

**INTERPELLATION OF MASCULINITIES: A STUDY  
OF SELECT SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURES**

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

PRANAMYA BHAT

Reg. No. 177078SM503



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL STUDIES AND  
MANAGEMENT

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KARNATAKA,

SURATHKAL, MANGALