cultures and as transgender identities vary across different societies and cultures, it is difficult to homogenize their experiences. Interpreting the trans identity formation is a complex phenomenon as the process involved is found in fragments in select autobiographies.

1.15 RESEARCH QUERIES

There are a few queries that were conceived during the inception of this research. They are:

- What is the relevance of gender performativity in the life of transgender individuals?
- How does culture shape the transgender identity?
- What are the factors that contribute to transgender identity?
- Is the transition from a cisgender to a transgender vividly depicted in transgender narratives?

The upcoming chapter would elaborate on the gendered codes in cultures related to women and men. It would analyse and elaborate various bodily practices and codes that leads to the construction of an identity, which is either essentially male or female. Chapter three would elaborate on the concepts of the enactment of gender, and analyze the aspect of gender passing, transition, excision of femininity, and imitation of femininity by drawing instances from the select autobiographies. Chapter four would focus on the process as discussed by Ekins and king i.e., migrating, negating, transcending, and oscillating in the context of transgender individuals. It would also apply the concept of 'skin ego' to understand the transsexual identity. The aspects of FTM transsexuality as presented by Judith Halberstam and Jay Prosser would be applied in the analysis of select autobiographies. In Chapter five, the notion of mimesis, which is a philosophical concept would be applied to understand the gendered aspects in hijra and FTM identity. The concluding Chapter would present significant research findings, observations, contributions, and directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL CONSTRUCT OF SEXUALITY AND THE POLITICS OF BODY

The transgression from the essential masculine and feminine behavior is mostly considered as un-acceptable even after a gamut of anthropological, sociological and gender literature suggests the plurality of identities and records of multiple sexualities. It is the culture that associates these mannerisms, behaviors, and attitudes as masculine or feminine. The 'body' is a site in which the cultural and social constructions come into being and is mapped onto individuals. Masculinity and femininity are culture-specific constructs that impart a set of instructions or prescriptions on being an 'ideal' man or woman. These constructions not only constraint individuals in binary categories but the social order or the systematic regimes such as "government regulation" (Brown and Gershon 2017: 1) controls bodies to behave in socially and politically accepted manners. The body is thus, seen as a part of hierarchized dichotomies, "for example, masculine/feminine; mind/body; fat/skinny; heterosexual/homosexual; able-bodied/disabled" (ibid). The power structure leads to the dominance of one class/group and subjugation of others. The subjugated become the minority for whom the government can either choose to recognize the rights of minorities, or justify discrimination, or marginalization of minorities which in turn leads to "citizenship entitlements which are not available for bodies that transgress cultural, social, sexual, and/or political boundaries" (ibid). 'Body' is thus socially and culturally shaped and 'the politics of the body' is different from the 'body politic' which argues that 'body' itself is politically inscribed and is shaped by practices of containment and control. The category 'man' is not an inherent trait of 'biological' and 'anatomical' maleness, but it is achieved through the process of 'becoming'. In *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay World*, George Chauncey mentions:

> Whereas manhood could be achieved, it could also be lost; it was not simply a quality that resulted naturally and inevitably from one's sex. The calculated character of the everyday rituals of male sociability, solidarity, and competition by which men enacted their manliness and demonstrated their relative virility suggests the remarkable degree to which they regarded their manliness as a kind of ongoing performance (Chauncey 1994: 90).

Apropos to the above argument is Beauvoir's claim that "One is not born a woman but rather becomes one" (Beauvoir 1949: 8), and Butler's argument is inclined to the achieved and 'performative' status of gendered identities. Similarly, R.W. Connell in *The Men and The Boys*, argues "Masculinities do not exist prior to social interaction, but come into existence as people act" (Connell 2000: 218). Hence, the body from the poststructuralist perspective is seen as a medium and a passive structure on which constructions enable the process of 'becoming'. The female-to-male transsexual autobiographies affirm that female-to-male transsexuals practice testosterone use to transform their phenotypically female bodies. The use of testosterone produces secondary sex characteristics that are seen as a marker of adult masculinity such as facial hair and increased muscle mass. In *Both Sides Now*, Khosla was also prescribed testosterone before his chest surgery where he mentions, "the doctor talked about the process of administering testosterone. The optimal dose seemed to be 200mg every two weeks- the same doses they give genetic men when their testicles don't produce adequate amounts of testosterone" (Khosla 2006: 34). Transmen and men differ in their physiology and subjective experiences of masculinity and maleness, but it could be inferred from the excerpt a few cisgender men also struggle to achieve masculinity. Max Valerio's autobiography, *The Testosterone Files: My Hormonal and Social Transformation from Female to Male*, as the name itself suggests is not only the transformation through bodily surgeries but also through affirming the social identity as a 'man'. In Jamison Green's autobiography *Becoming a Visible Man*, the term 'becoming' implies that 'body' is not a natural entity with a fixed meaning, but is constantly built in the process of 'becoming'. Body critic Chris Shilling in *The Body and Social Theory* mentions, "in the somatic

culture, the body is seen as an entity which is in the process of becoming; a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual's self- identity" (Shilling 1993: 5). Green's autobiography also focuses on similar notions about body where he mentions, "being a man is more than looking like one. It requires being comfortable in the body of a man, and that is something testosterone assists in, but only if it is within the individual's comfort zone" (Green 2004: 94). It could be inferred that body can be constructed through testosterone and surgeries, but the social identity is affirmed through performing the tasks or mannerisms associated with essentially male or female identity.

2.1 THE SOCIAL BODY

The 'body' is seen as socially constructed in the anthropology of Mary Douglas and her work on the history of the human body. Foucault and Goffman also contributed through their writings and studies on 'body' and helped in shaping social constructionist views on 'body'. Foucault's account is concerned with how 'bodies' are controlled by discourse, and Goffman's work focuses on the 'symbolic interactionist' where 'body' is the component of action. Foucault and Goffman's view of the 'body' is central to the lives of embodied subjects; it also emphasizes that the significance of the 'body' is determined by social structures that exist beyond the reach of individuals. Further, theorists Bryan Turner and Arthur Frank develops their ideas on Foucault and Goffman's concepts of 'body'. Turner talks about the 'bodily' order, and Frank is concerned with the action as embodiment and focuses more directly on the style of 'body' usage and issues related to lived 'body'.

The 'body', as anthropologist Mary Douglas has argued, is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies and even metaphysical commitments of culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the 'body'. She emphasizes on the fact that the 'social body' regulates how the physical 'body' is perceived and experienced. She talks about the relationship between the 'social body' and the individual 'body'. It threatens to collapse these two bodies together by reducing the phenomenology of the individual 'body', the ways in which people live, experience and

perceive their 'bodies' into the positions and categories made available by the 'social body'. The 'body' may also operate as a metaphor to culture. The 'body' is not only a text of culture, but as anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu and philosopher Michel Foucault (among others) have argued, a practical, direct locus of social control. Through table manners and toilet habits, through seemingly trivial routines, rules, and practices, culture is "made body" as Bourdieu puts it in *Outline of a Theory Practice* and it is converted into automatic, habitual activity and is called "beyond the grasp of unconsciousness… [untouchable] by voluntary, deliberate transformation" (Bourdieu 1977: 94). So why change one's body? As the 'body' is where one lives and through it one communicates to others. It could be understood that the reaction one's 'body' receives from others affects how one interacts. As Jamison Green in his autobiography mentions:

> I wanted to change my body because I felt invisible. Inside a female body, I felt as if I couldn't fully exist, as if the masculine part of me was compressed inside me to the degree that was not comfortable, but downright painful. We all have hidden components of our personality or selves that we either want to protect or yearn to have others see (Green 2004: 95).

It could be inferred as Green mentioned that genitals do not function as the basis of one's gender identity; but he also examines the corporeal significance of the 'body' itself in producing the experience of particular gender consciousness. Bourdieu's work also provides an analysis of the 'body' as a material phenomenon which both constitutes, and is constituted by society.

2.2 PERSPECTIVES ON 'BODY'

There are three theoretical approaches and epistemologies that have been traced by Hughes and Lock, and they put forth a model of three bodies that includes "phenomenology (individual body and the lived self), structuralism and symbolism (the social body), and poststructuralism (the body politic)" (Hughes and Lock 1987: 8). Phenomenology considers bodies as the ultimate point of view and Merleau Ponty in this

regard mentions, "I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them" (Ponty 1962: ix). It recognizes the epistemological significance of the bodies, the lived experience and I. Merleau-Ponty (1962) has argued that individuals perceive the world through their 'bodies'. He analyzed 'body image' as the image perceived by the individuals in their psyche, and it may or may not correspond to their actual bodies. "The *I* confronts the world as a series of *essences* that are contingent upon an embodied location" (Rubin 2003: 26).

From a 'structuralist' perspective, a 'body' is socially constructed by discourse. In this context, critic David Armstrong in *The Political Anatomy of the Body: Medical Knowledge in Britain in the Twentieth Century* mentions, "the reality of the body can only be established by the observing eye that reads it" (Armstrong 1983: 2). The 'body' is not the part of a given reality, but an effect of our systemization of 'becoming'. One of the major claims that Anne Fausto Sterling made in her book *Sexing the Body* is that "labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender-not science-can define our sex" (Sterling 2000: 3). The standards of appropriate gender also dictate what it is to look like an 'ideal' man or woman with corporeal 'ideals' and are subject to cultural pressures. However, it could be deduced that neither 'culture' nor 'biology' is singularly deterministic for masculinity or maleness. The practice of pharmaceutical technologies such as testosterone, human growth hormone, and the category of erectile dysfunction drugs such as Viagra are used to enhance the physical form which is the culturally set idea of the 'ideal' man and masculinity. 'Becoming' is a process and one cannot fully understand the complexity of experimental gender identity without first unpacking the multiple elements of identity that include cultural ideals, performances, and bodies. Individuals are born and socialized into a culture, which provides scenarios of the behaviors and appearances of an appropriately gendered man or woman. To be seen as a 'man' or 'woman', one has to act in concert with or resist gendered mores. This understanding of masculinity and femininity relies on culture. Vidya, in her

autobiography *I am Vidya* mentions about herself becoming a part of this cultural process, where she in a male body, tries to enact femininity which opposes the cultural ideals. Thus, she subsumes that one experiences life with or through the body which may or might not mirror the standards of an appropriate masculine or feminine body. She mentions, "When I was in surroundings other than home or college I generally felt quite free to be myself. On such occasions, I walked swaying my hips like a woman, sat with my legs crossed stylishly or rearranged my hair in a feminine way when the wind blew it across my forehead" (Vidya 2007: 44). The idea of femininity in a masculine 'body' is considered as inappropriate in a cultural milieu as it traverses the social role and norms linked to the female body. But, the 'body' is in a constant flux, altered by activities and technologies that are experienced through a gendered lens and judged by oscillating a set of standards.

The relation between social expression of masculinity and femininity and their physical underpinnings has been debated in scientific and social arenas. In 1972 the sexologist John Money and Anke Ehrhardt argued that sex refers to physical attributes and is anatomically and physiologically determined. Gender was seen as "a psychological transformation of the self- the internal conviction that one is either male or female (gender identity) and the behavioral expressions of that conviction" (Sterling 2000: 3). Anne Sterling gives an example to present gender differences when she mentions:

> If girls couldn't learn math easily as boys, the problem wasn't built into their brains. The difficulty resulted from the gender norms-different expectations and opportunities from boys and girls. Having a penis rather than a vagina is a sex difference. Presumably, the latter could be changed even if the former could not (ibid: 4).

Bodies are a part of nature, but explanations in terms of biology are inappropriate. It must address the dichotomy between, nature and culture since the relationship between these is 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. An

important feature in the context of 'body' mentioned by body critic, Bryan S. Turner in "Ontology of Difference" is that "the sociology of body must be social and not individualistic" (Turner 2008: 207). He further explains:

> …the phenomenology of embodiment is highly individualistic and fails to recognize fully that personal experience of embodiment is highly mediated by social training, language and social context. My authority over my body may be a necessary feature of human agency, but the nature and extent of that authority depends heavily on my social circumstances- my body may be somebody's legal property (ibid).

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. In the context of 'body', there are various theoretical positions in which the idea of somatic tradition is explained.

Marx brought the concept of 'body', which was later appropriated and brought forward by Foucault, but they follow very contrasting traditions on the concept of 'body'. The two traditions on the concept of 'body' are, the first that of Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, and the second being associated with the 'epistemology' of Freidrich Nietzsche and finds its expression in the works of Michel Foucault. Marx and Feuerbach's approach to the 'body' is via a theory of human sensuous practice on nature in which embodiment is considered as social and historical. They opined to the idea that the realization of human potentiality is only possible under social conditions where human beings are free from external control. "Marx's social ontology leads to a critique of those features of control and constraint over human potentiality which results from social domination" (Turner 2008: 208). In the second perspective of body, which is associated with the epistemology of Nietzsche, finds its expression in the works of Foucault. Body in this structuralist perspective mentions that:

The body arises as the consequence of modern rationalism and it is situated in the context of political struggles which seeks to regulate human beings within an administered society. The body is that which is signified by biological, physiological, medical and demographic discourses, it is thus a concept which is the effect of knowledge/power (ibid).

2.3 BODY AS 'BECOMING'

'Body', if taken from a post-structuralist perspective, becomes a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or are defined as in Butler's *Gender Trouble*, "as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determine a cultural meaning for itself" (Butler 1990: 8). She questions the construction of gender and claims in *Bodies that Matter*:

> If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this 'sex' except by the means of construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender but that sex becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access (Butler 1993: xv).

Her argument lies in the fact that if gender is a construction, there must be an "I" or "we" (ibid: xvi) then who enacts or performs the construction. "How can there be an activity, a constructing without presupposing an agent who precedes and performs that activity?" (ibid). She concludes that, "subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the "I" neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves" (ibid). It is the social, cultural, and political environment in which the construction and the process of gendering take place. She further argues that, gendering cannot be strictly seen as a human act or expression, it is "a willful appropriation, and it is certainly not a question of taking on a mask; it is the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible, it's enabling cultural condition"

(ibid: xvii). She gives an example of 'performativity' and mentions the repeated inculcation of the norm after the infant is born.

> The matrix of gender relations is prior to the emergence of the 'human'. Consider the medical interpellation which shifts an infant from an "it" to a "she" or a "he" and in that naming, the girl is "girled," brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that "girling" of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm (Butler 1993: xvii).

This 'interpellation' of gender as Butler states, is seen clearly in the examples of those abjected beings who find their gender identity outside the binary. She doesn't directly refer to the transgendered beings, but she formulated that "the construction of gender operates through exclusionary means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation" (ibid). The 'interpellation' of gender roles or gender norms are these constructs of typical male and female role that one is assigned from a very early age, but in a Butlerian reading it could be seen that only if one performs or reiterates the assigned role, through various intervals of time, it leads to the construction of identity. Hence, "construction not only takes in time, but is itself a temporal process which operated through reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of reiteration" (ibid: xix). For Butler, the materiality of body is a construction that emerges out of a field of power that shapes its contours with sex and gender. She rejects linguistic determinism and cultural constructivism and describes that the materiality of the body arises in a matrix of power relations so that the agency of the subject comes after and not prior to the materiality of the body, emerging through a process of enactment. She reformulates the very meaning of construction and describes it in terms of a temporal process. The performance of gender is a constant reiteration of the

regulatory norms and it is in the performance of these norms that the materiality of the 'body' emerges. The materiality of body arising from the performativity of the regulatory norms, has similarities to theatrical performance- with a difference that, in the latter actors come before the role, whereas, in the former, in the performance of the dominant norms (due to the naturalization of roles), the actors become the roles. Whereas Butler focuses mostly on the performativity of gender, her theory of the materiality of the body achieved through the performativity of gender could also be applied to hijras and transsexuals. In the hijra autobiographies by Laxmi, Revathi, and Vidya which begins from their early childhood where they were identified as a 'boy', and later found themselves inclined to feminine gender roles.

2.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSGENDER BODIES

Essentialist gender roles and norms work as surveillance or as Foucault calls it 'panopticon' and assert 'masculinity' to men and 'femininity' to women. Laxmi in *Red Lipstick* claims herself to be very 'hijrotic' which she defined as "a blend of hijra and erotic" (Laxmi 2016: 37). She was asked to seek help from psychologist because Chhaya "thought I might have some specific issues that made me behave so femininely despite being a man" (ibid: 38). So, it is from the very beginning of her childhood she found herself comfortable in feminine gender roles and through the process of reiterating the norms, she claimed authority of the feminine gender. She mentions that she was exploited because of her femininity in the childhood, "when I realized that I was exploited as a child because of my femininity, I decided to use exactly that, 'my femininity' to wreck revenge" (ibid: 168). Over the period, with the process of reiteration, she established her femininity from childhood. She mentions her anguish against patriarchy which she thinks "tried to crush my femininity" (ibid).

> I am an epitome of sluthood- I can be an ultimate seductress and I can also suddenly become other worldly, divine and naïve… it was empowering! I would tease them, make them want it, and then I will make it seem that I never wanted it in the first place. So many times I would leave them in the middle of it all, with

their throbbing erections aching for climax-the absolute humiliation for any man. I played my femininity so well that they got manipulated (ibid: 169).

Laxmi in *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*, also deconstructs the notion that hijras renounce sexual desire and practice by undergoing sacrificial emasculation. Hijras are said to have emasculation to be a part of hijra community or to become a 'proper' hijra, but Laxmi finds herself beyond these confinements and still identifies herself as a hijra and as a woman. Her identity is a non-essentialist and was naturalized through the temporal process with repeated and reiterated norms that lead to the construction of her feminine identity. "I had no surgery done because I am not castrated" (Laxmi 2015: 80). She explains her anxiety on being called as a man, "I regarded this (burning her certificates) as a symbolic act because I was destroying records in which I was referred to as a male" (ibid).

Vidya was also identified as a 'boy' in the early years of her life, but by rejecting to the notions of boyhood and claiming authority over her female-ness, she, over the time, constructed her feminine identity. So it could be inferred from the autobiographies that is not the 'sex' one is born with, it is about the identity or the gender norms and roles that one chose to carry through a temporal process of 'performativity'. In one of the chapters titled "The Princess" from the autobiography, she mentions:

> My boyhood obsession with film heroines and my secret pleasure in cross-dressing up like them intensified now rather than reduce. I was seventeen now. No amount of teasing had any effect on me that could make me behave differently. On the contrary I began to comfort myself that my detractors were only poking fun at my effeminate ways only because I felt like a woman inside and wanted to be a woman (Vidya 2007: 33).

Not only the excerpt shows the enactment of gender roles, but also conveyed the idea that the essentialist ideologies are deep-rooted in the cultural articulation. It also depicts the essentialist notion of femininity that can be enacted only in a female 'body', and hijras

are ridiculed for their feminine appearance and mannerisms. Revathi uses the metaphor of the lushful green crops as she walks past them, she imagines herself growing into a girl, like the seeds have 'grown tall' and 'gently green'. She mentions, "when the field stood tall and gently green with crops, I walked and sang and danced to my heart's content; imagining myself to be a girl" (Revathi 2010: 5).

De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* articulates the notion that gendering, or becoming a 'man' or a 'woman', is a productive social process through her much-quoted extract where she mentions:

> No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human beings presents in the society: it is the civilization as a whole that produces this creature indeterminate between male and eunuch which is described as feminine (Beauvoir 1949: 295).

Beauvoir's idea focuses on the social construction of masculinity and femininity. But for Butler, 'body' is important for the understanding of gender. "Consider gender, for instance as a *corporeal style*, an 'act', as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where '*performative*' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (Butler 1990: 139). Gender is framed here as an enactment and as involving, bodily signification and mentions, "they are fabrications, manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (ibid: 136). Hence, bodily practice is could be seen as an important axis in the system in transgender embodiment. In the context of bodily transformation critic, the Susan Stryker situates transsexuality as:

> …culturally and historically specific transgender practice/identity through which a transgendered subject enters into a relationship with medical, psychotherapeutic, and juridical institutions in order to gain access to certain hormonal and surgical technologies for enacting and embodying itself (Stryker 1994: 251-252).

2.5 DISSONANCES AND TRANSITION

The surgical transformation of female-to-male transsexuals is complex, and Green in his autobiography also talks about the expenses incurred on each surgery. He describes surgery as a complex process and mentions:

> There is no such thing as a single, discreet "sex change operation" for FTMs. There's "top" surgery: a bilateral mastectomy or other breast tissue removal procedure and contouring of the chest. Then there's bottom surgery: removal of the internal female reproductive organs and or genital reconstruction (Green 2004: 102).

But Green also mentions in his autobiography that masculinity can be enhanced through the 'body', but the social identity as a man is achieved. One of the debates that come to the forefront while studying trans masculinities is that, it is less studied and less focused. Halberstam also mentions that female masculinity is highly marginalized and less explored. "It is true that trans-men (whether transsexual, transgender or other) have been fairly ignored" (Aboim 2016: 225). Transmen have also received less attention from the part of trans studies when compared to their female counterparts, which have gained far more visibility (ibid: 226). This holds true in the case of female third gender roles in India, as hijras are gaining more visibility through academic and literary circles, their male counterparts are still less studied and focused. Green in "Part of the Package: Ideas of Masculinity among Male- Identified Transpeople" also mentions that Female-to-male transsexual people are the least studied group of all when it comes to masculinity" (Green 2005: 291). When one talks about trans-masculinities and masculinities, R.W. Connell idea of masculinity is worth mentioning. Connell's canonical definition of masculinity is:

> […] simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (Connell 1995: 71)

In this perspective, masculinity can certainly be defined as simultaneously a practice, a place and an effect (Connell 1995). In understanding the facets of alternative masculinities, Aboim in her study "Trans- masculinities, Embodiments and the Materiality of Gender: Bridging the Gap", proposes the opposite of Connell's tripartite notion of masculinity. She mentions:

> Rather than falling into the trap of locations (the place from which a man enacts masculinity) as the triggers of all practice, we can, provisionally, position 'the place' as an effect – a journey of multiple embodiments as in the case of transmen– and not necessarily as the beginning or the end. In this sense, individuals – whether born male or not – can practice ('do') masculinity while embodying the effects of that very same practice. In this formulation, the doing and its effects create the places. Rather than a casual teleology, this formulation emphasizes the role of entangled embodiments in the making of (trans) masculinities and the strength of bodily materiality as permanently built as a process of becoming (Aboim 2016: 228).

It could be inferred that such an understanding of masculinity through 'doing gender' is a derivative of trans-masculinities. In the FTM autobiographical accounts, the experience of transitioning is discussed in greater length, and the trauma that entails. The autobiographies move from discussions about sexual relationships with women; intimacy with other transmen, experiences during surgery and hormone therapy, and the decision to undertake anatomical surgery which is a complex process in terms of health and body. Jamison Green's autobiography *Becoming a Visible Man* starts with an essentialist question, "You know what you are right?" (2004: 1). There are important distinctions for the female-to-male transsexuals, between masculinity, maleness, and the male 'body'. He explores these distinctions in terms of his childhood and dissonance while performing a 'female' social role. The notion that gender gives a certain kind of power in the society doesn't make any sense, but that actual body with other factors does. Green mentions that:

There is nothing wrong with wanting to break away from gender stereotypes; I definitely advocate doing away with gender-based oppression. There is nothing wrong with gender variance or with having a gender identity that is different from one's genitals. I wouldn't call someone else wrong for wanting to be gender-ambiguous or refusing to state a gender (2004: 87).

In a similar context, Green introduced gender as "a private matter that we share with others" (2004: 191). His experiences as an adult highlight the longing for a desired gender identity and the gender he could relate with. Green writes:

Gender is a private matter that we share with others; and we share it, it becomes a social construction, thus it requires, like a language, a 'speaker' and 'listener'. It is between the two actors that gender is defined, negotiated, corroborated, or challenged. But to say that without this interaction there is no need for gender like saying that if a tree fell in the forest and no ear is there to hear the sound, then there was no sound, or perhaps no tree actually fell! (2004: 191).

The analogy of 'tree' that Green talks about denotes that gender has an ontological status outside discourse, but Butler refutes the idea of a pre-linguistic inner core or essence by claiming that gendered acts are not performed by the subject, but they performatively constitute a subject that is the effect of the discourse rather than the cause of it; "that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality" (Butler 1990: 136). In the account of parody and drag that follows this description, it does, at times, sound as though there is an actor or a 'doer' behind the deed, and Butler later admits that in *Gender Trouble* she was waffled between describing gender in terms of 'linguistic performativity' and characterizing it as a 'straightforward theatre'.

Green, in his autobiography, mentions regarding the transition through surgery and hormones that, "surgery is not always the most profound aspect of a person's transition from one sex to another. HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) doesn't make us into

something we are not, but enables transsexual people to be more of who we are, to be more at home in our bodies the way we imagine non- transsexual people feel in their bodies" (Green 2004: 94). But on the other hand, he also makes a point that hormonal changes (taking testosterone) do not result in a social female transformation into a social male:

> One thing is certain: taking testosterone will not make a social female into a social male. It will change some sex-differentiated characteristics that are interpreted socially as male, but it won't make a man of anyone. Being a man is more than looking like one. It requires knowing what is expected of a man, and choosing how to go about meeting or not meeting those expectations at a given moment. It also requires being comfortable in the body of a man, that is something that testosterone can assist but only if it's within the individual's comfort zone. I also think that being a woman also requires the same thing (ibid: 94-95).

It suggests that in the quest of visibility of the 'body', a male 'body' will communicate the masculinity which was rendered invisible by the female 'body'. Similarly, in *Both Sides Now*, by Dhillon Khosla, he goes through similar experiences of transition and mentions:

> I felt anger at the contrast of my soft breasts against their firm chest. I felt trapped in my body and I resented the men's freedom. When I was home alone, I wanted to walk around without my shirt on, or wear my shirts unbuttoned in that casual, masculine way, but the movement of my body and the image in the mirror told me that I couldn't do either (Khosla 2006: 7).

Khosla's desire of a male 'body' and that yearning to get a male body and trying to fit into the masculine appearance, wondering if the appearance is masculine enough, and going through the surgeries to finally become one, was since childhood. He went through the chest reconstruction surgery which involved going through the nipple and liposuctioning the tissue. Khosla calls himself as a "helpless wounded animal" (Khosla

2006: 13) while undergoing the gender-transition. Later, after the chest surgery, he mentions:

> On the fourth day, while I was still bandaged and tubed, I got my period. It was not just physically uncomfortable- weakly stumbling to the bathroom to insert a tampon with this contraption of bandages and tubes dangling from my chest-it was psychologically jarring. Here I was in most tentative stages of developing my male body only to be shocked back into reality of my female one (ibid: 51).

He tries to communicate his in betweenness with genders while going through the transition. On the one hand, he goes through surgeries to gender-transition, on the other, he was still going through his female analogical processes such as menstruation. Through his autobiography, it appears that he longs 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. In the autobiography, there are constant accounts where he reasons why in that certain situations he was referred with female pronouns and not male pronouns. For instance, "He was calling me 'he' because he had read the memo, not because I looked like it" (ibid: 64). "Seeing the word 'male' on my chart made me wish even more that I were truly one of them and it got my hopes up that the hospital staff would refer to me with male pronouns" (ibid: 47). May be she said "Mr." but it sounded like "Ms." to me because I was still paranoid from the first call (ibid: 135). In another conversation where the lady responded, "you are welcome, ma'am". He explained himself that she must have said "you are welcome, man" but then he figures out that the tone of conversation had been too formal for that "hey man" tagline (ibid: 134). Being 'interpellated', both as a male and female, was an affective anxiety that was to be overcome. As a result, he underwent complete sex reassignment surgery. Before his surgery, he even used prosthesis. "I used a pair of scissors to cut open the pouch. But before I picked it up, I just looked at it. I saw the outline of two balls, fused together. In the middle of the balls was a penis shaped in a way that it folded over and hung flaccidly between the scortum" (ibid:

112). It could be inferred that the transitioning body can be conceptualized to its temporality. It is a dynamic process of change and becoming.

Kailey, who started his gender transition from female-to-male after living for forty-two years as a heterosexual female, mentions that he was diagnosed with gender identity disorder and he mentions that, "physical changes are only part of a transition. They don't prepare a person to function adequately in a gender in which he or she wasn't socialized. Socialization is often a massive barrier that's difficult to overcome" (Kailey 2005: 4). He also mentions that, "we are the ones who can liberate not only ourselves but the rest of society from the strict cultural standards that are almost impossible for anyone to meet" (Kailey 2005: 7). Kailey was constantly trying to fit in the identity of a man when he was diagnosed with gender identity disorder and he also mentions in his autobiography how certain masculine mannerisms need to be taught in order to be a social man. He mentions, "We are society of label, and I was having a hard time finding one that fit. Was I a man? A transman? A female-to-male transsexual? All or none of the above? My life was turning into a multiple choice exam (ibid: 26). Kailey's accounts talk about how the culture treats women's breasts as sexual and as a signifier of the feminine identity.

> Breasts are a significant identifier of females in our culture and therefore, something that transmen usually want to get rid of as soon as possible…breasts are the strongest signifiers of gender, stronger even than genitalia, since they are visible to everyone, even through clothing. But it wasn't until after my surgery that I realized the insanity of our culture's insistence on sexualizing the female breasts (ibid: 54).

But after his chest surgery he mentions, my chest isn't sexual anymore (ibid: 55). He pens down, his experience on both sides of the identity, man and woman, and how being a man was liberating in some ways, as he mentions that, he can go out now in the dark. He also emphasizes the importance of genitals and titles his chapter as "Dickless in Denver" where he mentions, "penises are a big deal in the transmale community" (ibid:

59). Before his bottom surgery, like Valerio, he used stuffer inside his jeans so that it looks like a crotch, and crotch being the essential marker of masculine corporeal identity.

> There exists an array of prosthetics they can give the impression of a living organ inside tight jeans. My first pants stuffer costs around dollar 100 although it was unattractive and a little complicated to wear, I felt good, when I had it on… I knew what was there- the mark of my manhood. Like the silicon breasts of my past, this was a visible sign, to myself to the world of what I was" (Valerio 2006: 60).

It could be inferred that the visible marker of masculine identity i.e. body, regulated Valerio's social identity as a 'man' which contributes to the understanding that bodily markers are significant in the construction of a transgender identity. In the context of surgeries, Nikki Sullivan, a critical theorist of 'body', examines similarities and differences between transsexual surgeries and other forms of bodily modifications such as piercing, tattooing, cosmetic surgery and self-demand amputation. Sullivan is concerned with how, across a wide range of discourses, various critics tend to perpetuate moral judgments that constitutes 'good' rather than 'bad' modifications. Kailey, before gender-transition, underwent breast surgery to enhance her breasts and in his autobiography normalizes the cosmetic surgery, and his stuffer and mentions them as a marker to enhance her femininity in the past, and stuffer as enhancing his masculinity now. In the study entitled "Embodying Desire: Piercing and the Fashioning of Neo-Butch/Femme Identities" Lisa Walker, critically examines dichotomous accounts of non-mainstream body modifications and cosmetic surgery in which the latter is understood as a form of compliance to normative gendered standards of beauty, and the former is represented as a radical political practice.

2.6 BODY AS SITES OF GENDERED 'SURVEILLANCE'

Gender roles and norms control the discourses about 'masculinity' and 'femininity' or as Foucault calls it 'panopticon' which is derived from social theorist Jeremy Bentham's

system of control. Similar is Foucault's (2004) notion of discipline that is concerned with the regulation of bodies and the division of space. The division of space brings in the aspect of bathrooms as they are designed in binary, i.e., male and female. In this notion, the bathroom serves as a technology of regulatory power that reinforces gendered surveillance. Valerio in his autobiography talks about the bathroom scenarios in "Urine, Scents and Bathroom". Kailey in his autobiography also talks about bathroom troubles for transsexuals in his chapter titled "The Bathroom Blues". In the context of Foucault's disciplinary power, critic Kyle Bender- Baird in "Peeing under Surveillance: Bathroom, Gender Policing, and Hate Violence" mentions that "disciplinary power operates through bathrooms in three ways: (i) the division of space allocated for specific functions; (ii) the panoptic design that facilitates and encourages surveillance; and (iii) the production of docile, appropriately gendered bodies. It divides space through enclosure and partitioning in the creation of functional sites" (Baird 2015: 2). The bathrooms are designed in a way that there is a purpose of each space and hence is different from the other spaces. "Within these enclosed, functional sites, people are partitioned into smaller units" (ibid) and "each individual has his own place; and each place its individual" (Foucault 1995: 143). In this Foucauldian understanding of power, bathrooms serve as a technology of disciplinary power. From this understanding, Foucault's (1995) analysis of 'docile bodies' to gender, suggests that sex-segregated bathrooms are a technology of disciplinary power, which forces individuals to choose between men's and women's rooms. Kailey mentions:

> The public restroom is the closest thing to hell…I started sweating more when I started using testosterone, but I never sweat so much as I did when I had to use the restroom at a mall or restaurant at the beginning of my transition. Restroom use is probably the biggest single issue for a person transitioning on the job, and it's a major discussion point (Kailey 2005: 143-144).

Foucault recognized bathrooms, like Bentham's 'panopticon', as mechanisms of surveillance. While discussing the construction of school buildings for the purpose of discipline, he included a description of bathrooms: "latrines had been installed with half-

doors, so that the supervisor on duty could see the head and legs of the pupils, and also with side walls sufficiently high that those inside cannot see one another" (Foucault 1995: 173). The architecture of public bathrooms is panoptic. Valerio mentions, "the atmosphere in the men's room is utilitarian, less social or lounge like. There is nervous homophobia in the air, a nearly palpable tension that precludes more than a minimum amount of socializing" (Valerio 2006: 183). He also mentions, "a restroom is a temple of sexual codification, of unrefined, unself-conscious masculine and feminine motivations, obsessions, and expressions" (ibid: 182). Sex-segregated bathrooms invite surveillance of gender norms. "The operation of disciplinary power in bathrooms can be understood as a social performance" (Baird 2015: 3). "Each performance is subjected to the performer, the observer, and the space in which it is performed" (Doan 2010: 639). There are three performers creating the scene; the person entering the restroom, fellow people, and the space itself, and they are a part of the surveillance. In the case of Revathi, she wasn't allowed inside the bathroom and was dismissed as gender non-conforming. She mentions, "I returned to the bus stand and decided to go to the women's toilet there. But the man who stood there to receive money for the pay-and-use toilets dismissed me as a pottai and would not let me in. When I tried to get into the men's toilet section, I was shooed away from there as well" (Revathi 2010: 54). Bathrooms becomes the site of surveillance and are surveilled by the disciplinarians of the society and thus a 'docile' body as Foucault calls it, will not only be identified as either 'man' or 'woman' but should also be read easily as such by others. The "cardinal rule of gender: one must be readable at a glance" (Halberstam 1998: 23). This creates problems for those who fall outside the gender binary either through their non-binary identity or through their non-binary gender presentation.

The concept of 'surveillance' has also been used by Tony Beauchamp in "Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility" where he points out the medical and psychiatric monitoring of trans people. He mentions, "trans studies provides an ideal point of entry for thinking through state surveillance of gendered bodies" (Beauchamp 2009: 47). The role medical and psychiatric institutions, through "the process of transition, eliminate all

references to their birth gender and essentially disappear into a normative gender world as if they had never been transgender to begin with" (ibid). Thus, medical and psychiatry can be seen as two major forms of surveillance.

2.7 SURGICAL AND EMASCULATED BODIES

Transsexuals undergo various medical surgeries and hormonal processes for transition of their body. From FTM transsexual autobiographies, it is inferred that Green, Khosla, Valerio and Kailey, undergo surgical transformation of their body which began by taking hormones as a process of initiating transition. For hijras, as understood from the autobiographies, *nirvan* plays a very crucial role as it ascertains their identity as a 'hijra'. According to the mythological bases, *nirvan* is a proof of asexuality. It is through the excision of the sexual organ which provides ritual power and authenticity to hijras. Gayatri Reddy in her ethnography narrates the myth associated with *nirvan*. She mentions:

> There was a hijra who lived in a king's court from childhood. From when she was very young, she used to go to the zenana (the area reserved for women) and help the women there with their tasks. This practice continued even after she had grown up. One day, the king, who didn't know that this person was a hijra got suspicious of her activities and asked her to leave the palace. The hijra did not know what had occasioned the change of heart but packed her things and started to leave. As she was walking out, a big storm rages through the area. For safety the hijra climbed a nearby tree. On the way up, however his clothes got snagged on a branch and her genitalia or lack thereof-were exposed. On seeing this, the king realized his folly and asked the hijra to return to his kingdom (Reddy 2006: 97).

Emasculation is the major source of the ritual power for the hijras. It is the source of their uniqueness and the most authentic way of identifying oneself as hijra and of being identified by a larger society. Emasculation is considered as a rite of passage, through the

operation, the former, impotent male person dies, and a new person, endowed with sacred power (shakti) is reborn. There are three stages in this transition as mentioned by Nanda in her ethnographic account: In the first preparatory period, the person is separated from his former male status, in the second, the liminal period, which corresponds to the recovery period after the operation, the person is in a liminal state, betwixt and between, no longer a male but not yet invested with the powers. In the third stage, in an elaborate ceremony, the individual undergoes *nirvan* and becomes a real hijra. The *nirvan* operation served as an ultimate proof of the asexuality of hijras.

In Lacanian reading of hijras and the rite to castration, Lacan formulates that "the phallus is the privileged signifier" or metaphor of law, and the phallus's function is also to represent that which is not present. Lacan suggests that the phallus as a signifier masks its own absence, and is invariably intertwined with its opposite, castration. It is the emasculation ritual that transforms an impotent male into a potentially powerful person. The renunciation of sex and the repression of sexual desire are, in the Hindu belief system, associated with the powers of the ascetic. It is only when the penis is removed that the phallus effectively functions as a sign of generativity that is the receptacle of the goddess's gift of fertility. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi in her autobiography *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* describes castration as, "In India, becoming a hijra is a spiritual process; but in the west, it is clinical, involving counseling, surgery and hormonal therapy. After that, the person concerned goes about his/her business as if nothing has happened. Of course, there's society. It ostracizes anyone who doesn't fall in the line" (Laxmi 2015: 88). Even though emasculation is seen as primary to hijra identity, Laxmi chooses not to undergo castration, yet associates herself with woman. She deconstructs the notion that it is mandatory for hijras to castrate or emasculate themselves. Vidya in her autobiography *I am Vidya* illustrates the importance of nirvana. She mentions, "*Nirvana!* How long I had waited for it! What humiliation I had suffered! Obsessed with it, I had mortgaged my pride, my anger, my honor-even begged on the streets to achieve this end. (Vidya 2007: 11). Similarly, Revathi mentions her experience of emasculation.

Hijras who undergo this operation do not eat fruit or drink milk for forty days. On the fortieth day, they offer puja to Pothiraja Mata. They carry a pot of milk to appease the goddess and only after they have ritually mixed it with water of a river or a pond, do they eat and drink milk (Revathi 2010: 75).

When one analyses the construction of hijra identities, two constructions by Roland Barthes seems relevant. Roland Barthes mentions about innocent and intentional signification and there is an identifiable difference between the two. Dick Hebdige in his work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, defines 'innocent signification' as "expressive of normality as opposed to deviance, i.e., [ensembles which] are distinguished by their relative invisibility, their appropriateness, their 'naturalness,'… intentional communication is of a different order….It is a visible construction, a loaded choice. It directs attention to itself; it gives itself to be read" (Hebdige 1991: 101). Hijra signification is more intentional in nature as they choose their emphatic sense of sartorial style and mannerism to display their femininity. Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* mentions, as such the "visual ensembles of spectacular subcultures", by being "obviously fabricated," go against the grain of a mainstream culture whose principle defining feature is "a tendency to masquerade as nature,… to translate the reality of the world into an image of the world which in turn presents itself as if composed according to the evident laws of the natural order" (Barthes 1972: 54). Hijras intentional choice of bodily changes in this context appears to signify difference from innocent mode of mainstream society. The significant effort to sculpt a more natural female body is by the use of hormones and emasculation. Lawrence Cohen in his essay titled "The Pleasure of Castration" has posed two challenges for the construction of sexual difference. First he argues for an analysis that "locates the body within a multiplicity of differences," rather than one which "reads the etiology of the sexed body in terms of the primacy of culture, political-economy, biology or psychology" alone (Cohen 1995: 295). Second, he emphasizes the "need to listen to the obviousness and necessity of sexual identities and embodiments by forcing it to stand for difference and difference alone" (ibid). It is the lived experience that provides the understanding to the phrase "multiplicity of differences". Not only the body is located

within a multiplicity of differences but, what is more important is the embodied experience of the individuals that should serve as the ultimate basis for theorizing and understanding identity. A. Revathi in *The Truth About Me* mentions, "I was a boy, and if I behaved thus. I wanted to live as a woman, at the same time I knew that I would have to live in fear of what people thought and said" (Revathi 2010: 21) and after emasculation she states, "I WAS ECSTATIC- I was at last a woman" (ibid: 74). The upper case in the text emphasizes her joy and the experience of being a woman, experienced through her body and after going through the ritualized emasculation. As Adrienne Rich states in, *Of Woman Born,* "Perhaps we need a moratorium on saying 'the body.'… When I write 'the body', I see nothing in particular. To say 'the body' lifts me away from what has given me primary perspective. To write '*my* body' plunges me into lived experience" (Rich 1986: 215). The body is seen as a medium through which identity is constructed and gender norms are played.

Transsexuals and hijras call into question both the stability of sex and its relationship with the social and psychological categories of gender. Transsexuals who problematize the correlation of a particular biological sex with a particular social gender are rendered 'bad' as referred by Janice Raymond in *Transsexual Empire* (1979). It offers an account of 'bad' transsexuals, as Dwight Billings and Thomas Urban represents in "The Socio-Medical Construction of Transsexualism: An Interpretation and Critique" with the "the false representations of an underlying material truth, through a willful distortion of surface appearance" (Billings and Urban 1981: 266-282). The two important aspects that are a part of this transformation are 'castration' or 'emasculation' and surgery. Castration has cultural connotations related to the hijras in India. Surgery is the careful assessment of the body and then undergoing the transition medically. Foucault used the example of Jeremy Bentham's concept of the 'panopticon', it is a prison structure that places a guard tower at its center and positions prisoners in a circle around that center. From the tower, the guard can observe each prisoner in his or her cell, but the prisoners cannot see the guard. The effect of this arrangement is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 1995:

201). This omnipresent visibility is imprinted in the mind of the prisoner who then self-polices. This system of control could work even without literal guards; that is, the threat of the gaze is enough to ensure compliance with the rules of the prison. Drawing on Foucault, Peter Conrad (1992) describes medical surveillance as a form of social control in which conditions are understood through a 'medical gaze', transferring authority away from individuals to biomedicine. This gaze becomes normalized, and individuals continue to use the techniques of medical surveillance, such as medical conceptual frameworks, to make sense of their own bodies. This applies to female-to-maletranssexuals who rely on medical practitioners to help them alter body.

2.8 DISCOURSES ON TRANS-MASCULINITIES

Robert Stoller, a psychoanalyst in his book *Splitting: A Case of Female Masculinity* creates female masculinity as a psychological syndrome. Before this, Freud's concept of 'penis envy', is a stage theorized based on the female psychosexual development in which young girls experience anger and disappointment when they recognize their genitals as inferior to male genitals. In the Freudian paradigm, as mentioned in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* edited by James Strachey:

> Normal femininity means that girls love their fathers, resent but identify with their mothers and finally achieve contentment with their lot by having a compensatory baby, preferably one born with a penis. One alternative to this normative female Oedipus complex is the masculine protest in which the woman rebels against femininity by choosing masculine occupations and sometimes by becoming a lesbian (1948: 223-43).

But in the context of autobiographies, Valerio, Green, Khosla and Kailey's trans masculinity wasn't interpreted as a psychological syndrome. It is their desire of a masculine identity and social identity as a man which lead to the surgical transition. Butler in her essay "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary" (1993)

subverts previously negative connotations of female masculinity created by psychologists such as Stoller, Freud and Lacan. Her persuasive central argument in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble,* is that anything that is socially instituted has to be practiced to remain in force and hence can be repeated differently. Butler concludes in "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary" essay by asserting that "what is needed is not a new body part, as it were, but a displacement of hegemonic symbolic of (heterosexist) sexual difference and the critical release of alternative imaginary schemas for constituting sites of erogenous pleasures" (Butler 1993: 91). In the essay, the term 'lesbian' is not defined or specified by practice or desire. The term refers to women who desire women erotically, rather than to the woman-identified-woman of 1970s lesbian feminism.

Judith Halberstam in "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity" poses a transgendered challenge to the concept of gender, describing gender as a fiction and a postmodern mixing and matching of body parts. In her writing about genders as fiction, Halberstam breaks down the notion that there is any 'crossing' to be done in moving between /among genders. She writes, "Masculinity or femininity may be simulated by surgery, but they can also find other fictional forms like clothing or fantasy. Surgery is only one of many possibilities for remaking the gendered body" (Halberstam 1994: 225). Halberstam defines her concept of 'gender fictions' as "fictions of a body taking its own shape, a cut-up genre that mixes and matches body parts, sexual acts, and postmodern articulations of the impossibility of identity" (ibid: 210). Judith (Jack) Halberstam moved the discourse of female masculinity from a stigmatized to a positive view. Halberstam introduces the concept of female masculinity by roughly defining the term in the preface to *Female Masculinity* as "writing about women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine" (Halberstam 1998: vi). She further mentions her goal to raise female masculinity so that "masculine girls and women do not have to wear their masculinity as a stigma but can infuse it with a sense of pride and indeed power" (ibid). Halberstam mentions many varieties of masculine women including passing women, butches, and the luminal category of transmen, who cease to identify as female at all. Among the behaviors she associates with masculinity are dressing like men, desiring women, being

recognized as men, painting on moustaches, growing moustaches, engaging in traditionally male occupations and protecting female partners. Many FTMs and transmen before identifying as transperson have had relationships with lesbian women. Some of these relationships survive the identity transition from butch dyke to transman/FTM. The female partners may or may not shift their identity from lesbian to straight or bisexual or queer woman. In this context Khosla in *Both Sides Now* mentions: "While I was thinking she sees the boy in me, the woman was through a process of questioning her own sexuality and thinking this was some sort of a novel lesbian experience" (Khosla 2006: 21). While the writer thought that the girl was attracted to him because of her male energy (before transition) she was seeking a lesbian experience. Similarly in the autobiography by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* describe her experiences of being a homosexual before the transition and talks about her relationships with men in the autobiography. She writes, "I was a male, then what was it about my body that attracted other men to me? Why was it always men who were turned on by me and never women? Nasir and I became lovers" (Laxmi 2015: 17). Similar experiences are mentioned in Valerio's autobiography *The Testosterone Files* that describes his identity as a butch lesbian earlier. "He even gave his support for my being a lesbian after I told that I would never change" (Valerio 2006: 35-36). Valerio offers interesting accounts in his autobiography about his partners when he identified himself as a lesbian, and still was in a dilemma about his identity. He mentions about his girlfriend Tama:

> She might wish to experience a woman's body to have a genuine, inconvertible lesbian sexual episode. The problem was that the woman's body in question was mine. And I couldn't conceive my body as really being a woman's body. I knew it was, technically, but this fact had no basis in reality for me emotionally (Valerio 2006: 87).

Valerio's desire was to see his body as masculine as shown in super hero movies, and their version of the typical masculine man, "I want to look like superheroes- muscular, svelte, great in tights and a synthetic bodysuit! I spent hours drawing their perfect, well-

muscled forms, contemplating with awe what it would be like to possess their agility speed, fantastic legs and great biceps" (ibid: 90). He also offers an account where he was going through transition phase and was on hormones, and he felt his female body while becoming a man.

> I tough my own chest, weep my fingers up to my nipple…I feel erotic sensation. How ironic, to finally experience pleasurable in a female part of my body, now that I am on testosterone and becoming a man…apparently many transmen had never experienced feeling in their nipples before taking testosterone and now with the hormones, they do (ibid: 215).

It can be inferred that that transmen see their mind and body as the 'self' and the 'other'. Where they identify as a man, but the body in this perspective can be seen as 'other'.

Female inversion and the accompanying masculinity was considered at length by Richard von Krafft-Ebing and then later by Havelock Ellis. In *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), Krafft-Ebing identified four types of lesbians: women who were available to the attention of masculine inverts but not masculine themselves, cross-dressers, fully identified inverts who looked masculine and took a masculine role and degenerative homosexuals who were practically male. Masculinity in this context should not be seen as hegemonic or fixed as it occurs in a continnum with identities and sexualities that are not labeled. Henry Rubin in his study *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men,* aims to correct the misconceptions about transmen. He argues:

> 'Identity' follows from 'embodiment' but that, when it does not, individuals struggle to conform their 'bodies' to their identities so that they become recognizable to themselves and others". Many of his interview subjects felt that they were always 'authentically male' but that they needed technological help such as breast removal surgery and testosterone administration to "restore the link between their bodies and their core identities or true selves" (Rubin 2003: 11-22).

Against theories of Butler that emphasize the discursive constitution of the subject, Rubin argues that 'bodies' are important to gender identity than behavior, labeling or sexual preference. In the essay "Female Masculinity and Phallic Women- Unruly Concepts" by Judith Kegan Gardiner, he mentions the excerpts taken from Rubin's interview subjects, paradoxically his subjects "believe that all men have male bodies but that they are men even though they lack penises and once had female bodies" (Gardiner 2012: 613). So, it could be inferred that more than the 'body', the behavior and mannerisms adds to the identity of a transsexual. 'Bodily practice' is an important axis of difference in this system, with sex/gender performativity rather than anatomy being the salient marker of difference.

2.9 FORMULATING TRANSGENDER EMBODIMENT

Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) presented the ideology of woman which undertakes to deconstruct the social construction of gender and the cultural paradigms that support it. The social construction of gender takes place through the workings of ideology. Louis Althusser in "Ideology and State Apparatuses" defines, "Ideology as that system of beliefs and assumptions – unconscious, unexamined, invisible – which represents 'the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1971: 162). It could be understood that the ideology of gender is inscribed in discourse, in one's ways of talking and writing, and it is produced and reproduced in cultural practice. In this context, Green mentions, after transition:

> I don't care what people think about my reconstructed genitals, or about the fact that I was long ago treated as a girl. I don't care whether people think I am reinforcing gender stereotypes because I am in heterosexual relationship, or they think I am bravely accosting the gender apartheid system because I have broken the barriers, lived on both sides of the gender fence, and overcome my preconceptions about sexuality (Green 2004: 168-167).

Green is of the idea that genitals are the sole basis of one's gender identity, but body transformation helps in producing experiences to establish a social identity. According to Butler, gendered discourses are embodied so that they appear as natural and come to define 'bodies' as 'sexed'. Here, Butler draws from Michel Foucault's theorizations of discourses as historically specific productions of knowledge produced through social forces and the manner in which bodies and feelings do not have an external existence beyond these discursive practices which define them (1995: 19). Sex is understood as the cause and not the effect of gender. Since 'sex' is not the cause of gender, but a discursive effect, there's no gender 'proper' to one's 'sex'. As the feminist sociologist Anne Witz in "Whose Body Matters? Feminist Sociology and the Corporeal Turn in Sociology and Feminism" puts so succinctly, "gender precedes sex" (Witz 2000: 7). Transgender individuals and their bodies are rendered as 'abject' as they violate the 'sex'/ 'gender' binary. Judith Butler's arguments have provided a means to contest the gendered processes which governs the 'bodily' life. Australian feminist philosopher Moira Gatens provides an addition to the critique of sex/gender beyond social constructionist and inclines it to the performative arguments of gender. She conflates the masculine/feminine dichotomy of culture with a sexed body as Butler has done in her works. That is because gender is invested in particular bodily capacities, it has different relations of signification depending on specific 'body'. The social constructionist arguments which Gatens challenges, stems from the assumption that in order to alter one's lived experience one must consciously alter material practices of a culture. This also supposes that one has rational agency over one's actions and that material practices are tenuous and can be easily rearticulated. Gatens critiques the prioritization of such ahistorical accounts of gender and 'body'. She refutes their validity by arguing for the corporeal specificity of the body. 'Bodies' are mapped, coded and embodied historically, materially and culturally in particular locations (Gatens 1997: 7).

Both Butler and Gatens argue that the terms such as 'body' and 'gender' are unstable in their construction and it is in the process of 'becoming', so the feeling of wholeness to one's gendered identity is problematic. Bodies are not reducible to organic processes or

culture of isolation- it's a dynamic of discourse and corporeality which produce the body and its capacities. Biology produces specific ways of 'knowing' and experiencing gender" (ibid: 14). The transsexual body has the capability of articulating creative languages around the body as it can produce varied gender discourses and experiences. Visibility for transgender individuals is important that comes through the changing one's body and Green in this context mentions that corporeality and somatic transition are a medium to establish an identity. He mentions:

> I think it took me about forty years to achieve real presence, the kind that is beyond the self; but only proof of it is in the strength of one's connectedness with others, the kind of connectedness that I could not truly feel until I became a visible man (Green 2004: 169).

The body is a site on which individuals construct and form an identity through social process and surgical construction. Surgical construction is important, but the social achieved status leads to the formation of identity and it is always in the process of becoming. In the context of reconstructing bodies, Jason Cromwell in his essay "Queering the Binaries" mentions:

> Trans people both construct and reconstruct their bodies, identities and sexualities. Through medical interventions body parts are added on (e.g. breast implants and some genitoplastic procedures) and subtracted and relocated/repositioned (vagino reconstructions), chest construction and other genitoplastic procedures. But long before medical interventions may occur most transpeople have constructed and reconstructed their bodies in different ways. For some, the construction is a process of dissociation and disconnection (Cromwell 2005: 518).

Reconstruction does not lead to the formation of identity, but combined effects of body and temporal changes and social processes helps in the construction of an identity. In this reconstruction, re-association with the new identity is where a transgender becomes a

whole person. The forthcoming chapter focuses on gender performativity and the subversion of the roles carried out by hijras and FTM transsexuals in order to establish their identity.

CHAPTER 3

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND THE SUBVERSION OF ROLES

Gender identity is critical to every individual, as it projects one's personal experience of their gender. Gender as perceived by 'others' is called a 'gender role' or a 'social role'. It encompasses a range of behaviors and attitudes that are generally acceptable and appropriate for individuals based on their actual or perceived 'sex' or 'sexuality'. The two concepts are tied together as it includes a basic identity as a man or woman, and the perceptions about individual's level of conformity to the societal norms of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. These aspects are reflected in their sartorial style, mannerisms, body language, and other factors that influence one's presentation of 'self'. For most of the individuals', their gender role along with their gender identity and all symbolic manifestations are congruent. But, transgender individuals do not fit in this binary gender role and here lies a disagreement with the societal rules and their expectations. For Butler, gender roles and gender identity are unrelated and she mentions, "We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, and achievement, "a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of flesh" (Butler 1985: 11). She suggests that femininity should not be reduced down to the female body and its effects. In a similar context, John Beynon in *Masculinities and Culture* mentions, "Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up; rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behavior which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways" (Beynon 2002: 2), here he describes the 'performative' nature of gender. 'Femininity' or 'masculinity' is culturally shaped, and can be both experienced and enacted. The significance of gender performativity for male and female cannot be denied, but 'performativity' is of crucial and critical importance in the lives of transgender individuals as their gender identity fall out of the social 'male' and 'female' role. Linked to the notion of trans identities, cultural critics and anthropologists, Cornwall

and Lindisfarne in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* assert that, "there are male and female versions of masculinity and, equally female and male versions of femininity" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 15). Male 'femininity' and female 'masculinity' are enacted and constructed through symbolic manifestations and performative acts. As a consequence, 'male' and 'female' have no intrinsic biological reality and are better understood as metaphors through the process of 'becoming', by which an identity is constructed. "An essentialist 'male-female' dichotomy cannot account for the ways people are gendered in different places at different times…the idea of being a man can no longer be treated as universal" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 3). It further suggests that there is neither natural, nor necessary connection between men and masculinity, or women and femininity. By presenting gender as cultural and performative, the paradigm that holds that masculinity and femininity are straitjackets into which all biological males and females are automatically fitted, begins to be severely undermined.

In similar lines, critic and theorist Gayle Salmon in "Homoerratics" describes gender from the viewpoint of a trans-identity and explains the nature of gender as:

> Gender is a matter of the relation between inside and out, between self and viewer, between the visible and the invisible. This contrast is ubiquitous in trans-writing, where inside often stands in for a certain immaterial truth of gender, and outside for a false and unwanted fleshly covering (Salmon 2010: 114).

The aspect of gender discussed by Salmon (2010) holds relevance and significance for transgender identities including both hijras and FTM transsexual identities. In such a view, the external bodily modification becomes the sign of internal continuity and persistence. Male femininity and female masculinity in hijras and FTM transsexuals are the social roles that are constructed, enacted, produced and are manifested through performative acts as could be traced from the select hijra and FTM transsexual autobiographies for this study. Not only the bodily modifications, but the representation of 'self' through clothing, body language, gestures and mannerisms associated to the

particular gender, intensifies the effects. Emphasizing the importance of sartorial style, K. Silverman in "Fragmentation of a Fashionable Discourse" mentions:

> Clothes play a key part in our acts of self-presentation, whether we like it or not or recognize it or not. …clothing is necessary condition of subjectivity, that in articulating body, it simultaneously articulates the psyche (Silverman 1986: 147).

Sociologist, Erving Goffman is also of the view that non-verbal presentations like clothing, form a very important part when the concept of body and bodily modifications are taken into consideration. His theoretical notion of 'body idiom' "is the conventionalized form of non-verbal communication which is by far the most important component in public" (Shilling 1993: 82). It is used by Goffman in the sense to refer to, "dress, bearings, movements and position, physical gestures such as waving or saluting, facial decorations and broad emotional expressions" (Goffman 1963b: 33) that forms a social identity. Goffman's approach on bodies suggests that they have dual location, i.e., "Bodies are the property of individuals, yet they are defined as significant and meaningful by society" (Shilling 1993: 82). This in turn leads to his formulations on the approach to body, where "body plays an important role in mediating the relationship between individual's self-identity and social identity" (ibid: 83). Accordingly, bodily modifications and the non-verbal presentations like, sartorial style, body language and comportment are significant in affirming to the desired social and gender identity in question.

3.1 PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDER

In order to affirm to the social and gender identity, Butler's notion of 'performativity' is relevant as it claims that the nature of 'body', 'sex' and 'gender' are 'performative' and thus through repeated acts and recitation of the norm, a gender identity can be established. In building her argument on 'gender performativity' she denies the distinction between sex and gender, and "rejects ontological claims which seize the body as sexed in dichotomous terms" (Butler 1990: 36). Accordingly, gendered discourses are

represented and embodied so that they appear as natural and define bodies as 'sexed'. Gender, is thus a mechanism through which 'sexed bodies' are produced. Butler here draws upon Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* where the theorization of discourses is seen as "the historically specific productions of knowledge that is produced through social forces, and how bodies and feelings/affects do not have an 'outside' existence beyond these discursive practices which define them" (Foucault 1977: 19). The discursive process of 'sex' and 'gender' comes at this relationship in opposite way whereby 'sex' is understood as the cause and not the effect of gender. Since, 'sex' is not the cause of gender, but a discursive effect of gender, there's no gender that is proper to 'sex'. Feminist sociologist, Anne Witz in "Whose Body Matters? Feminist Sociology and the Corporeal Turn in Sociology and Feminism" puts it concisely as "gender precedes sex" (Witz 2000: 7) and suggests the multiple arrays of social roles that can be played out, apart from the conventional male and female gender roles, and thus helps one to locate trans identities as arising from this gendered discourse of 'performativity'.

Criticizing the essentialist notions which restricts the identities to the binary, Butler argues that "gender normativity is a deception constructed by the heterosexual matrix that creates dichotomous categories of male and female" (Butler: 1990: 22). She asserts that the corporeality is portrayed through cultural norms which make bodies comprehensible. She deconstructs the inherent basis of one's gender identity and considers that gender is expressed through repetitive utterances which includes linguistics utterances, acts, habits, postures and gestures. It expresses that gendered identities are in fact "fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (ibid: 136). Repetition and recitation establish some of these utterances as 'proper'. Butler re-asserts that gender is 'performative' to illustrate that body has no gendered fixity, but it is 'a stylized set of repeated acts and expressions' that give meaning to the body. Masculinity and femininity are essentialist formulations formed through binary; male and female, but the possibility and enactment of female masculinity and male femininity makes the concept of gender 'performativity' of relevance to transgender individuals.

Sex, which is anatomical and biological can be constructed, like gender is produced through repeated performative acts. But, Butler does not deny the existence of corporeal identity i.e., 'body'. For her, 'body' from the start is socially constituted. Sex is conventionally taken as a naturally established fact and allocates 'sex' (female or male) based on the genitals of the neonate. This assigned 'sex' becomes the deciding factor of the neonate's gender and sexuality. If the neonate is born as intersex, it is seen that through surgeries either male or female status is accorded to the neonate. Intersex category brings into notice that 'body' is taken as the surface of 'fabrication' and 'tailoring' where 'sex' and 'gender' are tools to carry out 'performative' acts. Butler's concept of 'corporeal signification' sees 'body' as a surface on which acts, gestures, desires and 'performative' attributes are carried out which results in the production of an identity which is close to natural being (Butler 1990: 173). In a similar context, Bristow, a gender critic, suggest that 'body' is a platform which gives gendered connotation to acts, gestures, desires and 'performative' attributes. It is based on the "widespread belief that there is indeed a core gender identity which actually depends on performative acts that give the illusion of naturalness" (Bristow 1997: 214).

Butler in the process of formulating the discourses on performativity emphasizes on the distinction between 'performance' and 'performativity' arguing that, "performance presupposes an existing subject, performativity contests the notion of the subject" (Butler 1990: 33). Linked with the notion, is the idea of 'linguistic performativity' where Sarah Salih in "On Butler and Performativity" explains linguistic performativity as connected to gender. She mentions, "Gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language. If you like, it is not that an identity "does" discourse or language, but the other way around—language and discourse "do" gender" (Salih 2006: 56).

> There is no "I" outside language since identity is a signifying practice, and culturally intelligible subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses that conceal their workings (Butler 1990: 145).

It is in this sense that gender identity is 'performative'. The process of identity formation that hijras and FTM transsexuals undergo is seen as 'performative' identity which is a signifying practice and the subjects are produced through enactment of their collective performative acts. There are various performative acts that include non-verbal signifiers that lead to the production of gender in transgender individuals as traced from the autobiographies. From the autobiographical accounts of hijras, the performative acts that are traced includes multiple practices such as 'gender passing', enhancing femininity through sartorial style as the visible signifier, through the performance of women's tasks, performing the female identity through language, i.e., the use of female pronouns and names, erasing the apparent masculine signifiers, dance, street plays, and theatre to stay close to their intrinsic feminine self, while working on the visible signifiers of femininity. The perceptible femininity is enacted through sari, hair, and body language that are considered as an important signifier for a feminine identity. The practice of hand-clapping as linked to hijra community is seen as an act which is essentially related to them, and yet creates a confusion regarding the femininity that they 'mimic' or 'enact'. The act of emasculation or *nirvan* is a hijra practice followed by the hijra clan or *gharanas*, which is a ritualistic practice and is considered as an important aspect of 'hijra identity'. In following the gendered aspects as related to woman, hijra identity could be seen as an approximation to the female identity as understood from the autobiographies. Unlike hijras which is a cultural identity, FTM transsexuals undergo a series of surgical procedures in order to construct their identity. The practices adopted by FTMs are done under medical guidance as understood from the select autobiographies. In the case of hijras, the medical aspect is not emphasized, but the cultural and rituals associated to the identity are of crucial importance. The performative attributes in the context of FTMs as understood from the autobiographies include, gender passing, anxiety of being in a wrong body, trajectories of transsexuality, erasing femininity through surgeries and enhancing masculinity through multiple practices including multiple chest surgeries, stuffing the crotch, use of hormones, using *kajal* to draw beard, using bandages to tighten the chest before surgery, and affirmation from the cisgenders in a social setting. From Jamison

Green's *Becoming a Visible Man* (2004), to Max Wolf Valerio's *The Testosterone Files* (2006), to Dhillon Khosla's *Both Sides Now* (2006), and Matt Kailey's *Just Add Hormones* (2004), transition for FTM transsexuals has been described as a process of transforming the body so that its visible signifiers of gender come into accord with the internal invisible sense of gender. But, masculinity in a female body is carried out or enacted not only through surgeries and hormones but also through a blend between 'performativity', 'representation' and 'transition' in the context of female-to-maletranssexuals. It is a process of 'becoming' a man and the constant process to establish a male identity through the performative attributes. The FTM autobiographies are taken to explore the question of FTM transsexual representation by positioning assumptions of masculinity within dimensions of 'performativity' and 'body'.

3.2 GENDER 'PASSING' AND VISIBILITY

Jamison Green, in his autobiography, emphasises on the difficulties in transition which includes surgical transition and establishing a social identity of a man. This can be further related to the aspect of gender passing, as it is correlated. He mentions the need and importance of gender 'passing' as a 'female for a male' and gender 'passing' as a 'male' for a female'. Green in "Look! No, Don't! The Visibility Dilemma for Transsexual Men," mentions on the significance of visibility and passing among transmen:

> Some of us have chosen to make ourselves visible as FTMs-men who were born with female bodies, not 'women who became men'- because we have realized the isolation individual men like ourselves experience can lead to poor self-esteem and ill-informed choices with respect to treatment in medical, legal and social arenas (Green 1999: 118).

The aspect of visibility and gender passing as a 'man' are important aspects that influence their lives while going through transition and performative construction of a male social role. The concept of 'passing' in its original usage as mentioned by Lynne Friedli in "Passing Woman" describes "passing" in the context of African-Americans who passed

as whites (Friedli 1987: 251). Taken from this formulation by Freidli, gays and lesbians may opt to pass as straight, but within transgender discourses, gender 'passing' means blending in and becoming unnoticeable and unremarkable as either a man or as a woman. Gender passing is the notion in which an individual dresses in the clothing of the opposite dress "for the purpose of convincing an 'unknowing audience' that one actually is a member of that sex" (Herrman 1991: 179). But, for transgender individuals, it is not merely through the clothing and dressing, but it is an attempt to come in to accord with the invisible identity that they relate to. The fear of being referred in female pronouns were scarring for Khosla during his transition from female-to-maleidentity. Khosla gave a lot of thought to the process of gender passing and in many instances he was seen contemplating about his looks. "He was calling me 'he' because he had read the memo, not because I looked like it" (Khosla 2006: 64). Gender theorist, Robert Stoller in "Passing and Continuum of Gender Identity" mentions that "passing is problematic for transpeople and is related to the problems of identity formation" (Stoller 1965: 191). Similarly, in *Society and Identity: Toward a Sociological Psychology* Weigert et al., mentions, "the predicament of the transsexual, specially the preoperative one, provides a rich example of how an individual engages in artful impression management to present a problematic gender identity as beyond doubt and within a totally taken-for-granted world of social action" (Weigert et al. 1986: 75). Gender passing within this discourse is only problematic when artful impression management is not successful and the person is read (e.g., as a man in a dress or as a woman in a man's suit).

Green is constantly critiquing the gender roles, and questions the implicit connotations linked with the category 'man' and dismisses it. He mentions:

> What makes a man a man? His penis? His beard? His receding hairline? His lack of breasts? His sense of himself as a man? Some men have no beard, some have no penis, some never lose their hair, some have breasts; all have a sense of themselves as men. Transsexual men are also men. Transsexual men are men who have lived in female bodies. Transsexual men may appear feminine, androgynous

or masculine. Any man may appear feminine, androgynous or masculine (Green 2004: 186-187).

Green makes a very important point by describing the very nature of gender roles and gender identity and confirms that the concept of gender passing is crucial for both transsexuals and cisgenders. "Appearance has nearly everything to do with how we perceive gender and the kinds of attributes we assign to people upon first meeting them" (ibid: 190). He mentions:

> The crux of the matter of gender for anyone is their own visibility and sufficient external confirmation of their gender identity; thus if a person is comfortable with her or his gender-body congruity or incongruity and their gender identity is confirmed by people around them whom they value, they will feel seen and validated by others (ibid: 187).

Green also describes the importance of kinesthetics as an important part of one's presentation of 'self' in a social setting:

> I learned that there is something about gender-not sex or sexuality-that transcends clothing, hairstyles, body shapes, voices and even the conscious awareness that a body has particular sex. There is something else going on, something more deeply embedded in the gestalt of expression, the body language, that a person uses, that expresses something both from the surface and from deeper within (ibid: 189).

It could be understood that one's presentation of the self also carriers an essential role is establishing an identity for cisgenders and transgender individuals that includes kinesthetic and body movements. Khosla's autobiographical account greatly focused on his struggles of gender passing as a man, looking 'manly' enough, and the inexplicable pain he feels when referred with feminine pronouns. He mentions, "I don't think I could ever fully describe the pain and anguish of hearing "she" and "ma'am" and "miss" (Khosla 2006: 54). Khosla feels a sense of anguish when he was referred with female pronouns like ma'am in restaurants or in public places. "Ma'am, I can take you over here.

She repeated 'Ma'am' again, and I felt an overwhelming surge of rage followed by an immediate sense of inner contraction-like someone had stuck a pin in a balloon and my identity was nothing but the hot air outside" (ibid: 102). He describes an incident after his mastectomy, when he was excited that he finally looks like a man but after being referred to as "ma'am" (ibid: 56) in a restaurant, he mentions, "it hit me like a sucker punch-like everything I had just gone through had been ripped out from under me in one fell swoop" (Khosla 2006: 56). He described his anguish and failing to pass as a man, "How am I supposed to have people call me 'he' at work when I still look the same?" (ibid: 57). Kailey in his autobiography also mentioned the importance of gender passing and mentions:

> Passing plays an important role in the initial phases of transition. It's often how a transsexual person measure his or her progress on hormones…my primary source of feedback was how often I was "sirred" as opposed to "ma'amed"…Passing is actually as necessary concept on the first stages of a transition and probably shouldn't be ignored…the milestone "firsts" are exciting and important- the first "sir," the first time you're directed to the men's room instead of the women's the first time you flash your new driver's license at a club… as you move through the stages, the "sirs" become commonplace and the once-in-a- while "ma'am" hits you in the face like a splash of ice water (Kailey 2005: 31-32).

In one of the instances, to gender pass as 'man', Khosla used his old *kajal* to draw moustache and beard on his face.

> I had asked my therapist whether she knew specifically how hormones changed the face. Did the face change its shape or was it just the facial hair that made one look male. She answered that she thought it was just the facial hair and then I could do specific things to make it easier to "pass" as a male, such as cutting my hair even shorter and removing my one earring" (Khosla 2006: 36).

The problems of gender passing is faced by hijras too as evident in their autobiographies. Hijras also feel great pride and happiness in gender passing as woman; it is a positive and affirmative signal for them. "There is some pleasure associated with passing on as a woman" (Reddy 2006: 123). For instance, Revathi mentions; "I wore my sister's wedding sari and her jewels. People walking on the road looked at us in astonishment. Some women came up to my mother and said, 'We see you have two daughters now'" (ibid: 124). It is a pride for hijras to get a confirmation from cisgenders when hijras are dressed as female. Moreover, hijras believe that their feminine name adds to their femininity and they are advised not to reveal their masculine name to anyone. As seen in the autobiography, Vidya was asked not to tell her male name to *kothis* as "they will tease you with your man's name if you do" (Vidya 2007: 67). In this context, the concept of gender passing is applicable to transgender individuals in general even with the change in the culture or region. The experiences of transgender individuals are subjective in nature but, gender passing as a woman or man establishes a social identity and social role. Thus, it could be inferred that the very nature of citing, reiterating, reenacting a performative act establishes a gender identity.

3.3 ANXIETY OF BEING IN A 'WRONG BODY'

Another important dimension to FTM transsexuality is the notion of 'wrong body' and 'anxiety of being in a wrong body'. Critic Talia Bettcher's (2014) idea of 'wrong body' in transsexuality involves a misalignment between gender identity and the sexed body. The phrase 'wrong body' describes the feeling that one's body is not a part of one's 'self'. The insider within the body does not recognize the outside of the body as belonging. The 'wrong body' is envisioned as a state in which 'body' and 'gender identity' do not match, hence "a disparity between body (materiality) and self (subjectivity) is embodied, entertaining dichotomous disjunctions such as the body and its expression, the body and its perception, the body and surrounding gender norms, and sex and gender, which implicitly places sex with (material) genitalia and gender with its (social) expression" (Engdahl 2014: 268). Khosla's autobiography repeatedly mentions

the anxiety of being trapped in a female body, and his continuing questions to the surgeons before any surgery describes his incessant need to affirm the social identity as a 'man'. In order to erase the vestiges of his femininity, Khosla underwent mastectomy twice to get an absolutely flat chest. He mentions, "There was a slight throbbing in my chest and I went to touch the bandages to make sure it was all flat" (Khosla 2006: 48). He would question, "How long it would take for the changes to holed- for me to look like a man" (ibid: 60), "how much more surgery do I need to feel complete"? (ibid: 61). Erasing femininity through chest surgery is the primary step in surgical transition as breasts are the visible signifiers of a female identity. Kailey's account mentions, "The ma'ams virtually disappeared after the chest surgery, even though my face was still same for quite a while" (Kailey 2005: 54). The chapter in his autobiography "Flat Busted" talks about his experiences of chest surgery and taking off his t-shirt after the surgery. He also mentions how breasts are considered as sexual signifiers and after surgery he mentions, "My chest was asexual" (ibid: 57).

> The surgery involved a double mastectomy with some minor sculpting, smaller nipples that resulted from the surgeon taking one nipple and making it into two, and pink, angry scars that ran across my torso just above my diaphragm. The first time I put on a tight t-shirt and walked out of my house, it was all worth it (ibid: 55).

Valerio in his autobiography, accounts similar instances where he experienced irritation and anxiety while wearing feminine dresses while being with girls. He mentions, "on Sundays I have to wear a white dress to go to church, as well as little white anklets, Mary Janes, and, to top it off, a lace doily on my head! But I have to wear this weird dress, and I run to the car, shaking with tears and humiliation" (Valerio 2006: 41-42). It could be inferred that there is a significance of corporeality and tailoring body in producing the experience of particular gender and complicates the relationship between social bodies and performativity.

One of the paradoxes of transsexual discourse is the notion of having a 'wrong body'. Despite Money's claim that the concept of being trapped in the wrong body was "adopted by transsexuals as their own" (Money 1990: xiv), the idea has been imposed upon transgender individuals by those who control access to medical technologies and have controlled discourses about transgender individuals. Jason Cromwell in *Transmen and FTMs* mentions from the excerpts of a personal communication with a transsexual where he says, "When a man is a man in every way (except) the lower part of the body, he is trapped, and I mean trapped, in a woman's body" (Cromwell 1999: 104). For many, once the wrong body has been surgically altered, they no longer consider themselves to be a transsexual. Their wrong body, now corrected becomes a 'gendered body' of woman or man. Such individuals are missing on the right to declare a gender, thus overruling and subverting society's biological designation of 'sex'. Kailey presents positive experiences in his autobiography regarding his surgical transition. Valerio's accounts also present positive experiences after transition, where he mentions, "if I am out with a woman friend for dinner, I get attention of the waiter or bartender more easily than she does. They look at me for direction and act as though they expect me to pay" (Kailey 2005: 187). He describes it as an authority or the ability to move and change situations in the world after his transition and the change in the gender roles. It could be understood that the very nature of one's gender lies in 'performing' and thus leads to identity formation. *In Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* (2016) by Laxmi, she mentions an instance where she refers herself as "*Main abhi aati hu*" (I am coming) (Laxmi 2016: 2). *Aati hu* and *aata hu* are gender specific connotations in Hindi, where former refers to female and latter to male in English language. Being a boy in the initial stages of her life, she was feminine and through language she tried to establish a female identity as she associated herself with a feminine gender role. Through the use of language, she tried to assert an identity. It could be inferred that gendered identities are constructed in the process of performing and identity is an act in the same way as performative language is an act.

3.4 TRANSITION OF 'BODY' AND THE 'SELF'

For Green, Valerio, and Khosla, the incongruity between masculinity and the female body evolved in a yearning to undergo sex reassignment surgery. For Green, it was due to the romantic frustrations, peer issues and being cited as a confused woman resulted in the bodily change to find his 'masculine self' through the body. Transition is seen as an extension of performativity by Green. "It is an oscillation of experiences: internal 'fulfilment' as opposed to conforming to rigid gender standards or binaries" (Green 2004: 89-90). Green conceptualises transition as a case of self- authorship and mentions:

> There is also the inevitable fascination with our physical body as it changes right before our eyes into something to which we finally connected and of which we want to be proud. We may also share a sense of freedom in wearing clothing of choice, the ability to experience psychologically satisfying sexual interaction for this first time, being recognised at last as a member of the gender category in which we feel most comfortable, and the sense of doing something for ourselves rather than always trying to please others. (ibid: 207).

Transition is an important aspect of identity formation and body dysphoria could be seen as omnipresent in select FTM transsexual autobiographies. There are instances in the autobiographies where the narrators experience dissociation from particular female aspects of their bodies. In his autobiography, Khosla (2006) pejoratively equates fatness with femaleness on several occasions and discusses his own mission to build lean muscle on his chest. He gets irritated when he had bandages and was tubed after his surgery and he gets his periods. He states that:

> It was not just physically uncomfortable-weakly stumbling to the bathroom to insert a tampon with this contraption of bandages and tubes dangling from my chest. It was psychologically jarring. Here I was in most tentative stage of developing my male body only to be shocked back into reality of my female one (Khosla 2006: 51).

For Valerio, "the tits are the first thing I have to take care of. Can't go around with those things hanging out, bouncing all over the place like wild rubber balls. They will definitely put a dent in my male image" (Valerio 2006: 128). It is important to note that these autobiographies clearly reveal the agonizing disjuncture that transmen reported experiencing between their physical bodies and their sex and/or gender identifications. Kailey's arguments in his autobiography are more about acceptance of the transmen body and less about being trapped in the female body where he disregards the ideal male body as shown in magazines which renders trans body invisible. He questions:

> The slender, muscular, well-defined, and eternally young physique is now de rigueur for men… the media, driven by advertising revenues, decide on the ideal, creating an image that is just our grasp…with all emphasis on the perfect body, where does this leave transmen? How do our bodies fit? (Kailey 2005: 69-70).

According to Green, the body is a product of binary classification and categories, and he argues that transsexual bodies (pre or post transition) do not conform to normative male or female standards. Rather, he argues that, transition becomes a medium and a process by which transsexuals are able to realise a psychological and bodily comfort rather than a conscious attempt to reinforce binaries of sex/gender. Green emphasises that this process of transformation opens windows along the rigid boundaries of gender. Butler's response to sex reassignment surgery implies that if bodily markers 'indicate' sex, then 'sex' is different to the means through which it is articulated (Butler 1990: 90). To conceive of oneself as either a woman with a penis or a man with a vagina is considered pathological as Sandy Stone mentions in "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" that "under the binary phallocratic founding myth by which Western bodies and subjects are authorized, only one body per gendered subject is 'right' (Stone 2006: 231). According to the socially imposed order, one can only be one or the other, not both and certainly not neither, regardless of choice. Yet, the order does not present individuals from challenging, and thus subverting it.

Another important finding in FTM autobiographies are the intimate relations with their female partners, which are part of exploring their sexuality. Valerio discovered his sexuality and identity during his intimate encounters with female partners. He mentions, "I want to be with a partner who will ignore my female parts. I've come to the realization that I have to be seen as male with a woman in bed in order to be aroused" (Valerio 2006: 69). He discovered much later that, "my male identity was deep, rooted in my body. That finally, like all transsexuals, the body is the issue and not the role" (ibid: 101). Similarly Green also mentions:

> We met early enough in my transition that there were liminal moments where she thought she could still see the "woman" in me, and this in-between-ness, the quality of "morphing" that she experienced as she searched my face for something feminine-while simultaneously feeling my masculine energy-was new to her (2004: 154).

Intimate relationships in the context of Green and Valerio helped them understand the aspects of their sexuality which helped them establish their identity as a 'man'. Body dysphoria could be seen as experienced by Valerio as well, when he finds the incongruity between his gender role and gender identity. The chapter in his autobiography "Ephiphanies" states:

> I'm actually a man looking from the eyes of a woman, looking out of the body of a woman, which I see in front of me. The moving backdrop of my life, a feeling of being male-not so much a man *in* a woman's body as a man *with* a woman's body. When I was a child, I could feel my boy self-peering out of my eyes, knowing that other people were seeing a little girl (2006: 106).

In the context of surgeries to affirm gender identity, Money and Brennan in "Sexual Dimorphism in the Psychology of Female Transsexuals" (1968) mention that, in case of FTMs, "I have never met a FTM or transman who did not want chest surgery. Breasts are the primary sign of woman and by implication femininity, to reject them acknowledges

the fact" (1968: 496). Valerio mentions, "I wear layers. I am lucky since I don't have huge breasts. I only have to wear a couple of pieces of clothing to disguise the bulging contour. A T-shirt and a heavier shirt over it. I can get away with only a t-shirt too since the binder makes me flat, but then I am paranoid about my binding showing" (2006: 218). Similarly, Khosla in his autobiography mentions, "I told him about my prior breast reduction and showed him T-shaped scars. I wanted absolutely flat pecs, and I didn't want to be disappointed a second time (Khosla 2006: 46). He has undergone the chest surgery twice to remove the vestiges of femininity. After his second surgery when he was draped in bandages in hospital he asked Selena if his bandages truly looked flat. "She lifted the blanket and said yes, they definitely looked flat" (ibid: 48). The transsexual discourses suggest that FTMs are obsessed with chest surgery and other surgeries to remove female organs. "There are four primary techniques used in removal of the female breast: keyhole, drawstring, pie wedge and double incision" (Green 2004: 103). Valerio's autobiography also mentions the anxiety that transmen go through without the chest surgery.

> Taking off breasts will be like unfastening a couple of deflated balloons. I want that contour tight and masculine. I fantasize about finally being able to work out in a gym without worrying about the binding. Being able to see my pecs, instead of having them disappear under my flesh. Being seen as a man, feeling manly in my body without these barriers. I can't wait. I can't wait, but I have to" (Valerio 2006: 220).

Similarly, for Green, gender is presented as a "private matter that we share with others…a language" with different 'dialects' (Green 2004: 191-2). His experiences as an adult highlights that he longs for a gender 'comfort' which he translated into a quest for 'visible maleness'. Green mentions:

> Gender is a private matter that we share with others; and when we share it, it becomes a social construction, thus it requires, like a language, a 'speaker' and 'listener'. It is between the two of these actors that gender is defined, negotiated,

corroborated, or challenged. But to say that without this interaction there is no need for gender is like saying that if a tree fell in the forest and no ear is there to hear the sound, then there was no sound, or perhaps no tree actually fell (ibid: 191).

Green used the analogy of the 'tree' to suggest that gender has an ontological status outside discourse and gender links this to bodily affect. This notion of ontological status is central to the process of gender intervention and performative aspects. It is also noted that, sex change operation was both satisfying and dreadful and fear and ambiguity are also seen as two elements in the process of sex change. He mentions:

I've undergone a bilateral mastectomy via double incision, a hysterectomy and oophorectomy via abdominal incision, and a metoidioplasty without urethral excision. None of these procedures was a walk in the park; I was apprehensive going into each of them, though in different ways…I had no idea how the results would actually look" (ibid: 114).

Green's surgical transformation was a quest to be visible through his body and through a male body he would be able to communicate his masculinity which was earlier repressed by the female body.

I began to struggle consciously with what I called a lie in my existence: if people perceived me as male, I had to worry about whether they might find out that I had a female body, and then would feel betrayed or deceived and entitled to punish me for it. But, if people perceived me as female and treated me the way they treated women in general (even if it was polite, respectful or deferential, I felt invisible, as if I didn't exist). It was hard enough living with this myself and with my partner, but to inflict this on children, to ask them to carry the burden of the dichotomy that was my physical being, was asking too much (ibid: 21).

Green, Khosla and Valerio in their autobiographies described that they identified themselves as lesbian for a long time before the transition. Kailey identified himself as a

man, after living for forty two years as a heterosexual female. He mentions in his autobiography the kind of questions he was asked regarding his sexual orientation when he announced his transition, he mentions:

> "So you like women now?" one of my female friends asked, "No," I said. "Why should I"? She seemed relieved but still suspicious. "Well you're straight, aren't you"? I can't speak for the multitudes, but I can tell you that my primary sexual orientation is, and always have been men… but with the limited sexualities that our culture defines, as a female attracted to men, I was straight. As a male lusting after the same guys, I'm gay (Kailey 2005: 87).

Kailey mentions his constant problems with the labels associated with the bodies and sexualities and always finds it difficult to limit himself in a label. "I call myself "gay," it's primarily for the benefit for people who feel the need for a one-word definition of my sexuality" (ibid: 103). Green also mentions his relationships with his lesbian partners, Khosla and Valerio to a great extent were engaged with the lesbian feminist community too. Khosla mentions, "…and in between my music and the law, I dated women, some of them within the lesbian community, and some of them not" (Khosla 2006: 4), thereby describing the exploration of his lesbian self which he thought was his identity. But, later when he underwent transition, he found himself more of a man than a woman. Kailey identified himself as a gay transman, as he is attracted to men, and his sexual orientation remains the same as when he was a female. Kailey's account offers the interesting ground for the sexual relationships in transmen. He mentions, "One of the most confusing questions that partners seems to have is "what does that make me?" Because we're so attached to our labels of sexual orientation, a partner wants to know how the transition will affect his or her label as a heterosexual or a homosexual person" (ibid: 106). Green in his autobiographical account also moves through a series of similar experiences with gender dissonance. He moves from discussions about sexual relationships with women and intimacy with other transmen. Cultural tolerance for a wide variety of male looks and behaviors is also a factor in establishing a gender identity for many transitional men.

3.5 TRANSSEXUAL TRAJECTORIES

The process of becoming an FTM does not end with the childhood identification of a male 'self'. Valerio, in his autobiography, also recounts the instances, where he was treated as a boy, "I'm not treated like a typical little girl. In many respects, my courage, independence and physical vigour are encouraged. Perhaps, my parents perceive my masculine nature, my intrepid and adventurous spirit" (Valerio 2006: 41). As seen in this context, bodies are made to go through the gendering discourses, but bodies perform and enact according to their sexuality. Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* asserts that masculinity should be welcomed from girls too, if they identify and choose to express themselves as masculine. Halberstam mentions, "We might do well to work on other formulations of gender and body, right body, and right gender to provide children…queer cross-identifying children, with futures and bodies that seem habitable" (1998: 171). It could be understood that it is not the feeling of a male identity that compels transmen to transition to visible manhood, but the inability to fight society's non-acceptance of female masculinity or "bodies that fail to integrate" (ibid: 147). Judith Halberstam (1998) perceived that:

> …sexual and gender identities involve some degree of movement (not free-flowing but very scripted) between bodies, desires, transgressions, and conformities; we do not necessarily shuttle back and forth between sexual roles and practices at will, but we do tend to adjust, accommodate, change, reverse, slide and move in gender between moods and modes of desire (ibid).

FTMs may feel like boys from the start, but still they need to formulate a specifically transsexual identity. Henry Rubin in *Self Made Man* terms, the process of consolidating a transsexual identity as a "transsexual trajectory" (Rubin 2008: 114). The concept of 'trajectory' is borrowed from sociologist Barbara Ponse, *Identities in the Lesbian World: The Social Construction of Self* (1978), who develops Erving Goffman's notion of 'career' in *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Goffman elaborates:

The term is used in a broadened sense to refer to any social strand of any person's course through life… [t]he regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person's self and in his framework of imagery of judging himself and others (1959: 127-28).

In Ponse's schema, a "trajectory is a non-sequential route to an identity with five stops": (1) experiencing a subjective feeling of difference, (2) finding the appropriate category and assigning the feeling of difference a meaning in relationship to that category, (3) accepting the category as descriptive of one's experience, (4) seeking a community, and (5) engaging in relationships. This trajectory holds true for FTMs and for hijras as well. Valerio experienced that subjective feeling of difference from the very beginning and was even referred as a "real tomboy" (Valerio 2006: 42). He then identified himself as a lesbian linked to the lesbian community for a very short period of time. Later, he discovered his male 'self' and identified himself as a transman. He describes this instances from childhood and thus, "I have a very difficult time relating to girls. I'm tormented and teased by a group of girls because I'm unable to play house to their expectations. They try to get me to play their girl games, sweeping floors and wearing fake curlers" (ibid: 43). Valerio's autobiography offers very interesting accounts which portrays the importance of performativity in the life of FTMs. Before getting a mastectomy surgery, he was suggested by fellow FTM transsexual to use a wide stretch of elastic to his chest to flatten his chest. He mentions, "A method to reel my breasts in, tie them down, and flatten my chest with least amount of discomfort" (ibid: 128). "I've been binding myself flat for six months now" (ibid: 132). Along with hormones and surgeries, these are practices used by the FTMs to establish an identity that is essentially masculine. David W. Krueger in "Diagnosis and Management of Gender Dysphoria" mentions that "absence of a penis is loathsome" for an FTM (Krueger 1983: 77) and the "ultimate goal is the attainment of a functional penis" be it an artificial penis (Pauly 1974: 521). In *Both Sides Now,* Khosla mentions, "While I had often dreamed of having a penis, I had never given any thought to having testicles. After finally getting rid of my sagging, fleshy breasts, the last thing I had on my mind was adding another set of

pendulous sacs of skin" (2006: 70). He orders for himself a prosthetic phallus so as to feel a complete man. Valerio mentions, "I've been stuffing my briefs with a sock. It works. I safety-pin a large, rolled up athletic tube sock to the inside of my underwear each morning. Position it so that the bulge looks realistic" (Valerio 2006: 137). Valerio's chapter "Patriarchal Underwear Cannibals" describes the dilemma of an FTM in choosing underwear to wear. He mentions the instances of various transmen, who have always worn men's underwear from the beginning. Valerio and other transmen were too embarrassed to go and buy a pair of boxer or briefs and further described the subjective experience that transmen went through pre-transition. The important point to note here is that masculinities and maleness are embodied and enacted in distinct and varied ways on the female-to-maletranssexual body. For example, before surgery, Green was scared and anxious about attending the men's group meetings for the fear that "female bodiedness" would be uncovered (Green 2004: 35-8). His ways of dressing, acting and speaking (in a low pitched tone) typified the ways in which his masculinity produced the truth of his 'maleness'.

3.6 PERFORMING MALENESS

Gender is repetition of a norm that creates different possibilities. As gender is the effect of institutions and discourse, sometimes gender can be effected in ways that subvert the norm, exposing its unnatural and discursively constructed character. Green uses a computer analogy to describe the dissonance between gender identity and body in transgender individuals. He uses the metaphor where he mentions sex as the hardware and gender as the software. He mentions his experience with his identity (pre transition) as an "operational confusion" or dissonance between the physical body and established gender identity (Green 2004: 7). To further elaborate on this complexity, he distinguishes between masculinity and maleness where masculinity is perceived as a way of acting or performative, and maleness explores the social construct which is signified by physical appearance. Thus, there is a sense of "incompleteness" which Green experiences through his female body (Green 2004: 31). Being a man "is gestalt, a wholeness of mind and

body" (ibid: 189). Green notes that his masculinity and maleness did not depend upon the possession of a biological male body. Rather, his masculinity was natural. Drawing on the tenets of Lou Sullivan's *FTM Newsletter*, Green advocates that the "body does not prescribe a fixed or 'correct' form of masculinity" (ibid: 28-9). He experiences that the expressions of masculinity exist irrespective of the body that enacts it. Green recognized the different experiences of this form of masculinity when he was female as opposed to being male bodied. By identifying that masculinity is the defining quality of 'manhood', he explains that being male bodied allowed him to enter public spaces without the normalizing gaze which queried his androgyny, unlike the time when he was female bodied (ibid: 23). After Green's transition, he seems to reverse his earlier position, as he notes the ways in which the body itself marks 'maleness'. He mentions:

> I became acutely aware of women's fear of men in general, something that I had never understood until it was directed at me as a man when I inadvertently surprised a woman by running up behind her as we were both entering a subway station. I didn't mean to startle her, and I did apologize, but the fear in her eyes when she looked at me, apparently thinking I was about to accost her, was a painful thing for us both. (ibid: 36)

Green reflects upon the startled look she gave him, and then links the gaze to the discourse of sexual violence. "The male body rather than masculinity is a weapon which perpetrates such violence" (ibid: 188). Green's experiences emphasize Butler's position on performative gender that obscure in historicizing the lived body. Even if one accepts that gender is an axis to approach critical analysis of bodily differences, it is problematic to assert that it is solely constituted in social terms. In Green's case, his masculine 'self' developed through a complex negotiation of performativity and bodily functioning. By understanding the anxieties surrounding the men's group and from Green's interactions, it can be observed that gender is 'compelled' by the way one live with one's body and its histories.

Performativity is not about the actual gestures or acts, but about the discursive process that presents individuals as male or female, masculine and feminine. Performativity in this context means, the multiple practices and processes carried out by FTM transsexuals and hijras in order to make sense with their body and identity. In this sense, masculinity and femininity are no longer presented as a fixed and essentialist construct for men or women who possess particular physiologies and corporeality.

3.7 ENACTMENT OF GENDER IN HIJRAS

Hijra identity as understood from the hijra autobiographies are crafted by performative aspects that include multiple practices that are related to femininity. Hijras not only produce gender identity but also question the identity of women. Their practices of hand clapping and *nirvan* fall outside the spectrum of a traditional female identity. *Nirvan* roughly translated as an emasculation operation is an important marker of hijra identity. It is said that, emasculation or nirvana authenticates the identity of hijras and gives them the power to confer blessings. It is only after *nirvan* or rebirth, one becomes a real hijra. Kalra and Shah explains *nirvana* as, "the emasculation operation (a secreative custom signifying the journey between genders) a journey that started but not yet ended as a hijra can never be a complete women" (Kalra and Shah 2013: 177-178). In addition to authenticating their identity, the ethnographic accounts of Gayatri Reddy mentions, "the *nirvan* operation is also believed to make a hijra more beautiful, more feminine- "just like women" (2006: 121). Reddy states, one becomes resolutely and irrevocably an *asli izzatwala* hijra (authentic hijra with honor) following this operation (ibid: 260). Revathi also mentions an incident after her nirvan, "when I went to the shops, shopkeepers and others who knew me observed, "*kya chikni ho gyi?* (You've become attractive?) (Revathi 2010: 92). Reddy's (2006) informants from her ethnographic study clarifies that even an impotent hijra is expected to undergo *nirvan* operation as it is considered as an ultimate proof of their authenticity. In one of the articles, "To Be Some Other Name: The Naming Game that Hijras Play" (2015) Saria Vaibhav distinguishes them as *asli* (authentic) and *nakli* (spurious) hijras on the basis of emasculation operation. Their life is structured

around *nirvan* which is the only means to authenticate their identity and it is their first step to become women. Vidya in her autobiography mentions about the longings that hijras have for *nirvan*:

> Nirvaana! How long I had waited for it! What humiliation I had suffered! Obsessed with it, I had mortgaged my pride, my honor- even begged on the streets to achieve that end. How could I sleep now, with my dream about to be fulfilled tomorrow? (Vidya 2007: 11).

The first chapter in Vidya's autobiography is "Nirvana," it clearly explains the importance of *nirvan* in her life, to form an identity. Emasculation could be seen as a performative act in the process of achieving the desired identity. Gayatri Reddy in her ethnographic study *With Respect to Sex* mentions hijras as the "phenotypic men" (Reddy 2006: 2) who wear female clothing and renounce sexual desire, and practice by undergoing a sacrificial emasculation, i.e., an excision of penis and testicles. The sacrificial emasculation has traditional ritual role dedicated to goddess Bedhraj Mata. The sacrificial emasculation is a part of hijra culture and belief also referred to as *nirvan.* It is only after emasculation that one gains an identity of a hijra in a hijra community and authenticates hijra asexuality. It could be seen as one of the performative act that is undertaken by hijras to construct and tailor their desired gendered identity. In addition to authenticating their identity, *nirvan* (emasculation) operation is believed to make a hijra more beautiful and more feminine. The act of *nirvan* has traditional, ritual and cultural connotations within the hijra community. The traditional attire associated with women in India is sari and salwar-suit. Though there are communities in India that follow other clothing styles according to their culture, sari is taken as a primary marker of feminine sartorial style in India. This process of becoming woman is an amalgamation of various other performative acts and multiple practices that are played out in order to establish a gender identity and social gender role.

Kulick in *Travesti* (1998) also mentions the use of 'sunday monday *golis*' among other hormonal substances to erase the signs of masculinity and enhance femininity of hijras.

Stephen Murray in "Gender-Mixing Roles, Gender-Crossing Roles, and the Sexuality of Transgendered Roles" mentions, "Travestis do not identify as women. Although, they dress in the style of female prostitutes, take female names, ingest hormones, and inject up to twenty liters of industrial silicone to enhance their breasts and buttocks" (Murray 2002: 302). Hijras use *darsan* as the term for the act of plucking out one's beard. Reddy explains this act of *darsan*, "a performative act of desirous sight/agency indexes the importance of praxis as well as the significance of the desire to see and be seen in the everyday world as non-masculine" (Reddy 2006: 126). She also emphasizes on the hijra usage of bleach and 'operation' to remove facial hair. Hijras were inclined to use whatever methods worked in terms of their beautification (ibid: 127). Laxmi in her autobiography mentions, her intentional acts to look female; wearing lipstick, growing fingernails long and wearing small rings, nose rings and getting her hair color golden (Laxmi 2015: 31). The realization of the hijra identity by the way of attraction and desire towards feminine mannerisms, and certain female gendered practice is the recurring theme as seen in the autobiographical accounts. In addition to being called as a "female thing" (Revathi 2010: 4), these Indian autobiographical accounts deal with performative attributes and inclination towards their construction as a hijra. Inclination to feminine acts are performative and could be seen when Revathi mentions her inclination towards household chores that are considered as essentially feminine. "I loved to sweep the front yard clean and draw the kollam every morning. I even helped my mother in the kitchen, sweeping and swabbing, washing vessels" (ibid). Not only enacting gendered practices, the desire to dress, and to restrict them to feminine body language make them feel a complete woman. Hijras have an excessive desire to talk like women and to be referred with feminine pronouns that explains their intricate yet natural desire to be a woman and feel feminine from within. Vidya's exuberance as she mentions in her autobiography lay in "walking swaying my hips like a woman, sat with my legs crossed stylishly, or rearrange my hair in a feminine way whenever the wind blew it across my forehead" (Vidya 2007: 44). These instances explain the delight that hijras have while enacting as women, which they recount as natural to them.

There are various instances in the autobiographies that depict theatre and dance as the perfect medium through which they can be true to their inner self of being a woman. For instance, Revathi agrees to dress up as female for the Mariamman festival in her village. She was rather very excited and she mentions "To the world, it appeared that I was dressing up and playing a woman, but inside, I felt I was a woman" (Revathi 2010: 12). Vidya's account describes dancing and theatre as her solitude, "I put on one of Manju's skirts. I shut the door and started to dance. I danced for long, cannot remember how long" (Vidya 2007: 28). She also recounts, "Actually, I was pretending to imitate a girl for fun and they liked my 'acting' but in reality, I was not really acting, but subtly expressing my inner urges" (ibid: 59). Laxmi's autobiographical account describes dancing as her therapy. "It was my dancing, complete with my feminine movements of the waist that contributed to my being thought of as effeminate" (Laxmi 2015: 23). This construction of femininity, through *nirvan*, long hair, passing as women, rounded bodies, absence of body hair, looking beautiful, female names and feminine body language, are hijras ideal of a perfect woman and the aim towards which they all strive. Long hair also adds to the beauty of a women as evident from hijra accounts and by imitating woman, the practice of growing long hair is seen as an important marker of feminine identity.

Hair is an important marker of being feminine as repeatedly mentioned in hijra autobiographies, for example, Vidya grew her hair, to feel feminine and when asked by family members, she said she did it for theatre in college. "When I moved to Chennai, I had already grown my hair long enough to tie in a bun. As all my theatre friends had long hair, my family believed I too had grown my hair long for the same purpose" (Vidya 2007: 73). Revathi also affirms in her autobiography, "long hair was an important marker of being feminine" (Revathi 2010: 28). One of the common themes that are redundant in these autobiographies is the use of theatre and dance to express their feminine self. Laxmi also mentions minor details of growing her fingernails, and wearing ring in her fingers and nose. In Revathi's account, she mentions about her getting dressed up by wearing anklets, decorating her braids with paper flowers, using creams and dusted powder on her face, "touched my eyes and eyebrows with kohl and sprinkled glitter" (Revathi 2010: 29).

They used additive methods to beautify like the use of makeup, jewelry and growing hair to approximate a feminine appearance. "I had pierced my ears and nose" (ibid: 48). She also recounts that some of her friends grew long nails and wore nail polish. "They even dared to address each other as women" (ibid: 19). But Nanda brings in another aspect related to hijras beautifying themselves as a woman. She states:

> Although their roles require hijras to dress like women, few make any real attempt to imitate or to "pass" as women. Their female dress and mannerisms are exaggerated to the point of caricature, expressing sexual overtones that would be considered inappropriate for ordinary women in their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. Hijra performances are burlesque of female behavior (Nanda 1990: 38).

In the attempt to imitate women and be essentially feminine, it could be inferred that hijras subvert the existing gender roles. Hijras sometimes refer themselves as neither man nor woman which opposes the binary. All the practices can be seen as performative in nature, yet subverting.

Revathi's autobiographical account also mentions the use of false hair when hair was cut by her brother in rage after she acted as a female in the village festival. "Apart from one's dress, lack of facial hair, and vocal timbre, the length of one's hair was used to gauge and mark gender" (Reddy 2006: 129). Hair is also an important marker and is of primary significance in marking both identity and status, as Revathi mentions the importance of growing hair and "without having grown my hair, I would be seen as a man wearing sari and it would mean dishonor" (Revathi 2010: 28). Clothes are the primary marker for hijras, they are often identified with their grandiose sartorial style. Umberto Eco in *Theory of Semiotics* mentions, "[I] speak through my clothes" (1975: 57). He was referring this in the context of semiotics, but it can be directly applied to hijras and their vehement expression of femininity through their dressing style. As Reddy states, "hijras are phenotypic men who wear female clothing" (2006: 2), and are identified through their adoption of women's clothing. It is a marker of their identity and

sets them from other identities such as *kothis* and *pantis*. Sexual identities like *pantis, kotis* and AC/DCs are contemporary identities when male homoeroticism is taken into consideration. *Pantis* are "penetrative, "masculine" men on the one hand and *kotis* are receptive, "effeminate" men on the other (Reddy 2006: 44).

There are various instances in the autobiography that suggest that hijras adopt a feminine hip swaying walk and wear saris. They try to adopt a body language that is essentially feminine. Vidya's instances in her autobiography clearly suggests this, "I walked swaying my hips like a woman, sat like a woman, sat with my legs crossed stylishly or rearranged my hair in a feminine way when the wind blew it across my forehead. I behaved like that whenever I felt light at heart" (Vidya 2007: 44). Despite their masculine body and baritone voice, the hijras try to act like women and imitate it in their body language and attires. They exaggerate femininity along with other aspects including clothing, mannerism, body languages, and try to carve a female body which leads them to intentional signification. It is a mimetic act and can be seen as beyond mimetic production of the female gender through multiple practices.

Critic Jay Prosser in "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex" (2006) suggests from a reading of Butler's text that transsexuality is productive and not essentialist. It was argued by Prosser that, even though Butler's *Gender Trouble* discusses performativity in the final chapter "Bodily Inscriptions and Performative Subversions," it is gender performativity that *Gender Trouble* is known for. While it argues that all gender is performative, that man and woman are not expressions of prior internal essences, but constituted, to paraphrase Butler, through the repetition of culturally intelligible stylized acts *Gender Trouble* presents the transgendered subject as the concrete example that brings into relief performativity of gender (Butler 1990: 31).

When Butler claims that gender is performative, she suggests that, gender is a doing, a process of continuously acting out the gender you are supposed to be. It suggests the presence of a subject behind the act of doing gender. Butler adopts the Nietzschean claim

that "there is no doer behind the deed" (ibid: 33). As a result, Butler clearly distinguishes her theory of gender performativity from other theories on gender performance. Her theory of performativity is drawn from speech-act theory of Austin and Derrida's ideas of 'citationality'. In *Gender Trouble* it is nowhere mentioned that Butler took the theory of performativity from Austin's Speech-act theory and she acknowledges in her 1999 preface that her theory "waffles between understanding performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical" (1999: xxv). In *Bodies that Matter* she explains performativity as:

> Performativity is thus not a singular act, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. Moreover, this act is not primarily theatrical; indeed, its apparent theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated (and, conversely, its theatricality gains a certain inevitability, given the impossibility of a full disclosure of its historicity). Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names (Butler 1993: 13-14).

According to Butler, all performances that are understood as reflections of an essential identity or self are constative performances. By constative, she means those performances of identity that actively construct the identity they are taken to be expressions of. The autobiographical texts help institute a certain discursive hegemony within a community whose members have a substantial investment in mimicking the enunciative modality of those who has been successful in achieving sex transformation. These autobiographies reveal what it is like to want another body, understood as the other body, "as a result of the subject's displacement of a radical abjection onto the body" (Hausman 2006: 357). The 'body' with its original sex, becomes abject through the inability of the transsexual subject to make that body signify appropriately within accepted gender codes. Reassigning the 'sex' and enacting the desired 'gender identity' on the 'body' is one way to avoid the sense of profound "outsiderness" (ibid) expressed by hijras and transmen in their autobiographies. Becoming the 'other sex' forces the 'body' to signify according to

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traditional gender codes and roles, enforcing cultural laws on the body's physiology. For hijras and transmen, sex change makes their bodies and experiences intelligible at last.

Corporeality is integral to hijra's constructions of various axes of identity including sexuality and gender. It is a practice in terms of performativity, emasculation, clothing and beautification, the practice of clapping hands are central to the construction of hijra identity. The primary markers of hijra identity are inscribed onto the 'body'. 'Body' is the surface to carry out these corporeal alterations. Hijra's practice of imitating women can be considered as their desire for the formation of a female identity that they consider is inherent to them. By imitating, they subvert the gender norms which results in burlesque femininity which by no means is feminine but "overtly feminine". Their construction is an attempt to embody the femininity but they fail to realize that no matter how close approximate they are to femininity they will still be "neither man nor woman" (Nanda 1990: 35).

As understood from the autobiographies, transmen prefer masculine pronouns and gender passing as 'man' is an important aspect which constructs their identity as male. From Jamison Green (2004) to Max Wolf Valerio's (2006), Dhillon Khosla's (2006), and Matt Kailey (2004), transition for transmen can be described as a process which includes the transformation of the body and corporeality, to bridge the gap and maintain congruity between its visible signifiers of gender i.e., body and the internal invisible 'self'. The multiple gendered practices in order to claim authority over a desire gender role are seen as performative in nature in order to create performative selves as understood from the autobiographies. The numerous performative attributes as traced from the autobiographies describes the manner in which these acts form the basis of their social identity. It also explains the importance of gender performativity and stylized acts in their everyday construction of social identity. The forthcoming chapter interprets the fragmented process of identity formation as understood from the autobiographies.

CHAPTER 4

INTROSPECTIONS ON TAILORED SEXUAL IDENTITIES

At the boundaries of gender categories, it seems, bodies may travel without passports granted by society.

<div align="right">Raewyn Connell, 1999</div>

Butler project a query, on whether, identities can be tailored or formed according to a set requirement, "does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism, foreclosing the possibility of agency and transformation?" (Butler 1990: 8). How and where does the tailoring of identity take place? Is body taken as a surface on which cultural meanings are inscribed? According to philosophical debate of 'free will' and 'social determinism', body appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed. But, bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of gender. "The locus of intractability whether in "sex" or "gender" or in the very meaning of "construction," provides a clue to what cultural possibilities can or cannot become mobilized through any further possibilities" (ibid: 9). It further suggests the possibilities of imaginable gender configurations within culture. It doesn't mean that gender possibilities are open to unlimited experiences, but the experiences are limited and constrained within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse based on the binary structure. Michel Foucault stresses on the ways in which sexuality is written on the 'body', whereby he deconstructs the notion of 'sexuality'. Tony Purvis in his essay "Sexualities" states that, "If sexuality is inscribed in or on the body, then it is texts and discourses (literary, medical, legal and religious, for example) which make the sexual into something that is also textual" (Purvis 2006: 435). This argument suggests the interconnections of sexuality with texuality. In the context of select autobiographies, it is seen that, sexuality is restrained in language descriptions. In the autobiographical narrative by A. Revathi, *The Truth About Me,* the narrator, in first person, attempts to

explain the experiences of 'doing' masculinity, 'being' feminine and 'feeling' as a girl in a male body, but at the same time, is unable to find exact words to describe her feelings. "I did know that I behaved like a girl, it felt natural to me to do so. I did not know how to be like a boy. It was like 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 2010: 7). The analogy used here with 'eating' and 'being a girl', doesn't quite explain her experience or anxiety of 'being' a girl in a male body. Of being a girl in a male body Revathi mentions, "I experienced a growing sense of irrepressible femaleness, which haunted me, day in and day out. A woman in a man's body was how I thought of myself" (ibid: 15). There are a host of terms with cultural connotations that has been used for hijras based on the phase of their transition and these experiences cannot be homogenized or put under the umbrella term 'transgender'. In *The Truth About Me* by Revathi the terms *thozhis, kurathis, pottais, devadasis, ghori moorathan, pinjus* denote the phases that Revathi went through. *Thozhis* is a Tamil term used to refer to each-other as friend, in the hijra clan, to show love and affection, *kurathis* are female tribal gypsies in Tamil Nadu and South of India. *Pottais* are cross dressers or sari-clad feminine man; *devadasis* is used in the context of renouncing the sexual practices after *nirvan* and *ghori moorathan* is a person who is becoming *chela* for the first time. *Pinjus* is used by the older women in hijra clan, to address the young and tender age members. The fragments and trajectories of Revathi's identity can be traced through these terms and is evident in her autobiography, where she dresses like 'female' for the Mariamman festival in their village and agrees for the role of *kurathi*. "They asked me if I would like to dress up as a kurathi, since I appeared feminine anyway" (ibid: 12). Here, 'performance' and 'performativity' both are at play, she is involved in theatrical 'performance' of being a *kurathi*, which is at the same time enacting out the desired gender role and hence suggests 'performativity'. "To the world, it appeared that I was dressing up and playing a woman, but inside, I felt I was a woman" (ibid: 12). After, realizing about her 'female self', she spent most of her evenings with her new friends who were "like" them (ibid: 18). "We could fold up our *lungis*…I guess these men were

more my female comrades than mere friends; my *thozhis*. Being *thozhis* was a phase in her life, where performativity was carried out through language i.e., "…we address each other as women" (ibid: 18). Being a *pottai,* was another phase, where she hasn't undergone *nirvan* and yet she was clad like women. She mentions, "…my guru told me that I ought to be careful and make sure that my penis was not visible when I peed" (ibid: 24). She was asked to be careful until she underwent *nirvan*. After getting settled in a hijra household, hijras were asked to dance for a living on several occasions, wearing female clothes, where they were mocked at almost all the times. "We got stared at a lot, and I heard people ask rather loudly whether we were men or women or Number 9 or *devadasis*" (Revathi 2010: 29). *Devadasi* cannot be seen as an identity of Revathi, it was something that she was called, when she was not operated and danced on the streets. Revathi in her autobiographical narrative talks about the '*guru-chela'* system prevalent in Tamil Nadu, though every city has its own hijra household with different set of rules, functioning, and culture. To be a *chela*, one has to perform certain set of rituals to become a part of that household. In her earlier household in Mumbai, she wasn't a *chela* to anyone but in Tamil Nadu she was accepted as a *chela* by the seven *naiks* of the household. *Ghoori moorathan* is a person who is becoming a *chela* for the first time. It could be said that hijra household follow a different hierarchical power structure where the head (superior) makes the rules, and the *chela* (subordinate) follows them. Each household has its own *reeth,* or system; as Revathi mentions:

> The *naiks* called the *jamaat* to order and announce loudly for everyone to hear
> that Revathi was being chela…at this, all present clapped their hands. I was asked
> to do *paampaduthi* (touching feet to show respect) to all elders. They call it *reeth,*
> this system of consecrating chelas (Revathi 2010: 63).

Hijra household operates on defined power structures that could be related to Foucault's notions of power that, it is 'everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and regimes of truth'. He argues that 'power is immanent in all social relations, and all social relations, are relations of power, whether in families, or in all hierarchies of

government'. Foucault's concept of 'power' has much in common with Althusser's 'ideology' and Gramsci's 'hegemony' as it rules by consent. Foucault's 'power', just like 'ideology' and 'hegemony', derives its strength from the fact that the subjects deeply believe in what it tells them, for it gives a sense of belonging and contributes to their well-being. He maintains that 'methods of power operate not by right, but by technique, not by law, but by normalization, not by punishment, but by control' (Foucault 1977). Hijra household is an apt example for this as, hijras need a place where they can be guided by their own community towards their betterment. In the household, Revathi was referred as *pinjus* for being the youngest. So, the term, to some extent describes her journey towards identity formation. Another important aspect in identity formation is the name, Matt Kailey in *Just Add Hormones* mentions that his gender transition began with a name change and he writes, "Now you can choose your own name…Now you can choose the name of your own most admired television star…Choosing a name is one of the earliest steps in the gender transition and is the beginning of a new identity formation" (Kailey 2005: 25-26). In other cases, name is used to assert an identity, as in the case of Revathi, when she returns to her village, she mentions, "My name is Revathi and that's what you should call me from now on" (Revathi 2010: 113).

Jonathan Ames in *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs*, compares transsexual autobiographies (of both FTM and MTF transsexuals) to a classic literary model, the *bildungsroman* or coming-of-age novel. Ames states that he sees a basic outline of transsexual autobiographies in three acts, "first act: gender-dysphoric childhood; second act: the move to the big city and the transformation… [third act] the sex change" (Ames 2005: xii). Within the select four FTM autobiographies for this study, there is a linear story of transitioning, where the authors track their transition in a linear fashion, and the narrators aren't closeted in their description about transition, but rather are open about telling their stories through the means of autobiography. The narrators chose to come out once again through their publishing and writing. In case of hijra autobiographies, there is a linear fashion in identifying themselves as female from childhood, but Revathi and Vidya's autobiographical narratives are gripping, which

mentions about the struggles with the family, violence inflicted on them, finding space in hijra household, struggles with education and sex work. Laxmi on the other hand, was supported by her parents, and she speaks of humiliation and violence in the earlier parts of her narrative, when she was still a boy. She became an activist later and lived her life on her own terms. There are differences in terms of their journey and identity formation, Vidya and Revathi are essentialist, as they follow idea of typical women. On the other hand, Laxmi is an anti-essentialist for choosing not to castrate her male genitals, and still identifies herself as a hijra.

The term *nirvan,* has been repetitively used in the hijra autobiographies, Revathi uses it as *nirvaanam,* and Laxmi and Vidya use the spelling '*nirvana',* which creates confusion about the actual terminology of the word in the context of transgender individuals. 'Nirvana' is a Buddhist term that refers to a state in which there is no desire, suffering or sense of 'self' and the subject is free from moral obligations. '*Nirvaanam'* or '*nirvana'* can be loosely translated as emasculation or castration process. There isn't a concrete or established term that could describe the transition process of hijras. Emasculation operation is also called as "*thayamma* operation" (Revathi 2010: 66), the operation performed by one hijra mother on another. For Revathi and Vidya, *nirvan* was an important part in order to begin with identifying themselves as women. In Laxmi's autobiography, it is mentioned as the "essentialist account of her life and Laxmi's account, conversely is anti-essentialist" (Laxmi 2015: 187). In the "Afterword" to *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi,* R. Raj Rao, mentions, "Revathi describes her essential identity by virtue of her being a hijra, Laxmi conversely de- centers through her being, the very idea of an essential identity" (ibid: 188). Revathi and Vidya's life is centered on *nirvan* however, at the same time, Laxmi didn't endorse the view of *nirvan* to become a real hijra. She deconstructs the identity of woman by becoming the woman that she is, and also deconstructs the identity of hijra by not choosing *nirvan*, which, is the basis of hijra identity according to the popular belief. She mentions, "castration is strictly optional, and every hijra decides for herself whether or not to undergo it…though the world believes that a castrated hijra alone is a real hijra" (Laxmi 2015: 156). The autobiographical

narratives of Laxmi, Revathi and Vidya depict the ways in which culture plays an important part in shaping the identities of individuals, and the ways in which gender is constructed differently across cultures. This can be understood at two levels, one from the cultural differences between the traditions of Laxmi, Revathi and Vidya, and another from the cross-cultural differences between the transmen and hijras. The former covers their differences in terms of identity formation, hijra household tradition and the nature of their journey towards identity formation, whereas, the latter talks about the differences in social organization and transmen identity formation as different from hijra identity formation. Surgery as a process which is to be done by medical professionals and *nirvan* as a tradition related to hijra culture as argued by many. Gender thus, can be seen as a system of social differentiation and social placement. Societies have clear understandings about the manner in which gender is constituted through multiple types of gender categories, categorization of individual members, and yardstick for categorization and so on. Hijras in India, wear saris to identify themselves as woman, similarly trans feminine woman in the West, would wear clothing that is considered feminine in the West. Sabrina Petra Ramet in her *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures* (1996) refers to this as 'gender culture'.

4.1 TRANS 'GENDERING'

Garfinkel (1967) and Kessler and Mckenna (1978) find gender not as something which people have, instead they see the production of a gendered social identity as an on-going accomplishment. So, the word 'gendering' (Ramet 1996: 37) is used to refer to the processes, whereby a person is constituted as 'gendered' on an everyday basis. Gendering can be divided into two processes, according to the cultures that recognize binary order of thinking. Ekins and King (1993, 1997) termed 'males femaling' and 'female male' (Ekins 1987) for individuals who find themselves incongruous with the associated gender roles and identity. Ekins and King also term it as 'transgendering'. The starting point of 'transgendering' is the wish for, or an enactment of, processes that entail the 'crossing' of the borders that the initial binary classification has created.

Ekins and King in *The Transgender Phenomenon*, talk about four major modes of transgendering: (i) crossing the divide permanently; (ii) crossing it temporarily; (iii) seeking to eliminate the divide; (iv) seeking to 'go beyond it' (Ekins and King 2006: 34). 'Crossing the divide permanently' entails the gender transition wherein the individual chooses to undergo sex reassignment surgery to claim the membership of other sex. From the autobiographies of Vidya and Revathi, it is stated that they chose to undergo *nirvan* or emasculation operation to become the member of the female sex. Green, Khosla, Kailey and Valerio also use surgical and hormonal procedures for complete gender transition. As stated in Laxmi's autobiography, she didn't choose to undergo emasculation. 'Crossing it temporarily' describes the confusion that the individual experiences in the earlier days of their life regarding their gender identity. The confusion regarding their gender identity was pertinent in the autobiographies by both hijras and FTM transsexuals, but they chose to undergo gender transition and crossed the divide permanently. 'Seeking to eliminate the divide' and seeking to 'go beyond it' in the process of 'transgendering' could refer to transvestites or to cross-dressers who dress in the clothing of opposite sex, and they can be referred to as gender non-binary.

Judith Butler emphasizes, a construction, is not "manipulable artifice" because the subject of gender "neither precedes nor follows the process of gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves" (Butler 1993: 7). "Gendering is accomplished when one is allocated to one of the two gender categories on the basis of certain signifiers which are taken to indicate the gender in question" (Ekins and King 2006: 37). Hence, 'transgendering' is accomplished by altering the signifiers in some way. Ekins and King further mentions about the five main sub-processes by which 'transgendering' is accomplished.

The first sub process involves 'erasing' which entails the eliminating of aspects of maleness or femaleness, masculinity or femininity. A genetic male may undergo castration; a genetic female may undergo a hysterectomy. The second process involves 'substituting'. The person who undergoes transition replaces the body parts, identity,

dress, posture, gesture and speech style that are associated with one gender, with those associated with the other. In relation to the body, for example, a penis is replaced with a vagina; a flat chest is replaced with breasts; rough skin replaces smooth skin; body hair replaces no body hair and so on. The degree of substitution will depend on a number of factors such as the particular personal project of the individual, the personal circumstances, the development of any technology aids that may be used and the financial affordability. 'Concealing' as the third sub-process, refers to the concealing or hiding of things that are seen to conflict with the intended gender display. It may involve hiding body parts- wrapping a scarf around the Adam's apple, tucking the penis, binding the breasts. McKenna and Kessler in *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* argue that for female masculine individuals, displaying male characteristics may be more important than concealing female ones. They argue:

> In order for a female gender attribution to be made, there must be an absence of anything which can be construed as a 'male only' characteristic. In order for a male gender attribution to be made, the presence of at least one 'male' sign must be noticed, and one sign may be enough. This is because the basic categorizing schema is, 'see someone as female only when you cannot see them as male' (McKenna and Kessler 1978: 158-9).

In addition to 'concealing' and displaying, transgendering may involve 'implying' certain body parts or gendered attributes. The fifth sub-process 'redefining' the binary divide may entail selves, body parts, and gendered accoutrements, and taking on new meanings within the redefined system of classification. As understood from the hijra autobiographies, hijras go through these processes, but not necessarily in the same order. In *I am Vidya*, Vidya identified herself as a female, imagined herself swaying her body and wearing dresses associated with females, imitating the everyday kinesthetics of women like "girl drying her hair after shower," "dressing and walking around like heroines" (Vidya 2007: 27), "wrapping a towel around me all the way up, covering my chest, just as film heroines did in bathing scenes" (ibid: 29-30). Both Laxmi and Vidya

used dance, as for them it was a medium to accentuate their feminine self, and it brought them a step closer to their femininity. It is their routinized efforts at femininity that brought them closer to their feminine gendered 'self'. In a similar context, Beauvoir mentions of 'becoming' as more of a 'process' than the end product. For Khosla, the process began with the erasure of feminine parts such as breasts through mastectomy. Khosla questions, "how much more surgery do I need to feel complete" (Khosla 2006: 61) describes his existential crisis in between identities. Kailey talks about the "manly phases" (Kailey 2005: 31) during transition and mentions 'passing' as something which measures one's progress on hormones. He accounts, "If I had a skill for invention, and if transpeople had any money, I could probably live comfortably by creating a Pass-O-Meter that would track passing percentages and come up with a grand total of how "male" or "female" an individual was seen by the world" (ibid: 31). Khosla, Valerio, Kailey and Green took hormones in order to accentuate their male identity and to enhance secondary male characteristics. The processes stated by Ekins and King (2006), are a part of transgender identity, but they experience these stages at different phases of their identity construction. The nature of experiences is subjective as seen in autobiographies.

Ekins and King in *The Transgender Phenomenon* (2006), merge the above sub-processes under 'migrating', 'oscillating', 'negating' and 'transcending'. Migrating covers erasing, concealing, implying and refining, it covers the substituting identity. In the process of oscillation, it is the implying sub-process that is dominant. Here, erasing, substituting, concealing and redefining will be variously co-opted in the service of implying. The negating mode of transgendering is often the most difficult to discern, and differentiate from other processes and it focuses on sub- process of erasing. The transcending mode of transgendering is identified by the dominance of the sub-process of redefining in relation to the binary gender divide. There are various processes formed by gender and transgender theorists in order to trace the identity formation in transgender individuals, but, the identity path cannot be considered neutral for all.

4.2 'MASCULINITY WITHOUT MEN'

R. Connell defines 'hegemonic masculinity' as a "historically unstable and contested set of culturally accepted ideas, strategies and practices which are taken to legitimize the existing patriarchal relations" (Connell 1995: 77-78). Connell notes that 'hegemonic masculinity' is defined through a series of exclusions that are based on gender, class, race and sexuality, which also tend to privilege particular groups of men vis-à-vis other groups of men. There are representations of alternative masculinities in fiction, and in lived experience and they show how important it is to recognize the alternate masculinities.

> More women, perhaps, feel able to push at the limits of acceptable femininity, and more men, maybe, find ways of challenging dominant forms of masculinity, but the effects of even gender bending have not been cataclysmic. We still script gender for boys and girls in remarkably consistent and restrictive ways and we continue to posit the existence of only two genders (Halberstam 1998: 118).

Judith Halberstam and Jay Prosser have worked extensively on female masculinity, Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* (1998) and Jay Prosser in *Second Skins* (1998) provided an extensive analysis of female masculinities in fiction, films and in FTM autobiographical narratives. Both Halberstam and Prosser approached FTM transsexuals from a different perspective. Halberstam's ideas arise from the purview and perspective of transgender butch, and Prosser views it from FTM transsexual standpoint. Halberstam has approached FTM transsexuality from the perspective of a lesbian feminist who has an understanding of transgender butch. Halberstam mentions:

> In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, the mannish woman who actively desired women might have been called a 'hermaphrodite', a 'tribade' or a 'female husband', rather than a lesbian, and none of the labels quite adds up to, or feeds directly into what we now understand as a lesbian sexual orientation. The name 'lesbian' is the term we affix to the pleasurable and cumbersome intersections of embodiments, practices, and roles that historical

processes have winnowed down to the precise specifications of an identity (1998: 50).

Halberstam has compared transgender butch to FTM transsexuals. Her theories on transsexuality are influenced by her belief that society needs to remove its gender classifications, as she views them as restrictive and unnecessary. She believes that the reason FTM transsexuals decide to undergo transition is because they are extremely masculine and feel they must have bodies of men to comply with society. The technological availabilities of surgeries to reassign gender have made the option of gender transition available to those who understand themselves to be tragically and severely at odds with their bodies, and particularly for MTF transsexuals these surgical transitions have been embraced by increasing number of gender variant people.

> The recent visibility of female-to-male transsexuals has immensely complicated the discussions around transsexuality because gender transition from female-to male allows biological women to access male privilege within their reassigned genders (Halberstam 1998: 143).

Halberstam further mentions the distinction between FTM transsexual and a transgender butch, where FTM transsexual identity becomes associated with 'real' and desperate desires for embodiment, but butch women become associated with a playful desire for masculinity and a casual form of gender deviance. She fails to mention that, it is possible for an individual to identify as a butch in the initial stages of life and then choose SRS to establish a male identity. In case of Valerio, Khosla and Green, they identified themselves with the lesbian community in the initial stages, before undergoing transition. Halberstam, in defining FTM transsexuals, forgets that more than masculinity, a male identity is crucial for an FTM transsexual. In order to get that male identity, changing one's body and undergoing sex reassignment surgery (SRS) is only a part of it, but it is not the only crucial criteria to be the male as evident from the autobiography. As Beauvoir mentioned, "one is not born a woman," in a similar context, one is not born a

man, but becomes one, through various SRS procedure to form a male identity that need not be intensely masculine, but FTMs try to approximate this masculinity.

Halberstam (1998) mentions in her work that, butch women do not undergo SRS, which implies that FTMs can also do the same. She missed the fact that FTMs are already men, and they do not feel they have choice in that matter. Halberstam makes a point that FTMs have long periods in between their genders, which is an observation that is seen in select FTM autobiographies. It is also observed from the autobiographies that many FTMs do come out as lesbians before they undergo gender transition. Max Valerio and Dhillon Khosla identified themselves as lesbians and they were linked with the lesbian communities and had lesbian partners before identifying themselves as man. One of the reasons behind identifying themselves as lesbians first, is the confusion and identity crisis that arises when one does not fit in the ascribed gender identity and social role, and identifying themselves as a lesbian can be seen as one step ahead towards figuring out their identity and their sexual desires. Valerio mentions, "I was a dyke and proud. That had been my identity since adolescence, a way for me to identify and understand the fact that I was attracted to women and had been ever since I could remember from childhood on to a time when I felt a need to put a name to my desire" (Valerio 2006: 51). There is a period of lesbian identification that Khosla and Valerio went through. Valerio mentions, "I begin to think of myself as "butch". A word that is just beginning to come back into vogue in lesbian circles in 1983" (ibid: 48). Later he mentions, "It didn't occur to me that my male identity was deep, rooted in my body. That finally, like all transsexuals, the body is the issue, not the role" (ibid: 101). "I thought I was a lesbian. Fourteen years of believing I was a dyke, and here I was a straight man all along!" (ibid: 106). Halberstam also formulates a masculine continuum based on lesbian and transgender masculinities i.e., Androgyny- Soft Butch- Butch-Strong Butch- Transgender Butch- FTM Not Masculine- Very Masculine (Halberstam 1998: 151). According to the range of continuum, Halberstam mentions:

At the transgender end of the spectrum, the continuum model miscalculates the relation between bodily alteration and degree of masculinity; at the butch end, the continuum model makes it seem as if butchness is sometimes just an early stage of transsexual aspiration (ibid).

Finally, Halberstam mentions that, "concrete distinctions between butch women and transsexual males, such distinctions all too serve the cause of hetero-normativity by consigning homosexuality to pathology and linking transsexuality to a new form of heterosexuality" (ibid: 157). FTMs can be 'homosexual', 'heterosexual or queer'. Like, to Valerio's surprise, "I'm amazed. Although I know that many transsexual women are lesbians, it's never occurred to me that a transsexual man could be gay. I like the idea. This elegant twist of identity shines a clarifying penumbra, a sparkle of sheer freedom. One could explore. Possibilities multiply" (Valerio 2006: 102). They do not need to conform to the hetero-normative society. Jay Prosser in his *Second Skin* (1998) reinforces this statement and delves more deeply into what it is to be an FTM transsexual.

Jay Prosser, in *Second Skins,* focuses on two concepts explained in his theories of 'FTM transsexuality, and in his work he focuses on psychologist Didier Anzieu's theories on identity, stemming from outside the inner body, or "skin ego" and the importance of transsexual narratives (Prosser 1998: 65). Prosser describes 'skin ego' as:

Didier Anzieu suggests the body's surface as that which matters most about the self. His concept of the "skin ego" takes the body's physical skin as the primary organ underlying the formation of the ego, its handling, its touching, it's holding-our experience of its feel-individualizing our psychic functioning, quite crucially making us who we are. Bordering inside and outside the body, the point of separation and contact between you and me, skin is the key interface between self and others, between the biological, the psychic, and the social […] The body is crucially and materially formative of the self. Anzieu's means of demonstrating that all psychic structures stem from the body, the skin ego returns the ego to its bodily origins in Freud (Prosse 1998: 65).

In other works, skin is not merely the border between the 'self' and the outside world; it constructs what 'self' is. According to Anzieu, the central tenet of Freudian psychoanalysis, that "every psychical activity is analytically dependent upon a biological function" and the body has become unrecognized, unacknowledged element in everyday life (Anzieu 1989: 21, 40). Anzieu reverses the substitution of language for body and opposes Lacan's formulation: 'the unconscious is structured like language' with a formulation implicit in Freud: "the unconscious is the body," the unconscious seems to me to be structured like the body" (Anzieu 1990: 33, 72). Butler, in her footnote to "Bodily Ego" in *Gender Trouble* cites Anzieu's *The Skin Ego* as "a provocative account… which unfortunately doesn't consider its implications of its account for the sexed body" (Butler 1990: 143). Taking from Butler's note, Prosser derived that stories of sex change, and transsexual narratives provide perfect matter for Anzieu's account. Prosser describes that:

> Sex change entails a transformation of the body's surface. Hormone therapy begins this process, dramatically contravening the functioning of the gonads, refiguring the body's contours, altering tissue structure (muscle, fat, breast, and genital) redistributing hair, changing skin texture in body and face. Surgery continues and radicalized the transformation: removing sex organs (genital and secondary, internal and external), reshaping the remains and/or relocating other bodily tissues-nerves, skin, flesh to form others. How does sex reassignment surgery as a manipulation of the body's surface change the transsexual's sex? Of what does this "moment of sex consist"? In its turn Anzieu's skin ego allows us to consider the significance of sexed embodiment in transsexual accounts: to explore the feeling and experience of being transsexed (Prosser 1998: 67).

Considering these complications, Prosser finds Anzieu's concept of the 'skin ego' helpful. In transsexual autobiography, the trajectory of transsexuality and autobiography are entwined in complex ways, in narrative and bodily form, conducting each other. The narrative transitions of autobiography allow the somatic transitions of transsexuality in an

immediate and material sense. According to Prosser, every transsexual is an autobiographer, and while visiting the clinician's office for gender transition, s/he recalls his/her narrative. He mentions that in the autobiographical narrative, transsexuality emerges as "an archetypal story structured around shared tropes and fulfilling a particular narrative organization of consecutive stages: suffering and confusion; the epiphany of self-discovery; corporeal and social transformation and finally the arrival 'home'-the reassignment" (ibid). Due to hidden and easily misunderstood nature of transsexuality, Prosser mentions that autobiographies are used to make identities concrete. Since, identity is felt by the transsexual, but not always seen by outsiders, FTMs feel that by explaining their identity in narratives, they can show what is hidden and make people understand their experiences.

Jay Prosser's *Second Skins: The Body Narrative of Transsexuality,* also explores transsexual autobiographies in the chapter entitled "Mirror Images: Transsexuality and Autobiography". He focuses on how transsexual autobiography is an important process for transsexuals. He mentions:

> In transsexual autobiographies the trajectories of transsexuality and autobiography are entwined in complex ways, narrative and bodily form conducting each other. To begin with, the narrative transitions of autobiography allow the somatic transitions of transsexuality in an immediate and material sense. The autobiographical act for the transsexual begins even before the published autobiography-namely, in the clinician's office where, in order to be diagnosed as transsexual, s/he must recount a transsexual autobiography (ibid: 101).

Prosser demonstrates that autobiography is entwined in 'trans' experience. He also mentions that "Narrative is also a kind of second skin: the story of transsexual must weave around the body in order that this body must be "read" (Prosser 1998: 101). This reflects the importance of looking at written autobiographies to see how these men, in particular, conceptualize themselves and their gender transitions. In the autobiographical narrative, transgender individuals have transitioned from female-to-male through the use

of hormones and social transition. They create a linear narrative that straightens out a complicated transition. The narratives are broken down into different temporal stages: internal coming out, external coming, intervention of hormones, and post-transition. Through these constructed stages, authors are able to create a coherent transition narrative that allows the author to establish their transgender identities.

Prosser's take on transsexuality is heavily based on the concept of the "skin ego", and on the concept of 'wrong body'. The autobiographies used in this research reinforce that sex and identity are more than just skin deep. Throughout the autobiographies, Green, Valerio, Khosla and Kailey identified themselves as male, they simply had to change their skin to match their subjective identity. As stated previously, Prosser describes the manner in which the medical field want to hear their stories in order to allow SRS. Then he goes on to say that, "the wrong-body formula is used by transsexuals themselves to express the sensory experience of transsexuality" (Prosser 1998: 67). Again, it is unclear whether he agrees with this "wrong-body formula" or not. However, the 'wrong-body formula' is an accurate description for the way some of these men describe themselves. They did grow up feeling like they should have been boys, and their anatomy should match to that of a male and not of a female. The discomfort that many of the men felt while growing up with their female anatomy, is quite clear in their autobiographies. Prosser mentions, "If the dominant body image presentation is that of being trapped within an extraneous "other" skin, sex reassignment surgery is figured as bringing release from this skin" (ibid: 82). It is similar to the process after mastectomy, as Kailey mentions, "Chest or top surgery is one of the most fulfilling accomplishments of transition" (Kailey 2005: 53). Releasing the female-to-male from this restrictive second skin, mastectomy gave them a freer movement. Kailey mentions, "You can finally abandon painful and artery constricting blinders. You can wear the flimsiest of T-shirts with no telltale binder or bra lines" (ibid). Surgical removal of breasts contributes to shaping of post-mastectomy body image as disburdened. Kailey titled the chapter in his autobiography as "Flat Busted" (53) and "Dickless in Denver" (59).

The body image produces physical experience and FTM autobiographies inscribe the event of surgery as a return: a coming home to the self through the body. Prosser argues, "what makes the transsexual able and willing to submit to the knife- the splitting, cutting, removal and reshaping of organs, tissues and skin, that another might conceive as mutilation- is the drive to get the body back to what it should have been" (Prosser 1998: 83). Green, Valerio, Kailey and Khosla went through mastectomy to get a flat chest which is free from layers of clothing that was used to conceal the breasts. Breasts are a significant identifier of females, so it is necessary for transmen to get them surgically removed.

4.3 CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES

Jamison Green and Max Valerio had a few more commonalities between them, including the year in which they both began their hormonal transition (1988 and 1989 respectively). They also had the same mentor Lou Sullivan, the founder of FTM international. Valerio, Green and Khosla had embraced lesbian identity, previous to their trans male identity, while Kailey had identified himself as a straight woman in the earlier stages of his life. There commonalities of age, use of hormones, and length of transitions allow for a pattern of narrative to emerge. The format in which the transsexual autobiographies were written and the important milestones within their transitions exemplify the manner of transgender transition processes.

Psychoanalyst, Patricia Gherovici, in *Please Select Your Gender* argues that there are different waves of sex change memoirs, with the second wave autobiographies being described as following:

> …the model of core gender identity. They want to confirm the usual transsexual plot of a psychological evolution: they begin with a failure to identify with the gender assigned at birth and move to the realization that the self is trapped in the body of the opposite sex, finally culminating with the decision to transition (Gherovivi 2010: 225).

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These four autobiographies fit within the second-wave of sex change memoirs as mentioned by Gherovici, as they plot a life narrative that follows a transition timeline that is simplified in order to create a coherent and intelligible understanding of their gender transition. Green, Valerio, Khosla and Kailey have lived parts of their lives as a girl and woman with unambiguous female embodiments. They have occupied different subject positions such as living as lesbians and Kailey as a heterosexual woman. They have months of experience of attempting as highly gender ambiguous, as seen from their autobiographies. This feeling of ambiguity can occur before or post transition. In the context of gender ambiguity, C. Jacob Hale in "Tracing a Ghostly Memory in my Throat: Reflections on FTM Feminist Voice and Agency" mentions:

> During periods of gender ambiguity we tend to develop, finely grained observations about how gender attribution works and about the degree of gender agency in manipulating cultural meanings of gendered bodies, we are subjected to first hand experiences of abjection-falling out of the realm of social existence, entering a field of deformation and abjection (Butler,1987, 132; Butler, 1993,16) which Judith Butler writes accrue to the people who fall outside the established gender boundaries (Hale 2009: 46).

It is during transition that they see the rooted cultural definitions clearly when they face first hand abjection at the hands of society as clearly instanced in the select autobiographical narratives. It is the social categorization of identities as 'man', 'woman' or 'intersexed' that creates complications for transgender individuals as they don't belong to the binary and may identify as FTM transsexuals, but they may or might not identify as man or transman. Just as some MTFs, such as Kate Bornstein (1994), self-identify as neither man nor woman, some FTMs discursively position themselves as neither, or both, or "all of both and neither of either", or as members of a third gender, or look "forward eagerly to the day when there [will] be more genders from which to choose" (Devor 1997). It leads to the query, should there be a plurality of genders to choose from or do

the elimination of hegemonic binary divide that would lead to congruity? Kailey in his autobiography *Just Add Hormones* critiques the social norms and mentions:

> I don't profess to be a man now, except when forced to make a choice on some form that doesn't recognize alternative states of being…our society tends to put very finite expectations on male and female thought and behavior and has ways to punish those who do not conform. Although I continue to struggle with the rigid boundaries that the culture has put on someone who looks male, like I do, I have found freedom in incorporating the male and female pieces that were already there and not allowing myself to be bounded by others' expectations of manhood (Kailey 2005: 42).

4.4 REGISTERING IDENTITIES AND CRAFTING GENDER

Transman identity is less about fulfilling the parameters of masculinity and more about associating with a male identity. Transsexual process starts with internal 'coming out' as a man in the case of transman. Internal 'coming out' is the process of understanding and acknowledging transgender feelings within oneself and realizing the need to transition. Internal realization is generally the first process that transsexuals go through as figured out from their autobiographies. Green mentions in his autobiographical narrative, "for me, the process of coming out as trans was less like opening a closet door and more like slowly lighting a series of candles in a dark cave" (Green 2004: 10). Green titled his first chapter as "How Do You Know" which suggests the beginning point of his indifference towards his body in the childhood. He mentions his thought process when he was six years old, "The NBC network's live telecast of *Peter Pan* starring Mary Martin in March of 1955, was one of those lucid moments. I clearly remember thinking, during Peter's first scene in the bedroom as he tries to retrieve his shadow, "If she can be a boy, then so can I" (ibid: 12). He also mentions the little joys of being called as a boy during a dinner party when a woman said, "your son is the spitting image of you" (ibid).

Green began doing extensive research about 'female-to-male' transsexual process, and then he comes in contact with Lou Sullivan, an FTM transsexual man in his mid-thirties who had dedicated himself to providing information to others. He also started a small group in San Francisco and also started to publish a small newsletter for FTMs. Max Valerio also describes similar experiences of having a little idea about being a transman and later he got to know about Lou Sullivan. After attending meetings conducted by Sullivan, his decision to transition solidified. Both Green and Valerio gained courage to undergo transition after meeting other transman who were going through transition phase. Khosla also met FTMs in a lesbian bar and also went for FTM meetings to get help in transition. His chapter "Excavating the boy" suggests finding the 'self' through the 'body' and carving his 'body' through surgeries in order to establish the male identity. For Matt Kailey, the difficult part was dealing with and acknowledging and accepting, that he was a transgender, he mentions:

> I am not a textbook transsexual… I wasn't a tomboy, which is one of the first clues that therapists look for in diagnosing a Gender Identity Disorder in natal females. I was also not attracted to females, a significant precursor to a DSM diagnosis (Kailey 2005: 17).

He struggled for an internal gender identity going through phases of "real manhood" and "redefining manhood" and "incorporating the feminine manhood"(ibid: 43), society doesn't allow for any ambiguous selections when it comes to gender. He describes his feeling of not being identified as biologically male or female:

> I felt transgendered, which seemed like an appropriate label to put on whatever it was that compelled me to pay some good money to stick a needle in my rear. I finally accepted the fact that I would always be a transman, no matter how male I became, and for me, that eventually became okay (ibid: 28).

As surgery and body image are important to establish an identity; clothing also plays a very crucial role in defining the male or female characteristics. Many a times, in

autobiographical narratives, clothing accentuates the identity when transwomen or transmen wear feminine dress or tight t-shirts after mastectomy to flaunt the flat chest.

Stella North in her "The Surfacing of the Self: The Clothing Ego" (2013) talks about the importance of clothing as opposed to skin, as clothing is fundamentally a material one, which rests on the intimacy of the skin. Nina Jablonski in *Skin: A Natural History*, positions skin as our "face to the world" (Jablonski 2006: 7). Clothing, according to North, is considered as a foremost face that intervenes between the body and the world. She also, talks about the metaphor 'second skins', which implies that clothing is primary to embodied experience, since "the body is always a clothed body, the lived ego is always already a clothed ego. To speak of skins and egos, then, is to speak of, on and through clothing" (North 2013: 64). Transgender individuals fit in this paradigm of constructing an identity on and through their clothing, which is primary to the skin, as the body is always seen as a clothed body, which brings in a new perspective of corporeal articulation of clothing and sartorial articulation of corporeality. The most salient feature of clothing is that, it is cultural and enculturating. In the context of hijras, they articulate their sexuality and their desire to dress as women through their clothing, their male body turns into a pseudo-female appearance, and clothing becomes a primary metaphor which is articulated through their corporeality. Quinten Bell in *On Human Finery* describes clothing as "a natural extension of the body" (Bell 1976: 19). It is through the clothing that one is represented in the world and clothing is thus corporeally and intercorporeally significant. Catherine Millot in *Horsexe: An Essay on Transsexuality* mentions, "for transsexuals a book may be read by its cover, and the bodily frame is thought of as another articles of clothing, to be retouched at will" (Millot 1990: 116). In the context to this, Jay Prosser questions, "Does sex reassignment suggest the body as a surface in which the self is substantially invested or conversely the body's substance as superficial to the self?" (Prosser 1998: 63). He explains in "A Skin of One's Own: Towards a Theory of Transsexual Embodiment," that more than the hormone therapy that it precedes, sex reassignment surgery is considered the hinge upon which the "transsexual's "transsex" turns: the magical moment of "sex change" (ibid). Feminist theorist Elizabeth

Grosz in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994), brings out the sexual difference between trans woman and woman, and mentions that, a transsexual may look like a woman, but can never feel like or be a woman. Prosser in this context mentions:

> Looking like a woman but not really one, yet after the "crude transformations" have, "disappointed" his "fantasy of gender, hardly looking like a man, the transsexual as transmorgrified, hermaphroditic prodigy falls into the very space/time ("gap," interval) of sexual difference. This "gap" is not only between man and woman but between signifier and referent: it is in this Lacanian sense (the fact that the signifiers of man and woman can never fully or fixedly inscribe themselves on referential bodies) that sexual difference is said to fail (Prosser 1998: 64).

Most of the transsexual autobiographies talk about being trapped in the wrong body. It is frequently articulated in the autobiographies, the kind of alienation that *hijras* and FTMs feel because of their bodies, which Prosser called "second skin" (1998: 68), and transsexuality is expressed as the desire to shed or to step out of this skin. In *Becoming A Visible Man* (2004), Green expresses a sense of dissociation from the body when, she was labeled as "the other mother," a label he couldn't accept, he mentions. That label fixed me in the female body that I had spent a lifetime ignoring because it didn't express me. I felt like a father, not an "other mother" (Green 2004: 22). Leslie Feinberg, in the *Journal of Transsexual,* mentions of a desire of embodiment in terms of shedding the body like skin: "I think how nice it would be to unzip my body from forehead to navel and go on vacation. But there is no escaping it, I'd have to pack myself alone" (Feinberg 1980: 20). Shifting from the body as a single piece of clothing, to the body as a suitcase full of clothing, with the "self" packed inside, Feinberg's imagery suggests the 'true self' as encased in a restrictive or burdensome outer layer. Transsexuals continue to deploy the image of wrong embodiment because of being trapped in the wrong 'body'. Green mentions about Blake, an Afro-American Indian University student, who emphasized that "We are not women who wanted to be men. We are men who are largely invisible

because we were born into female bodies" (2004: 64). So, there is this image of internal body attempting to force its way out of the referential flesh. Khosla mentions about the pre-transition phase where he was stuck in the state of in-betweeness when he was going through mastectomy and at the same time he got his periods.

> I was still bandaged and tubed, I got my period. It was not just physically uncomfortable- weakly stumbling to the bathroom to insert a tampon with this contraption of bandages and tubes dangling from my chest- it was psychologically jarring. Here I was in my most tentative stages of developing my male body only to be shocked back into the reality of my female one (Khosla 2006: 51).

The conflict between inner and outer body is resolved and the figure of authentic body seeking to break out of its outer body prison was incarnated. There are various theorists who have given the process of identity formation in transsexuals, but FTM transsexual Aaron H. Devor, formulates a fourteen stage model on the basis on the earlier models.

4.5 TRAJECTORY OF TRANS IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Aaron H. Devor traced the identity development of transsexuals, and it involves a number of stages of examination and analysis, which are both interpersonal and intrapersonal. His fourteen stage model is based on Vivienne Cass's model of homosexual identity formation. Although, a number of theorists have given the process of tracing the transsexual identity development and assimilation, Devor's model is built upon a model of homosexual identity formation by Cass (1979, 1984) and Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh's (1988) work about 'role exit'. Frank Lewins (1995) proposed a six-step model of transsexual identity development and assimilation. Brain Tully (1992) described a sequence of explorations which he observed being employed by many transsexual people. Jeremy Baumback and Louisa Turner (1992) also discussed a step-by-step process of transsexual identity formation. Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) included transsexuals in her experiences which she described as "becoming and ex". Anne Bolin (1988) took an anthropological approach to the exit and entry of roles which transsexual people undergo

and described gender and sex reassignment as a ritualized rite of passage. The focus here is to examine the ways in which this model might apply for hijras as well. As Devor (2008) mentions, this model is based on twenty years of sociological field research, personal experience, social and professional interactions with a wide range of transgender individuals, majority of whom have identified themselves as female-to-male transsexuals. It is important in this regard that the model can't be applied to all transsexuals in the same way. The model presents the commonly followed path traced by Devor for transgender individuals and need not share a particular outcome.

Aaron Devor in "Witnessing and Mirroring: A Fourteen Stage Model of Transsexual Identity Formation" discussed about the two themes that he figured as part of the entire transsexual identity formation.   He talks about the concept of 'witnessing' and 'mirroring'. According to him, "each one of us has a deep need to be witnessed by others for whom we are. Each of us wants to see ourselves mirrored in others' eyes as we see ourselves. These interactive processes, witnessing and mirroring, are part of everyone's lives" (Devor: 2008, 46). The term 'Witnessing' has been used by Warren S. Poland in "The Analyst's Witnessing and Otherness" (2000), in a psychological sense that, once transsexuals feel validated and confirmed, their sense of 'self' is reinforced. Witness is a concept, more like 'passing' as man or woman for transgender individuals. Transition allows them to make changes that enable others to witness them as they see themselves. He further mentions, "If one is only witnessed and never mirrored one can end up feeling profoundly alone in the world. One can feel as if they are the only one of their kind" (Poland 2008: 46). He uses 'mirroring' as another term, "about seeing oneself in the eyes of others like oneself, a need to be validated by people who are a part of the same social group within which one identifies themselves" (ibid: 47).

The first stage of the transsexual identity formation model by Devor involves a sense of anxiety that arises from one's dissonance between sex and gender. It arises from the non-conformity and not identifying with the social role or sex assigned to the individual. Usually, it is traced back to the earliest memories and evolves over time at a later stage. It

results in discomfort with the individuals around and a feeling of not fitting in the gender roles. Females prefer the activities and/ or companionship of males whereas, males prefer to be with females and doing things that females usually prefer to do. In this context, Vidya in *I am Vidya* mentions:

> What's wrong with my preferences? Why should a boy only wear shirts and trousers? I like skirts and blouses. Why can't I wear them? Why do people find something odd in what came to me naturally? (Vidya 2007: 29)

For Vidya, it was dance and a fondness to wear feminine clothes that made her closer to the feminine self. "I put on one of Manju's skirts. I shut the door and started to dance" (ibid: 28). More than the abiding anxiety, it was identification and imitating femininity that was a part of Vidya's childhood.

With female-to-male transsexuals, a sense of dissociation with their bodies started in childhood, but it took them a while to figure out their identity. It lead to anxiety and awkwardness at social gatherings. Valerio in *The Testosterone Files* mentions, "The fact that my mother perceives me, naturally as a little girl is a source of great pain for me… this is the strongest of our conflicts and will endure, in various guises, throughout the remainder of my childhood" (Valerio 2006: 34). The first stage as given by Devor doesn't apply for hijras, but somehow fits for FTMs

The second stage, arises from the 'identity confusion' about the assigned gender and sex at the time of birth, talks about the non-conformity about the gender roles assigned, and is often confused about the nature of their identity. Devor (2008) also mentions about the peer pressure where parents, teachers, and peers will routinely do everything in their power to persuade out of such ideas as they witness them as belonging in their originally assigned gender and sex. There is a kind of social and psychological pressure to conformity which usually cause individuals to either temporarily abandon these kinds of thoughts from others and/or from themselves (Zucker and Bradley 1995). Adolescents and adults may also respond to gender anxieties by feeling confused about the

appropriateness of their originally assigned gender. In the case of Valerio, he was asked to compromise and wear dresses, he would say, "you have to compromise Anita. You don't have to advertise the way you are" (Valerio 2006: 34). His mother will make "dramatic speeches about how I have to compromise and wear dresses" (ibid). Valerio didn't identify himself as a girl and was confused about his identity. He even identified himself as a lesbian for a short period of time. Laxmi also faced similar confusion regarding her identity in the early stages of her life. "I am effeminate,' I began, 'and people tease me. I am also sexually attracted to men. Why am I not like everyone else? Am I abnormal?" (Laxmi 2015: 11). She identified herself as gay, "I learnt a new word. 'gay'. I learnt its meaning, learnt how it applied to people like me. I was gay not abnormal" (ibid: 12). Before identifying herself as a hijra she identified herself as a homosexual.

The third stage talks about identity comparisons about the originally assigned gender and sex. At this stage, individuals accept the fact that the physical sex of their body has assigned them their gender status and they attempt to find ways to successfully navigate between social expectations and their own needs for self-expression. Khosla in his autobiography mentions, "as soon as we sat down, our waiter appeared. The first thing he did ask if he could get us two "ladies" a drink…His words knocked me right back to square one. As if I was fooling myself. Like there really was no way out (Khosla 2006: 56).

It is a difficult phase to find a balance between one's post transition identity and how people perceive one as a member of the former sex. The irony here is the fact that hijras are generally identified through their feminine sartorial styles and it is easy for onlookers to find a difference between a hijra and a woman. Though there is a need for hijras too to gender pass as woman which Devor terms as 'witnessing'.

In this stage, there is a sense of comparison and individuals compare their feelings, behaviors, and identities from other individuals of their gender and sex. They exhibit to witness and to find ways to share a common ground with others of their assigned sex and

gender, and thus seeing more of them mirrored back. Girls are allowed to be masculine and experiment until puberty within the relatively comfortable confines of this socially acknowledged and accepted variant form of gender role expression. In many cases, this translates into an identity as a butch lesbian by the way of popular perception that lesbians are women who want to be men (Devor 1997). Similarly, males may become drawn to lifestyles which allow them a community to express their inherent femininity. Some of them may be drawn to the drag scene where they will be given room to call themselves by female names, dress in women's clothing and be appreciated for their femininity. Others may simply enact 'femininity' in smaller but more subtle ways in their everyday lives.

The next stage i.e., fourth, deals with the discovery of transsexualism or transgenderism. Devor talks about identifying themselves as 'transgender' or 'transsexed' when individuals first learn that transsexualism exists. Some people learn it at an early stage and for most of the people, this takes place at a later stage in their lives, after living with feelings of abiding anxiety, identity confusions and identity comparisons. They finally find the mirror in which they can see themselves. Green identified as a lesbian in the early years of his life, and when he came to know about transsexuals and SRS, he met Lou Sullivan and Steve Dain, and that's when he found his identity, that is in congruity with his feelings. "I realized all the men in the room had once had female bodies. It was eerie and encouraging all at once" (Green 2004: 22). I was entering another world, finding another sense of myself that felt more solid, more real, and more possible than ever before. Was I really a boy now? Yes I answered. "Yes I am" (ibid). Similar experience is shared by Vidya too, as she identified herself as a woman and she mentioned, "My womanhood was raging to destroy my manhood, incinerating all the advice I was receiving" (Vidya 2010: 74). It took them less time to come in terms with their feelings and desires.

The stage five is about identity confusion about their trans identities. Individuals may or might not actively engage with the idea as an option for themselves. They engage in the

deeper level of both internal and external inquiry as a response to their initial discoveries. Hijras and transmen from the autobiographical narratives didn't experience this stage, as after dealing with anxiety due to their gender identity, once they were sure of it, they underwent transition.

The stage six is identity comparison about the transsexual or transgender identity. In this stage, individuals are indulged in the possibility that they might be transgendered, and try to affirm their trans identities to come to a definitive conclusion. Individuals compare themselves between themselves and the transgendered individuals. At this stage, the focus is on comparisons between oneself and transgender individuals, between oneself and people from one's originally assigned gender and sex; and also between oneself and people of the gender and sex to which one might be transitioning. Hijras didn't experience this phase as seen from the autobiographies, but Khosla, in a few instances, compared himself with men, which often lead to anxiety. "How am I supposed to have people call me 'he' at work when I still look the same? How fucking stupid. I cannot celebrate any of this until I no longer look like woman (Khosla 2006: 57). This is in Devor's conceptual framework termed as 'witnessing'.

The seventh stage is tolerance of transsexual or transgender identity. For some people, stages of 'identity comparison' and 'identity tolerance' are very brief and overlapping. For them, the relief offered by the possibility of a transsexual or transgendered identity is so great that they are able to come to a rapid tolerance or even acceptance of that identity almost as soon as they become aware of it. Green in this context mentions, "most of us are seeking perfection when measured against external stereotypes; rather, most of us are seeking an internal sense of comfort when measured against our own self of ourselves…Rationality and vanity may play equal parts in the quest for a body that is pleasing, both to oneself and to others" (Green 2004: 90). It is accepting the transsexual identity over the time and being complacent with the 'self'.

The eighth stage deals with the delay before acceptance of transsexual or transgendered identity. Many individuals experience a period of delay until they have enough

information about their identity and about transsexualism and they can be sure that, it offers them the correct solution to their gender discomfort. Transmen or hijras didn't experience this stage as seen from the autobiographies. Though, Green, Kailey, Valerio and Khosla turned to self-help groups by FTMs in order to gain information about SRS.

Individuals at this stage also turn to transsexuals for a mirroring confirmation of their transsexual or transgender identity. They contact support groups, internet, and social contacts to understand and know through personal experiences of others in similar situation. Through discussions about transition, and social identity formation, individuals compare their feelings and experiences with those who have already transitioned to a transsexual identity.

The ninth stage is accepting their transgender or transsexual identity. With accepting, marks the beginning of their social identity as a man or woman. By the time, individuals reach this point they have gathered enough information and have worked through their emotional anxieties about the subject that they are able to say to themselves and to others. This stage is experienced by Laxmi, Vidya and Revathi as a hijra and Green, Kailey, Valerio and Khosla accept their identity as 'transman'.

The tenth stage is the delay before transition. Not all transsexual and transgender individuals undergo physical or social transition. For a variety of reasons, such as health, family or financial considerations, a few individuals do not undergo transition or decide to undergo a few transformative operations due to financial and health considerations. Laxmi doesn't undergo *nirvan* as she identifies that she is a hijra even without *nirvan*. On the other hand, Vidya and Revathi had to wait for a longer period of time to undergo emasculation due to financial problems. Vidya was waiting for her *nirvan* for so long; it was such a crucial phase of her life as evident from a chapter in her autobiography titled "Nirvaan".

The eleventh stage involves transition and this stage encompass changes in social presentation of self, hormonal treatments, and various medical surgeries for sex

reassignment. During this stage, the effects of testosterone are particularly salient. People transitioning from female to male, benefit in their everyday lives from the relatively rapid and dramatic effects of testosterone treatments which lower their voices, increase muscle mass, and change hair growth patterns on their faces, bodies and heads. Khosla underwent mastectomy twice as the changes weren't visible after the first surgery, so he underwent second surgery to get a flat chest. For transmen, mastectomy and hysterectomy are the two surgeries that are crucial for the change, for hijras it is the *nirvan* or emasculation that plays an important role. Green mentions, "I've undergone a bilateral mastectomy via double incision, a hysterectomy and oophorectomy via abdominal incision, and a metoidioplasty without urethral extension" (Green 2004: 114). Surgery is very crucial for transmen and it requires accepting the fact that one is altering his/her body, and this means accepting limitations that one's body has, before one gets on the operating table. It requires accepting that one will not come scar less, without wounds or compromises.

Stage twelve is acceptance of post-transition gender/sex identity. For many individuals who have transitioned, the acceptance of a transsexual identity is identical with the acceptance of themselves as actually being a member of another 'gender' and 'sex', even if bodies and lives do not yet display that truth to others. As evident from the select autobiographies, Laxmi, Revathi and Vidya accepted their identity as a hijra and as a woman. In the case of female-to-male transsexuals, Green, Khosla, Valerio and Kailey established and accepted their identities as a man.

The thirteenth stage in the process of identity formation is integration as it takes time to integrate in the society after the post-transition and once that is done, they find themselves firmly established in the right gender and sex. They also find themselves able to create a life for themselves which allows them to integrate their past with their post-transition lives. This phase was found in fragments and was evident in pre and post-gender transition in the autobiographies.

Pride is the fourteenth stage and it implies both a personal sense of pride in oneself and a political stance. The pride of transsexual and transgendered people thus has to be seen as an ongoing accomplishment in the face of the relentless shaming that society most frequently inflicts upon transgendered people. In the autobiographies, hijras and female-to-male transsexuals felt a sense of pride in identifying themselves with their identities after transition and tried to assert their identity through their body and mannerisms. There are instances in hijra autobiographies where they were ridiculed by the society but they still established their identity which is true to their 'self' and fight for their rights as hijras or trans woman.

The identity formation model as given by Aaron Devor cannot be said to have traced all the phases of transgender experience, as experiences are subjective in nature. As mentioned by Devor, the model was applied on female-to-male transsexuals, it cannot be applied to hijras as there are differences in the phases that hijras undergo and also because of the cultural differences between the two.

It is mentioned in the chapter that transgender experiences are subjective in nature, but as evident from the study they are complex too. It is very important to understand the constitutive process of autobiographical subjectivity i.e., "memory, experience, identity, embodiment and agency" (Smith and Watson 2001: 15-16). The narrator depends on the access of memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past, and memory is both source and authenticator of the autobiographical acts. Memory is also crucial to individual experiences of body. Mediated through memory and language, experience is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present. The narrators of the autobiographical narratives make themselves known through acts of identification and by implication and difference. The body is a site of the autobiographical knowledge as memory itself is embodied, and autobiographical narrative is a site of "embodied knowledge" as narrators are "embodied subjects" (Smith and Watson 2001: 37). Agency is yet another aspect of autobiographical narratives, theorist Louis Althusser and Judith Butler situates agency in what she calls as the

'performativity' of subjectivity. The upcoming chapter will deal with the above mentioned autobiographical acts which are a part of subjective transgender experience. The notion of 'mimesis', which is a philosophical concept, is used to understand the gendered aspects in hijra and transsexual identity. The concept of 'agency', 'habitus' and 'performativity' that are important to conceive gender as a culturally and socially determined construction, and as a performance and practice, is further analysed in the upcoming chapters based on the select autobiographies.

CHAPTER 5

MIMESIS OF TRANS SEXUALITY

"In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself-as well as its contingency"

Judith Butler, 1990

5.1 GENDER AND IMITATION

Hijras and transsexuals are gender identities, the former one being a cultural identity in South Asia and the latter signifying female-to-male and male-to-female transsexuals under the medical/blanket term 'transsexuals'. The two gender identities emerge through an array of bodily, sexual and imitative practices that include, cultural and the medical, which further leads to the process of 'becoming', and connote the mimetic practices of already constructed gender, in order to establish one's gender identity. The social construction of transgendered embodiments is considered as mimetic and imitative in nature. Therefore, it is important to examine the gendered modes of embodiment from the perspective of social interactions, in order to understand the transgender individuals' experience in a heteronormative social context and to understand why certain constructions are considered more imitative than other gendered social constructions. Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* questions, "Why is femininity easily impersonated or performed while masculinity seems resilient to imitation" (Halberstam 1998: 28). Not only is imitated masculinity 'resilient to imitation', but also any form of gender imitation is resilient to imitation due to the fact that individuals have internalized commonly accepted essentialist, and established gender identities that are acknowledged in day-to-day interactions. In order to understand 'mimesis' in the context of transgender identities, it is important to understand the earliest meanings and implications of the term.

The term 'mimesis' traces back to ancient Greek philosopher Plato, who introduced the concept of 'mimesis'. This term has various implied meanings including the one suggested by Matthew Potolsky in *Mimesis* which mentions that, "it is derived from the root *mimos,* a noun designating both a person who imitates and a specific genre of performance based on imitation of stereotypical character traits" (Potolsky 2006: 16). Plato theorized 'mimesis' in various dialogues and writings, especially in *Republic* in the context of art, painting and especially poetry. 'Mimesis' is critical to Plato's understanding and philosophy of 'Truth', and in shaping his theory of 'Ideas'. He disregarded the 'mimetic' process and criticized it, as it produces the mere copies of the original that are 'twice removed from reality'. For Plato, the poetic process, i.e., 'art' is merely an 'imitation' of the 'Truth' that lies in the 'Idea', which is a form of degradation of the original. However, Potolsky in *Mimesis* mentions that mimesis is not related to just poetics but also "to the ways in which we know and interact with others and our environment" (ibid: 2). The word 'mimesis' originally signified 'miming' or 'acting' in speech or in action, and is often translated as 'imitation' and 're-presentation'. Thus, Plato considers mimetic process as inherently inferior as it consists of producing or performing mere imitations that can never be equal to their original counterparts. To Plato, the danger of this idea is that these imitations can be taken for 'Truth' by the audience, which could aim to replace the 'original' or could pretend to be the 'original'. He explains 'mimesis' through his idea of allegory of cave, and that 'mimesis' produces mere illusions, instead of the original.

According to its context, as Potolsky mentions, "mimesis takes on different guises in different historical contexts, masquerading under a variety of related terms and translations: emulation, mimicry, dissimulation, doubling, theatricality, realism, identification, correspondence, depiction, verisimilitude, resemblance" (ibid: 1). Mimesis carries not only the meanings and implications suggested by Potolsky, but also produces similarities as Walter Benjamin in *On the Mimetic Faculty* argues that it is "a rudiment of the one's powerful compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically" (Benjamin 2005: 160). Mimesis itself carries the aspect of 'adaptive behavior' which is not limited

to Plato's meaning, but it can be perceived based on the physical and bodily acts. The notion of 'mimesis' or the 'mimetic process' in gendered terminology provides a way and implies that gender is constructed and produced through the process of constant stylization of the body. Yet another theorist, Arne Melberg in the *Theory of Mimesis* describes that, "Mimesis is inherently and always already a repetition - meaning that mimesis is always the meeting place of two opposing but connected ways of thinking, acting and making: similarity and difference" (Melberg 2003: 1). In the context of mimesis, Butler's ideation of 'gender' in *Gender Trouble* seems apt as it emphasizes on gender as "the repeated 'stylization' of the 'body', a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 1990: 43-44). Mimesis, as an imitative act, in order to establish an identity, forms an important designation in transgender embodiment due to their non-conformity with the compulsory binarism. Gender, is thus constructed based on the repeated performances of social norms in order to abide by the heteronormative aspects that present themselves as natural. The repetition of acts have the power to distinguish those who conform to the established binary gender categories, from the non-conforming ones to the gender norms. Critic Kath Weston in "Gender in Real Time: Power and Transcience in a Visual Age" points out that "[t]he second iteration is never the first iteration; with repetition you may have what looks like sameness, because 'it' occurs again, but because this is again and not for the first time, there is always a difference the second time around" (Weston 2006: 112). Accordingly, the alternative 'stylization of bodies', i.e., transgender, drag queen, transvestites, can be seen as subversive and it indeed disrupts and challenges the binary categories of gender. Butler in *Gender Trouble* mentions, "[d]rag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself" (1990: 175), which suggests that gender becomes a form of 'drag' which is a set of imitations within the system of compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity. This suggests that there cannot be any 'realness' and 'naturalness' associated with gender. Kath Weston in her study conducted on transgendered individuals "Do Clothes Make the Woman?: Gender, Performance Theory and Lesbian Eroticism" (1993), describes

transgender embodiment as a 'double mimesis' that makes them the 'imitation of an imitation'. It could be inferred that gendered performance is socially constructed rather than inherent, gender appears to be a stylized routine than a natural or fixed identity. This stems from Butler's treatise that there are, "three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance" (Butler 1990: 175). The concept of 'passing' as discussed in chapter three, describes the 'imitative' aspect of gender as passing successfully in the desired gender role discloses the fact that gender is an imitation, an identity that has no natural basis. According to this, Butler asserts that "hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations" (Butler 1993: 125). Butler's analysis of 'sex', 'gender', and 'sexuality' demonstrates that individuals are driven to 'perform' their sex, gender, and sexuality accordingly. Butler shows the way these three categories are intermingled and imposed upon individuals "as a regulatory fiction" and the way these categories mask "the gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler 1990: 180). Concerning the intermingled categories of sex and gender, Monique Wittig in "One is not Born a Woman" argues that:

> …by admitting that there is a "natural" division between women and men, we naturalize history, we assume that "men" and "women" have always existed and will always exist. Not only do we naturalize history, but also consequently we naturalize the social phenomena which express our oppression, making change impossible. For example, instead of seeing giving birth as a forced production, we see it as a "natural," "biological" process, forgetting that in our society births are planned (demography), forgetting that we ourselves are programmed to produce children (Wittig 1992: 11).

From this observation, it can be stated that gender is something that one does or performs, and depicts the performative nature of gender. The aspects of social interaction also plays an important role in the lives of FTM transsexuals and hijras as their embodiment falls outside the binary domain. There are instances in the autobiographies

that depicts the unequal treatment with hijras and FTMs in their social lives, as their modes of embodiments are perceived as 'unnatural'. Gender norms are the reason that make visible the social gender arrangement and it is one of the major issues of concern for transgender individuals. For example, the restrooms as seen in many places, among many other social facilities, are organized according to the binary gender categories. This notion of 'surveillance' as coined by Foucault was discussed in detail in Chapter two. Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" mentions about, "A sex/gender system" which is "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity" (Rubin 1975:159), and turns gender into a fixed and given entity that is assigned during the birth of an individual. This system/process is based on the essentialist assumption that there are only two gender categories as gender follows from sex and hence perceives other identities as 'unnatural'. This essentialist understanding and associated gender norms are the reason for injustice, as there are instances in hijra autobiographies, where Vidya was harassed by being called a 'girlie' and later was commented upon by onlookers that 'he walks like a female!'(Vidya 2007: 30). Revathi also mentions being called effeminate, "you mother fucking sissy" (Revathi 2010: 10). Green also mentions, "when people make their sexuality obvious, some people react in a range of negative ways, from squeamish discomfort and giggling to violent anger and assault" (Green 2004: 157). Through these instances traced from autobiographies, it can be understood that one fails to understand that gender identities are 'performative' in nature and constructed through a process, and some gestures, acts and modes of presenting oneself can extend far beyond one's physical features and one's identified/designated sexes. Identities in this view, should be constructed away from the premises of gender norms and bodily transition, and modifications can be interpreted as a way to interact through the body. Kailey accounts his experience with the transition where he mentions, "Transition is a process, not a product, and spans a period of time that's usually decided by a transsexual's desires and bank account. A question I'm frequently asked when I "come out" as a transsexual is "Are you done" As if I were a Thanksgiving Turkey" (Kailey 2005: 3). The aspect of

transition (social and bodily) as could be evident from the autobiographies doesn't come overnight, it is a process of constant and continuous becoming to establish a social identity. Green also mentions, "transitions are not accomplished overnight (sometimes a gradual process is better in the long run, and some surgical techniques are potentially more effective when the body is mature)" (2004: 132).

5.2 PERFORMING 'MAN'/ 'WOMAN' THROUGH TRANSGENDER EMBODIMENTS

From the constant influx of phrases like 'be a man' or 'act like a lady', one presumes that gender is a 'performance' and there are various modes through which it can be 'enacted'. Hence, gender identity is a kind of performance that extends beyond the biological sex, physicality and it incorporates 'sign vehicles' (a term used by Erving Goffman). In an everyday interaction, bodily signals, manners, habits, and accoutrements are significant and informative about the presentation of trans self. Goffman's theory of 'interaction order' talks about the body, which is seen as important and a deterministic factor which influences the course of social interactions. It elaborates on how individuals control and manage their bodies, as he talks about the importance of body, self-identity and social identity. The transgender embodiment is both bodily and socially, as Kailey mentions, "socialization is often a massive barrier that's difficult to overcome" (Kailey 2005: 4). Due to the gender norms, it is the society that decides the identity of an individual. Kailey mentions his constant disregard of gender norms and mentions:

> Women have been told to "act like men"… what if there was no such thing as "acting like a man." And people simply acted in ways that came naturally to them? What if there were no threats to masculinity or femininity because the concepts were fluid and anyone could be "as masculine" or as "feminine" as he or she wanted to be? (ibid: 16)

Green also talks about his state of constant existential crisis that he experiences as an FTM transsexual:

If people perceived me as male, I had to worry about whether they might find out that I had a female body, and then would feel betrayed or deceived and entitled to punish me for it. But if people perceive me as female and treated me the way they treated women in general, I felt invisible, as if I didn't exist (Green 2004: 21).

The above reference describes what Erving Goffman in his work *Stigma* attempts to distinguish between "social and personal identity" (Goffman 1963a: 128). He mentions that these two types of identity can be understood through "ego or felt identity" (ibid). Goffman uses social identity to define individual's identifications and categorizations, and personal identity to point out the ways in which an individual is different from others. He defined 'ego' identity as one's feeling about their own identity. He defines it as "subjective and reflexive matter" (ibid). This argument about social identity and personal identity is important in the context of transgender discourse as, their personal identity is different from the social one, as it is a process of establishing and syncing their personal identity with the social one. The social identity is important to understand the position of gendered bodies in social interaction. Goffman further distinguished social identity into 'virtual social identity' and 'actual social identity' where the former refers to how one sees him/herself. The latter is focused on how others see him/her. In case of inconsistency between the virtual social identity and actual social identity, Goffman mentions that this inconsistency "spoils his social identity; it has the effect of cutting him off from society and from himself so that he stands a discredited person facing an unaccepting world" (ibid: 31). This suggests that one's virtual social identity is majorly governed by a desire of recognition by others who have accepted social structures and norms, and one tends to present him/herself as a 'normal' member of a society.

5.3 BODILY DISPOSITONS DURING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Chris Shilling indicates that "Erving Goffman's writings appear to place more emphasis on the body as integral to human agency" (Shilling 1993: 82). It can be interpreted from Goffman's analysis that "embodied individuals are not autonomous" (ibid). When individuals are in the presence of one another in a situation/context where there is no

verbal communication, they inevitably participate in a communication. According to Goffman, individuals seem to be the agents of their bodies as:

> […] significance is ascribed to certain matters that are not necessarily connected with particular verbal communications. These comprise bodily appearance and personal acts: dress, bearing, movement and position, sound level, physical gestures such as waving or saluting, facial decorations, and broad emotional expression (Goffman 1963b: 33).

Apparently, from Goffman's perspective, bodies are not socially produced modes of embodiment, they are rather reduced to sign-vehicles and body idioms which are not "necessarily connected to particular verbal communications" (ibid). This specific approach to the human body through sign vehicles creates a sense of dualism on the individual's identity through the distinction between self-identity and social identity. Individuals have the authority to manage their social identities, but their meanings are socially decided and determined, in this case, through social interactions. As certain types of bodies are established as 'meaningful' in society, people become familiar with these embodiments and they tend to be or become what is expected by the body idiom.

> One of the most evident means by which the individual shows himself to be situationally present is through the disciplined management of personal appearance or "personal front," that is, the complex of clothing, make-up, hairdo, and or surface decorations he carries about on his person. … It should be noted that with these matters of personal appearance the obligation is not merely to possess the equipment but also exert the kind of sustained control to keep it properly arranged (Goffman 1963b: 25).

This shows how the management of the 'body' has an influence over the course of everyday life. Goffman specifies two significant features of his theorization, i.e., individuals can manage their own bodies and their sign-vehicles; but, they are perceived in accordance with the "body idiom" which "is a conventionalized discourse" (ibid: 34). The major criticism of Goffman's work is concerned with the mechanisms which would

link body management of individuals within the bounded space of interaction in order to wider social norms of body idiom.

The discourses about sex, gender and sexuality of transgender individuals also draws on the concepts of 'habitus' referred by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's conception of 'habitus' talks about the institutionalized, routinized practices; the processes by which norms are authorized, incorporated and reproduced in the everyday social action of bodies. Butler describes the 'habitus' as "those embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own obviousness" (Bourdieu 1977: 152). Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus' emphasizes the reproduction of the social through routinized practices that are structured and organized within the social fields in which individuals are embedded. 'Bodily hexis' (a term used by Bourdieu) refers to the routinized performances embodied in the way in which people dress, stand, speak, think and feel (Bourdieu 1977: 93-94). Butler's arguments about the performative may be read as a critique of Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' as routinized practices. Butler argues that habitus "fails to take account of the way in which a performative can break with existing contexts, refiguring the terms of legitimate utterances themselves" (Butler 1997: 150). "Transgender performance involves the simultaneous production and subjugation of 'subjects' through creating "a space in which norms about gender are mimed, reworked, re-signified" (Butler 1993: 124-125). The autobiographies chosen for this study offers numerous accounts where performativity is at play and hijras, as seen from the autobiographies, mime, re-signify and re-work the gender roles. In Vidya's account, before the emasculation operation, writing their female names on wall, was also seen as a token of feminine approximation. Vidya mentions:

> Many female names were scrawled on the wall, some in ink, and others in charcoal. The room seemed to be reserved exclusively for transgender. Our predecessors in the room had scribbled their names on the wall, presumably because they feared they could die on the operation table. That was their way of ensuring the survival of at least their names after hazardous operation we call nirvana (Vidya 2007: 12).

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Performativity also focuses in relation to the social dimensions of cultural production, the actual embodied doing of the social. According to this view, performance is a part of everyday life, it is a way of generating meaning through embodied processes and practices. For Bourdieu, these embodied processes and practices are a part of 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977). Butler describes the 'habitus' as "those embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own obviousness" (Butler 1997: 152). Bourdieu's theory of the 'habitus' emphasizes the reproduction of the social through routinized practices that are structured and organized within the social fields in which individuals are embedded. While habitus is structured by 'field' as Bourdieu mentions, "the networks, meanings, rules and institutions that constitute social identities- the social actor's perceptions of the field are provided by the habitus" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). Gender, for example is produced within the individual through primary socialization into codes of masculinity and femininity. Green mentions the social construction of gender as:

> It is reasonable to assume that I am a man and that I enjoy all the customary attributes of the masculine gender within the society in which I live. This is an "incorrigible proposition" part of the set of beliefs we hold that define what is real, that in turn defines the interpretive structure of the onlooker, the one who is analyzing…any attempt to make another person's gender a solitary object that can be isolated and analyzed is doomed to failure, not because gender is a social construction… but because gender, even though it is imposed by society, is also a private matter, aspects of which *may or may not* be publicly expressed, and it cannot be wholly abstracted from the subject's control (Green 2004: 190-191).

Levi Strauss (1966) and Hebdige (1991) observes that individuals who undergo transition across binary gender categories may be viewed as 'bricoleurs', and they construct their identities out of public discourse of sex and gender. 'Bricolage' is the process of changing and subverting the role of an object in order to convey a different meaning. In order to transcend the given identity, 'mimesis' or 'imitation' comes to the fore front to build the approximate desired identity. Green mentions, "Surgery does not create flawless

body. Hiding ourselves may serve self-preservation, but it doesn't address the larger problem of social acceptance, acknowledge that what we experience is valid. To be believed, we must be seen" (Green 2004: 172).

5.4 IMITATION IN RELATION TO GENDER AND DEFYING 'DUALISM'

Another important aspect that needs to be considered with regard to 'imitation' is the way in which Butler in *Gender Trouble* talks about the drag performances and claims that drag performances reveals the 'theatricality' of gender. Michel Foucault in "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History" (1978) analyses the method of genealogy as a historical and philosophical technique and also discusses the three effective uses of history, i.e., parodic, dissociative, and sacrificial. Dissociative and sacrificial are not much of concern when it comes to imitation. Foucault's assertion of the parodic use of history coincides with Butler's discussion of drag and the manner in which drag reveals the theatricality of gender. Both these concepts are aligned and much of the discussion about performativity and drag performances are influenced by the critical observations of Foucault and Nietzsche.

To expand on the notion of mimesis, Butler (1990) further uses the concept of 'psychic mimesis' which is inspired from Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia". This concept suggests that gender is a form of melancholic introjection of heteronormative norms and regulations that one is made to perform "on the skin, through the gestures, the movements, and the gait (that array of corporeal theatrics understood as gender presentation)," that describe the gender identity (Butler 1990: 134). However, gender is "a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself" (ibid: 127). As gender does not correspond to an inner essence, it structures one's bodily disposition and appearance through the process of identification in accordance with a model without an original.

Apart from Butler, philosopher and gender theorist Elizabeth Grosz, in *Volatile Bodies* (1994), also talks about corporeality and the construction of bodies. She mentions some of the key features of the received history about the current conceptions of 'bodies'.

Philosopher Descartes, instituted a 'dualism' which is an assumption that there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substance, mind and body, each of which inhabits its self-contained sphere. The idea was formulated as 'cartesian dualism' and there are at least three lines of investigation of the body in the contemporary thought which may be regarded as the heirs of 'cartesianism'. They are:

In the first line of investigation, the body is primarily regarded as an object for the natural sciences, particularly in life sciences, biology and medicine, and conversely the body is amenable to the humanities and social sciences particularly (emotions, sensations, experiences and attitudes), philosophy (deals with the body's ontological and epistemological status and implications), and ethnography (for example; the body's cultural variability, its social transformation are analyzed. The body, either is understood in terms of organic and instrumental functioning in the natural sciences or is posited as merely extended, merely physical, an object like any other in humanities and social sciences. Both in different ways ignore the specificity of bodies in their research. Body is subject to change and undergo social and surgical transformation as in the case of transgender individuals who do not confirm to the binary dichotomous paradigm of thought. Green in this context mentions, "I don't care what people think about my reconstructed genitals, or about the fact that I was long treated as a girl…I've broken barriers, lived on both sides of the gender fence, and overcome my preconceptions about sexuality" (Green 2004: 167-8).

The second line of investigation regards the body in terms of metaphors that construe it as an instrument, a tool, or a machine at the disposal of consciousness, a vessel occupied by an animating, willful subjectivity. The body is typically regarded as passive and reproductive but largely unproductive, an object over which struggles between its 'inhabitant' and others/exploiters may be possible. Body in the context of transgender individuals is a medium to express their 'self' to the outside world. "I think it took me more than forty years to achieve real presence, the kind that is beyond the self; but the only proof of it is in the strength of one's connectedness with others, the kind of connectedness that I could not truly feel until I became a visible man" (Green 2004: 169).

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In the third line of investigation, body is commonly considered as a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, and a mode of rendering public, and communicate what is essentially private (ideas, thoughts, beliefs, feelings and affects). Green mentions that, "surgery does not create a flawless body. Hiding ourselves may serve self-preservation, but it does not address the larger problem of social acceptance, acknowledgement that what we experience is valid. To be believed, we must be seen (ibid: 172).

Philosophers such as Sphinoza, Nietzsche and Vico have questioned the terms within the Cartesian dualism' and Sphinoza's work represents a highly influential position that rejects Cartesian dualism'. Sphinoza's model of the body is fundamentally "non-mechanistic, non-dualistic, and anti-essentialist" (Grosz 1994: 13), and is generally referred to as 'Sphinoza Monoism'. Sphinoza's ideas on body as a departure from Cartesian formulations are in wide resonance with contemporary French thoughts from Louis Althusser, through Foucault and Deleuze. Drawing from the post Cartesian account, Grosz in *Volatile Bodies*, questions whether there is an explanation for a non-dichotomous understanding of the body? She frames a model for the non-dichotomous, non-dualistic model for the understanding of body which was equivocal to the notions by post-structuralist gender theorist like Butler. Grosz suggests in her work, the parameters in which bodies could and should be seen. She presents the probable model in which bodies should be interpreted as to give space to multiple identities that emerge:

First, there is a need of an account which refuses reductionism, resists dualism-notion of corporeality i.e., which avoids not only dualism but also the very problematic of dualism, that makes alternative to it. This would give space to alternative and multiple gendered identities that exist outside the dualistic dichotomy. Queer and transgender individuals do not conform to the assigned gender identity and sexual orientation which makes it difficult for individuals to establish their identity and affirm to social norms.

Second, corporeality must no longer be associated with one sex, which then takes the burden of the other's corporeality for it. "One's sex cannot be simply reduced to and contained by one's primary and secondary sexual characteristics, because one's sex

makes a difference to every function, biological, social, cultural, if not in their operations then certainly in significance" (Grosz 1994: 22). Masculinity or femininity can be achieved and are in inherent or fixed the individual's sex.

Third, it must refuse singular modes, modes that are based on one type of body as the norm by which all others are judged. There is no single mode that is capable of representing the 'human' in all its richness and variability.

Fourth, the body must be regarded as the site of social, political, cultural, and geographic inscriptions, production or constitution. The body is not opposed to culture, it is itself a cultural, 'the' cultural product.

Fifth, any adequate model must include a psychical representation of the subject's lived body as well as of the relations between body, gestures, postures and movement in the constitution of the processes of physical representations. Both physical and social dimensions must find their place in conceptualizing the body, not in opposition to each other but necessarily interactive.

Sixth, instead of participating in i.e., adhering to one side or the other side of the binary pair, the body is neither- while also being both- the private or the public, self or the other, natural or cultural, psychical or social, instinctive or learned, genetically or environmentally determined. (Grosz 1994: 24-25)

Grosz's parameters on which body should be seen, brings in the parity and give a space for transgender and transsexual individuals as their gendered identity is constructed outside the binary (Grosz 1994: 24-25). Grosz's model considers body as a surface which should be open to social, political and geographic inscriptions, production and enactment that refuses the reductionist approach to reduce the body to dualistic notions.

When the concept of 'body' is taken into consideration, 'agency' is an important notion by Butler when it comes to 'corporeality', 'significance' and 'becoming'. The theory of 'agency' "captures the sense of how worlds *are not*, but continuously become" (Claire 2009: 51). Butler theorizes 'agency' in terms of 'signification'. She understands that the

gendered subject is constituted through 'performativity' and the notion of 'performativity' provides a theory of 'agency'. The notion of 'performativity' by Butler, focuses on three premises, i.e., first, there exists no subject that precedes action and the subject comes into being through action. The subject requires recognition from another and is constituted through this recognition which is also referred as passing. Elizabeth Grosz has traced and critiqued the concept of 'recognition' in Butler's work. Finally, recognition occurs when a performance is read in relation to a 'norm'. This means that, "the subject who desires recognition, comes into being through the ritualized repetition of acts and gestures, or desires, which upon recognition, create the illusion of essential identity" (Claire 2009: 51). This is seen in the ritualized performative practices of transgender individuals where they try to establish their identity through multiple practices of social and bodily transformation. One is recognized to the extent that one performs in accordance to the established gendered roles and norms. Stephanie Claire in "Agency, Signification and Temporality" mentions about Butler's notion of 'agency'.

> Gendered norms must be repeatedly performed because of the impossibility of inhabiting gender or fully producing gender once and for all. Because performativity requires continual repetition, there is the possibility of introducing difference into the chain of citationality. The gaps embedded in repetition are, for Butler, the location of 'agency'. This agency is in no way pure or independent from relations of power or discourse; it exists within the citational chain-a-chain, that is, of signifying relations (ibid).

In brief, Butler's theory of agency is developed in terms of signification, i.e., signification, she mentions, "harbors within itself what the epistemological discourse refers to as 'agency'" (Butler 1990: 185). Adding to the discourse of agency, "Agency is characterized as a property of the 'individual' and is understood as the power to act" (Connell and Dowsett 1992: 72; Cussins 1998: 168). Perceived discontinuities between the anatomical bodies and social identities of transgender individuals illustrate the manner in which the experience of agency is embedded in the relationship between corporeality and discourses about male and female, masculinity and femininity.

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Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu argues that, cultural values associated with maleness and femaleness, class and ethnicity are reproduced in the gestures and movements of the body. These embodied differences are enacted in routine social interaction through the way in which people dress, stand, speak, think and feel (Bourdieu 1977: 93-94). "The body is a surface on which cultural meaning associated with social values, such as age, gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality are inscribed" (Grosz 1994: 141-142). The experience of 'agency' is embedded in a set of interrelationship between 'context', 'corporeality' and 'identity'. There are several instances in the FTM transsexual autobiography that projects the individuals as agents of their body and projects the risks involved in surgery in order to construct themselves as agents or individuals with the power to act. Khosla talks about his experiences of inconsistencies between his construction of 'self' and 'corporeality'. He also mentions the manner in which 'identity' is collaboratively produced through relationship to others in a particular setting. It brings to the notion of 'doing gender' which was first used by Candace West and Don Zimmerman. The notion of 'doing gender' was criticized and further formulated as 'undoing gender' in Butler's work *Undoing Gender*.

5.5 'DOING/UNDOING' GENDER

Critics West and Zimmerman, in their study "Accounting for Doing Gender" (2009), claims that gender corresponds to the manner in which an individual identifies himself/herself as a woman or a man in social interactions using culturally structured signifiers, identified as 'doing gender'. West and Zimmerman also refers to the case of a trans woman Agnes in their study, whose story was documented by sociologist Harold Garfinkel. West and Zimmerman notes that in her daily routines Agnes definitely appeared as a woman to others. From this perspective, Agnes' story provides a significant base for West and Zimmerman's idea of 'doing gender'. In the hijra autobiographies as well as FTM transsexual autobiographies, 'doing gender' on everyday basis is a common theme, where hijras' mannerisms and sartorial style is that of women and are successful in establishing the social role of a 'woman'. Revathi mentions, "It felt so nice when the

child started addressing me as his aunt" (Revathi 2010: 163). Valerio also describes a similar situation in a chapter titled "Authority" in his autobiography where he mentions;

> My male voice appears to have more authority. People listen to me with greater attention. If I'm out with a woman friend for dinner, I get the attention of the waiter or bartender more easily than she does. They look at me for direction and act as though they expect me to pay (2006: 187).

It is ironic that on the one hand, the above instance shows the social affirmation as a man for Valerio, but on the other hand, also shows the stereotypical notions and norms attached with the gender role of a male i.e., "expect me to pay" (Valerio 2006: 187). Agnes' story emphasizes the traditional norms that determine the gendered behaviors, gestures, postures, clothing, resulting, in gender differences and the tendency to perceive an individual either as a woman or as a man. By attempting to criticize West and Zimmerman's idea of 'doing gender', Butler uses the expression of 'undoing gender' in her book entitled *Undoing Gender* to formulate an argument against gender binary. In *Undoing Gender,* Butler aims to show through her discussions on gender and sexuality, "the question of what it might mean to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life" (Butler 2004: 1). In response to this, West and Zimmerman states that "gender is not so much *undone* as *redone*" (West and Zimmerman 2009: 118).

Related to the West and Zimmerman's arguments of 'doing gender', and Butler's proposition of 'undoing gender', Catherine Connell, in her essay entitled "Doing, Undoing, or Redoing Gender?: Learning From the Workplace Experiences of Transpeople," proposes that transgender individuals simultaneously 'do/undo/redo' gender. Connell's argument is based on the analysis of the claims of the individuals whom she had interviewed for the study and the manner in which they identify their gendered dispositions in their workplaces. In her study, Connell shows that the transgender 'do' gender at workplaces and appropriate themselves in terms of gestures, postures, and clothing in accordance with the gender identities. They also 'undo' or 'redo' their gender when they open up to others about their trans-identity and

problematize their colleagues' ideals of gender identity. In the study by Connell, one of the FTM transsexual, Kyle chose to do his masculinity differently than his male coworkers. Kyle conscientiously created a "hybrid gender identity, one that combined attributes commonly labeled feminine and masculine, thus resisting the pressure he felt to shed the embodied and emotional legacies that he associated with his past as woman" (Connell 2010: 44). Butler's in *Undoing Gender* states:

> If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not "do" one's gender alone. One is always "doing" with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary (Butler 2004: 1).

From the autobiographies, it was also seen that hijras and FTM transsexuals 'undo gender' in social situations. Revathi mentions, "On the bus, all my actions- the way I held onto the railings, adjusted my sari around my waist every time I felt it slipping, my manner of mopping my face with a kerchief earned a persistent stare" (2010: 125). 'Undoing gender' in terms of Revathi can be explained as:

> I learnt to dress like a film actress by watching how others did it. I learnt to wear make-up and choose my clothes. I came to know only then that there are such things as beauty parlours that help to make one beautiful. I started going to a parlour-to get a haircut that suited my face, to tweeze my eyebrows just so and to get a facial and bleach to blackheads (ibid: 134).

The performative aspect are always accompanied by other elements that doesn't take place in isolation, they are always doing with or for another in order to establish an identity. Laxmi also mentions:

> I also started to wear my sexuality on my sleeve. I usually went to college in men's clothes, for I was still a man, but sometimes I picked up courage and landed on campus in female attire. At such times, I made it a point to wear my

favorite lipstick. I grew my fingernails long and wore small rings on various parts of my body (Laxmi 2015: 30).

For Vidya who was a theatre artist then, the inner desire to dress feminine comes to the fore while acting. She mentions:

Some onlookers teased me every now and then when my femininity came out without my knowledge during rehearsals. He came into the green room once when I had lost myself in self-admiration before the mirror after the makeup artist had put on lipstick for me (Vidya 2007: 59).

'Doing gender' is in accordance with the dependent social norms as "the matter is made more complex by the fact that the viability of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms" (Butler 2004: 2). Butler further explains:

The Hegelian tradition links desire with recognition, claiming that desire is always a desire for recognition and that it only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings…the terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable (ibid).

'Doing gender' is primarily a social relationship and it is to be perceived by others in a particular way, either as male, or female. When considering gender as a 'doing', one should go beyond the conventional binaries of 'sex' and 'gender'. Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) provides a comparative image of theatrical performances to explain how one presents in accordance with the cultural expectations. Individuals perform these gender-related acts; however gender "is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production". (West and Zimmerman 2009: 126). According to West and Zimmerman, everyone is always constructing and performing, 'doing' gender by embodying behaviors which indicate either their masculinity or femininity (by the means of clothing, gestures, etc.). Since this is a constant interaction, West and Zimmerman argues that gender cannot

be done, individuals are trying to conform themselves to the majority/average, in order to be a part of the community, thus, reiterating the gender binary distinction and the continuous existence of gendered dispositions. Social constructionists would define that gender is interactional rather than individual – meaning that it is built and developed through social interactions. In short, gender identity is not only about how one identifies one's own gender, but also about how one presents one's gender to others. Butler in this context mentions:

> The transsexual desire to become man or a woman is not to be dismissed as a simple desire to conform to established identity categories. As Kate Bornstein points out, it can be a desire for transformation itself, a pursuit of identity as a transformative exercise, an example of desire itself and a transformative activity. But even if there are, in each of these cases, desires for stable identity at work, it seems crucial to realize that a livable life does require various degrees of stability. In the same way that a life for which no categories of recognition exist is not a livable life, so a life for which those categories constitute unlivable constraint is not an acceptable option (Butler 2004: 8)

The concept of 'habitus' as used by Bourdieu talks about the institutionalized, routinized practices; the processes by which norms are authorized, incorporated and reproduced in the everyday social action of bodies.

5.6 'HABITUS' IN RELATION TO TRANSGENDERED EMBODIMENTS

The concept of 'habits' was used by Aristotle and according to Aristotle, habits are the substance of moral virtue. Aristotle's discussion regarding moral virtue begins with the statement that while intellectual virtue principally initiates in teaching, "moral virtue comes about as a result of habit" (Aristotle 1991: 19). This view implies that moral virtue is not something we possess naturally, "we are adapted by nature to receive them [excellences], and are made perfect by habit" (ibid). This shows that moral habits cannot be acquired by a mere intellectual commitment to act in a certain way, but rather by actually practicing these moral habits. Aristotle formulates the concept of 'hexis' as the

condition of learned disposition to participate in certain modes of embodiments when one encounters specific objects and circumstances. 'Habit' and 'habitus' are derived from the Greek concept of 'hexis'. 'Hexis' was further reconsidered and theorized by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Later, in the modern period, the notion of 'habitus' (Latin) derived from 'hexis' (Greek) and has been discussed by various nineteenth-century social theorists, such as Emile Durkheim. The conception of habitus is also used in the theories of sociologists and philosophers Marcel Mauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu. 'Habitus' was restored in theory by Marcel Mauss and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and become a key concept in the understanding and observation of practical embodied activities. Pierre Bourdieu re-introduced this concept in his theory of social practice to analyze the practical embodied bases of an action.

Marcel Mauss states that his conception of the term 'habitus' is neither as a translation of 'habits' nor a translation of the Aristotelian 'hexis'. Mauss is interested in the power of socialization, of education and the manner in which social forms and norms impose themselves not only on thoughts, but also on the physical postures and mannerisms of body. Mauss gives examples from his childhood experiences of swimming trainings in order to explain his conception of habitus. He emphasizes the manner in which bodily dispositions and actions are acquired through socialization, and focuses on bodily practices that are formed through education, and deliberate and rigorous training. Mauss proposes that his conception of habitus refers to the reasoning of collective practical actions. Mauss mentions:

> These 'habits' do not just vary with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges. In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties (Mauss 1935: 73).

Mauss's notion explains that habits and norms do not just differ with individuals but with societies and culture and it is apparent from the autobiographical narratives too. Hijras on

the one hand are cultural identities in South East Asia, with a plethora of other identities linked to varied culture and cultural practices in India. On the other hand, transsexuals in the West are not linked with the culture of their region, 'transsexual' itself is a medical term, but there are identities such as *berchade* of North America or *fa'faine* of Balkans that has similar cultural connotations.

According to Mauss, the concept of 'habitus' is different from that of Bourdieu's. Bourdieu's conception of 'habitus' firstly allows oneself to discuss the manner in which gendered embodiments are produced. Secondly, it speaks about the manner in which the majority of individuals are still rigid about their capability to accept the gendered embodiments that are different from culturally established and commonly accepted gender norms and gender 'habitus'. According to Bourdieu, 'habitus' can be observed in day-to-day practices, the way one dresses, talks, movements, act, mannerism, and performance in social lives. Bourdieu characterizes 'habitus' as a set of "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which organize and generate practices and representations" (Bourdieu 1977: 53) and "an acquired system of generative schemes" (ibid: 55). This is one of the reasons that Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' corresponds with Butler's notion of 'performativity'.

Aristotle and Bourdieu formulated their ideas in different fields (one being a philosopher and other a sociologist), in different periods of time, and they produced differing theories on 'habits', but both point out the internalization of habits. For Aristotle, one can be conditioned to act in a certain way and this 'conditioning of oneself' ensures that individuals are active parts of their habits. Whereas, Bourdieu claims that habitus comes to be internalized and forgotten as history, and turns out to be a "state of the body" (Bourdieu 1977: 68).

'Mimesis' or the 'mimetic' process is not to just unconsciously 'imitate' actions, Bourdieu argues that individuals incorporate the social institutions, norms and regulations that produce the actions. The process of mimesis does not only include the imitation of

others' actions, but also includes the acquisition of the codes that cause those actions. For Bourdieu, 'mimesis' means the unconscious reproduction of other subjects' bodily practices. In addition to this, bodily actions and practices are derived from the norms and regulations of a social context and this ensures that norms and regulations of a social context are embodied in an individual's bodily practices.

Butler's definition of 'gender performativity' highly corresponds to Bourdieu's conception of 'habitus' in terms of both being a set of internalized norms and their repetitive and reproductive aspect of the past as a present. Butler defines gender performativity as:

> Performativity is thus not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. Moreover, this act is not primarily theatrical; indeed, its apparent theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated (and, conversely, its theatricality gains a certain inevitability given the impossibility of a full disclosure of its historicity) (Butler 1993: xxi).

The notion that everyday life activities and social interactions are both regular and experienced as natural and as being the only way of doing things, may suggest the conventional nature of gendered embodiments. The concept of 'habitus' and performativity are hence important to conceive gender as a culturally and socially determined construction, as a performance and practice.

5.7 GENDERED MIMETICS

'Mimesis' as a philosophical term, used in gendered context, implies or suggests the 'mimetic' nature of 'subject', represents 'becoming', a 'representation', and a 'process', a determined construction, approximate representation in a social setting. The autobiographies present vivid accounts of mimetic accoutrements of femininity or masculinity by hijras and FTM transsexuals through the aspects of performativity,

habitus, corporeal signification, body language and mannerism. The construction of an autobiographical text and the process of writing an autobiographical subjectivity depends on a number of factors that includes 'memory', 'experience', 'identity', 'embodiment' and 'agency' as mentioned by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide to Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001).

Memory and past experiences form an important factor in writing or framing an autobiographical narrative. Memory helps to access the past and to retell retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that history. Memory is thus, both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts. As Daniel L. Schacter has suggested, "Memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves" (Schacter 1996: 6). Schacter explores the manner in which "we construct our autobiographies from fragments of experience that change over time" (ibid: 9). In the autobiography by Revathi, she narrates from her memory that, "I was born last in the family of five with three brothers and a sister" (Revathi 2010: 2). It is seen in the autobiographies that the narrators incorporate multiple ways of accessing memory, multiple systems of remembering, into their narratives. These sources are personal which includes dreams, family albums, photos, objects, family stories, and genealogy such as, documents, historical events, and collective rituals. Laxmi's autobiography has a series of photos of her childhood, modelling days, and with friends and family (Laxmi 2015: 120). The collective nature of acts of remembering extends beyond the acknowledgement of social sites of memory, historical documents, and oral traditions. Memory is an inescapably intersubjective act, as Mitchell insightfully suggests: "memory is an intersubjective phenomenon, a practice not only of recollection of a past *by* a subject, but of recollection *for* another subject" (Mitchell 1994: 193, 17). Green in his autobiography mentions, "my early attraction to girls, stimulated by my experience of myself as different from them, while largely unexpressed, was subsumed within my sense of my body as male, which came both from within me and from other perception of me as a boy. My second attempt to communicate was when I was fourteen" (Green 2004: 15). Memory is a means of 'passing on', of sharing a social past that may have been obscured,

in order to activate its potential for reshaping a future of and for other subjects. Thus, acts of personal remembering are fundamentally social and collective. It justifies the objective behind writing the autobiographies by hijras and FTM transsexuals to put forward their lives in order to pace towards gender equity.

The sufferings and agonies of traumatic memory are haunted and it obsessively interrupt the present and insist on their presence. Traumatic memories of the past pop up to the surface of consciousness in fits and fragments despite the passing of years. Auto-biographical acts can work as therapeutic intervention for those suffering from traumatic and obsessional memories. Suzette A. Henke (1998) calls it as 'scriptotheraphy'. In the autobiographies, Revathi, Vidya and Laxmi mentions about the violence and the traumatic memories of the past which projects to the surface. Revathi mentions that, the process of writing her autobiography helped her to heal the traumas that she underwent. For Vidya, it was literature and drama that helped her to overcome the traumatic times and Laxmi was inclined to dancing in order to heal and as a meaning of therapy. Speaking or writing about trauma becomes a process through which the narrator finds words to give voice to what was previously unspeakable. Thus, the narrator of trauma often testifies to the therapeutic effects of telling or writing a story, acknowledging how the process of writing has changed the narrator and the life story itself. Hijra autobiographies marks the beginning of a discourse in the field of gender studies which is way towards gender equity and also help to situate hijra lives in academia and to the society at large.

Another important factor that influences an autobiographical writing is the experience of the writer and in this case, the experiences that Revathi, Laxmi and Vidya had to undergo as a hijra. It is through the experience of the writer that helps one to understand the society and community better. It is mediated through memory and language, and 'experience' is an interpretation of the past, and place in a culturally and historically specific present. 'Experience' is discursive, is embedded in the languages of everyday life and the knowledge. For instance, through the "discourse" of medical institutions (the language, images, metaphors and narratives through which medical institutions produce

and circulate knowledge about people), people understand themselves – 'experience' themselves as 'patients' in need of healing or bodies in the need of surgical intervention. Michel Foucault terms it as 'discursive regimes' the way one experience through multiple domains of discourse, domains that serve as cultural registers for what counts as experience and who counts as an experiencing subject. It is through the autobiographical narratives that the experiences of the community is coming to fore front in the shape of a discourse.

Autobiographical acts also involve narrators in identifying themselves to the reader and through the acts of 'identification' they make themselves known. Identities or subject positioning, materialize within collective and out of the culturally marked differences that permeate symbolic interaction within and between collectivities. One is a woman in relation to a man, and identities are marked in terms of many categories, i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, class, and so on.

Identities are constructed through language and they are not essential, born or inherited or natural, though much in social organization leads us to regard that identity as given and fixed. The Russian theorist M.M. Bakhtin argued that consciousness which also implies identity as a category of consciousness is dialogical. It is always implicated in "the process of social interaction." Since social groups have their languages. This autobiographical narrators come to consciousness of who they are, of what identifications and differences they are assigned or what identities they might adopt, through the discourses that surround them and because of what Bakhtin calls 'heteroglossia' in the social realm, the multiplicity of languages, words, and meanings that "mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and interrelated dialogically" (Bakhtin 1981: 292). The subject comes to consciousness through multiple identities and multiple voices.

Body plays a very important role and the body is a site of autobiographical knowledge, as well as a textual surface upon which a person's life is inscribed. The body is a site of autobiographical knowledge as memory itself is embodied. Autobiographical narrators

engage, contest and revise cultural norms determining the relationship of bodies to specific sites, behaviors and destinies.

Individuals are the agents or actors of their lives, rather than passive in social games or unconscious transmitters of cultural scripts and models of identity. So one tends to read autobiographical narratives as proofs of human agency, relating actions in which people exercise free choice over the interpretation of their lives and express their "true" selves.

The chapter hence, identifies the concept of agency, habitus and performativity that are important to conceive gender as a culturally and socially determined construction as a performance and practice, as could be interpreted from the study of the autobiographies. The social construction of transgendered embodiments is considered as mimetic and hence it is important of the gendered modes of embodiment from the perspective of social context.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The aspects of 'sex', 'gender' and 'sexuality' are crucial to the understanding of transgender embodiment as their sexuality is constructed distinctively as the culture associates certain mannerisms, kinesthetics, behaviors and attitudes as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. This research pursues the question of transgender sexuality via the conceptual frames of 'corporeality', 'mimesis' and 'performance'. As evident from this study, transgender individuals do not fall in either of the essentialist gender binaries, they construct their identity through a series of 'mimetic' and 'performative' processes. It is through the process of 'becoming' that various aspects of sexuality including body, social identity, performances, and gender roles are constructed. The basis to understand identities is, as Judith Butler mentions in *Gender Trouble*, "Our identities, gendered and otherwise, so not express some authentic inner 'core' self but are the dramatic effect of our performances". This research has taken into account hijras and FTM transsexuals and has tried to project the mimetic processes that hijras and FTM transsexuals undergo in their journey of discovering their sexuality through a series of repeated stylized 'performative' acts which includes, bodily practices, social interaction and embodied practices which results in unravelling the specifities of gender and identity. This research has tried to study the intricacies in the construction of hijras and FTM transsexual 'corporeality', 'identity', and 'subjectivity' in terms of appearance and 'performance' through select transgender autobiographies.

6.1 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Through this research, and after a detailed analysis of select autobiographies, it is found that, in order to construct an identity and corporeality, hijras and FTM transsexuals undergo a series of mimetic processes which showcases a separate identity claimed on the basis of corporeal and performative significations. It is further found that 'gender

performativity' and 'imitative' acts adopted by hijras and transsexuals contribute in the construction of transgender embodiment as transgender individuals undergo 'corporeal', 'physical', and 'psychological' changes during the process of identity formation. This research is built on select autobiographical accounts of hijra identities from India and FTM transsexuals from the West, to incorporate and highlight the discourses of 'gender', 'body', 'erotic' and 'corporeal' practices that also brings forward the unique understanding of hijra representation with the help of autobiographies. The processes of embodiment and beautification further deliver the idea of the performative dimension of the body, which emphasizes how performance is a 'citational precedent' of 'the embodied gesture of the body'. According to Butler (1990), performance further traces the 'gendered essence' and its repetition, producing a form of 'naturalisation' of the material bodies and further constructing its subjectivity (xv). Through 'performative' processes, hijras and FTMs undergo the process of 'becoming' and are able to display their gendered being.

6.2 SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Transgender studies as a discourse and as part of academia is well established in the West, but in India, it is an emerging area. The hijra (male-to-female) autobiographies are a recent addition in the literary circles, and there is still invisibility of female gender variance (hijrins) in the literary corpus. There are quantitative studies done on hijras and FTM transsexuals; but hijra autobiographies as a part of the larger literary circle, and the hijra sexuality had been sparsely explored in literary studies. FTM autobiographies from the West have been analyzed in the past, but sparsely in the context of sexuality, bodily practices, mimetic and performative attributes. Studying hijras and FTM transsexuals alongside gives insight into their differences and similarities. A collective research on understanding the transgender sexuality through select transgender autobiographies from India and West makes this endeavor a distinctive contribution to the field of enquiry into gender and sexuality studies.

The concept of sex and sexuality is still considered a taboo in India. The focus of gender and sexuality studies is primarily directed towards understanding women and their lives.

The exploration of gendered aspects and hijras as gendered being, is rarely studied through autobiographical narratives, this research contributes towards understanding the aspects of sexuality and the subjective processes that hijras and FTM transsexuals undergo in an attempt to establish their 'social' and 'corporeal' identity. The aspects of performativity is of importance to men and women but 'performative' attributes help transgender individuals to position their sexuality through 'corporeality' and 'social' roles. It discusses the less explored autobiographies by hijras, in the backdrop of sexuality and contributes towards understanding the transgender experience with their bodies in accordance with their gender identity. Gender and social theories of 'performativity', 'agency', 'bodily hexis' and 'habitus' have been discussed in the context to understand the transgender construction. The term 'mimesis' which is a philosophical term given by Plato, is studied from a gendered perspective to understand the imitative and mimetic aspects that leads to the construction of transgender embodiment. By bringing together the autobiographical accounts from India and West, it doesn't mean coalescing the two identities (hijras and FTMs), but this research becomes a medium to understand the subjective process involved in the formation of these identities.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE WORK

This research focuses on understanding of the subjective process of transgender embodiment exclusively from the autobiographical narratives written by hijras and FTMs. To explore the major aspects of understanding the transgender sexuality, the chapterization of the thesis has been done where in, the first chapter introduces the key terms related to transgender sexuality and the research area i.e., transgender studies. Further, it gives an over view to essentialist and constructionist aspects of gender i.e., 'sexual essentialism' and 'social constructionism'. It further contextualizes transsexuality and transgender individuals as a part of history, where in the history of transsexual and transgender identities are discussed. It situates hijra identity as a part of cultural history of India and the earliest depictions of hijras in ancient, medieval and contemporary era. It has also focused on the contemporary depictions of hijras in other genre such a novels, drama, poetry and documentaries. It also situates the autobiography as a genre and

contextualizes the importance of writing autobiographies in the past and discussed the importance of hijra autobiographies which is an emerging genre in literature in India. This research tried to bring to the forefront that hijra autobiographies from India helps in the formation and setting up of the discourses to discuss their embodiment and identity, and gives a scope to understand and analyze transgender sexuality.

The second chapter discussed corporeality as an important marker in transgender embodiment. Body, from a post-structuralist purview is considered as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed, and makes bodily practice an important axis in the process. The second chapter elaborates the concept of body from three theoretical approaches i.e., 'phenomenology' (individual body and the lived self), 'structuralism' and 'symbolism' (the social body), and post-structuralism (the body politic). It discussed the ways in which the standards of appropriate gender dictates what it is to look like an ideal 'man' or 'woman' with corporeal ideals and are subject to cultural pressures. Neither culture nor biology is singularly deterministic for masculinity or femininity. It further builds on the argument of 'becoming', which is a process, and one cannot fully understand the complexity of gender identity without primarily unpacking the multiple elements of identity which includes cultural ideals, performances and bodies. It also discussed Foucault's notion of 'panopticon' as mechanisms of surveillance to depict that sex- segregated bathrooms, invites surveillance, and creates problems for those who fall outside the gender binary either through their non-binary identity or through their non-binary gender presentation as evident in the select autobiographies. It further builds on the idea of trans-masculinity and interprets the ways in which masculinity is inherently seen as hegemonic and any other form of masculinity is criticized. This leads to conclude that masculinity in men is also a product of 'becoming' and masculinity in female bodies are also the product of the same 'becoming'. The chapter focused on the manners in which masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed, and are imbibed in the social interactions with phrases like 'not masculine enough' or 'not feminine enough'.

The third chapter dealt with the aspect of 'gender performativity' which is a Butlerian concept that is used to dissect the multiple practices and process that hijras and FTM transsexuals undergo in order to construct an identity that is approximately 'masculine'/'feminine'. Gender performativity is of crucial and critical importance to understand transgender identity and their distinctive construction. Through conceptual framework of 'performativity', various processes and multiple aspects that lead to the construction of an approximate female/male identity are examined. It elaborates on the process of enactment and production of gender that are identified from the select autobiographies, and included the aspect of 'gender passing', 'transition', excision of femininity, perceptible femininity/masculinity and, 'imitation' of femininity/masculinity. It draws examples from the autobiographies which depicts their 'kinesthetics', 'body language', 'mannerisms', 'surgical constructions', 'experiences in the wrong body', 'sartorial' style linked to being masculine/feminine and the 'mimetic' process, in order to gain the approximate 'masculine' and 'feminine' identity. It could be inferred that these multiple aspects are found to contribute to the understanding of the distinctive construction of transgender identity.

Identity formation is a crucial aspect in the construction of social identity, but the process of identity formation is found in traces from the autobiographies. Apart from studying the 'performative' aspect, Chapter four focuses on the process as discussed by Ekins and King i.e., 'migrating', 'negating', 'transcending', and 'oscillating' in which they describe various phases of the trans lives as they undergo surgical and medical gender transition. Through the instances from the autobiographies, an attempt has been made to understand the identity phases in the lives of transsexuals and hijras. The concept of 'skin ego' given by Jay Prosser and 'clothing ego' by Stella North is used to understand the transsexual identity as a part of their construction. The theoretical and critical aspects of FTM transsexuality by Judith Halberstam and Jay Prosser are analyzed by interpreting instances from the select autobiographies. This research tried to decipher third gender identity formation using fourteen stages of identity development given by Aaron H. Devor, where he also uses the concepts of 'mirroring' and 'witnessing' as

crucial in the formation of transgender identity. It leads to conclude that the stages given by Devor are found in fragments and identity formation in transgender individuals is subjective and the experiences cannot be homogenized.

The notion of 'mimesis', which is a philosophical concept, is used to understand the various gendered aspects in hijra and transsexual identity. This research identifies the concept of 'agency', 'habitus' and 'performativity' that are important to conceive gender as a culturally and socially determined construction, as a performance and practice, as interpreted from the select autobiographies.

On the whole, the chapters in the thesis, discussed the crucial aspects of transgender sexuality such as the cultural construction of sexuality and the politics of body of which corporeality is an important marker in transgender embodiment. It elaborated the concept of 'body' from three theoretical approaches in the context of transgender identity i.e., 'phenomenology' (individual body and the lived self), 'structuralism' and 'symbolism' (the social body), and 'post-structuralism' (the body politic). Further, it focused on the 'performative' attributes of gender which takes into account Butlerian performativity which positions kinesthetics, gender passing, mannerisms and surgical constructions to achieve the desired gendered status. The mimetic process in order to gain the approximate masculine and feminine identity, the sartorial style linked to being masculine/ feminine practices as seen as performative and are incorporated to attain the desired performative 'selves'. Gender passing ascertains transgender individual's identity as a man or woman, and hence is of crucial importance in order to construct a social identity. The body language and mannerisms associated with certain gender also contributes in the presentation of 'self' and in affirming their identity. Hijra surgical procedures are seen as more cultural and ritualistic in nature than medical as in the case of FTM transsexuals. The anxiety of being trapped in a wrong body is experienced by hijras and FTM transsexuals, and hence they chose to undergo bodily modification and surgical transformation. FTM transsexuals are seen to be struggling with their identity in the initial stages of their life, associating with lesbian identity, intimate relationships with women and then finally finding their identity as man. The social construction of

transgendered embodiments is considered as mimetic and imitative in nature. Therefore, it is important to examine the gendered modes of embodiment from the perspective of social interactions, in order to understand the transgender experience in a heteronormative social context and to understand why certain constructions are considered more imitative than other gendered social constructions. Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* questions, "Why is femininity easily impersonated or performed while masculinity seems resilient to imitation" (28). Not only is imitated masculinity 'resilient to imitation', but also any form of gender imitation is resilient to imitation due to the fact that individuals have internalized commonly accepted essentialist and established gender identities that are acknowledged in day-to-day interactions.

6.4 SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research was an attempt to understand the transgender embodiment from the purview of sexuality that explored key facets related to hijra and FTM transsexuals, but the scope could be further extended to understand the multiple overlapping of identities through other gender, psychological theories and social theories of similar nature. Here, only select autobiographies of hijras and FTM transsexuals was taken into consideration whereas, similar studies using quantitative social science research methods including interviews and surveys can be conducted. Female gender variance is a less explored area in India, so by using data collection methods such as interviews and ethnographic data, female third gender roles can be explored. There is always a further scope to extend and conduct inquiries and research into allied genres in literature including drama, novels, poetry and travelogues where transgender representations are made.

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- Understanding the Manifold Aspects of Hijra Identity through Hijra Autobiographies. International Conference on Moving Beyond the Margin: The Politics of Exclusion and Assimilation, Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer, November 15-16, 2018.

- An Empirical Study on the Attitudes and Behaviour of Individuals towards Transgender Individuals. 7th International Engineering Symposium (IES), Kumamoto University, Japan, March 7-9, 2018.

- Signification of Gender Liminality and Performativity: A Study on Hijras and Transvestites. International Social Sciences and Humanities Berlin Conference (IARSP), Humboldt University and Karadeinz Technical University, Berlin, May 18-21, 2017

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- Transgender Autobiographies: Advances in Human Rights and Social Change, 2nd International Congress on Human Rights and Duties, Yadam Institute of Research, New Delhi, December 10, 2016.

- Unraveling a New Literary Genre: Studies on Transgender Autobiographies, International Conference on Literature, Culture and World Peace, Higher Education and Research Society, Navi Mumbai, September 23-24, 2016.

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Conference Proceedings:

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- Tanupriya and P, Dhishna. (2016). "Exploring Kinesthetics of Third Gender through Select Autobiographies." International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL), 6(3), 29-34.

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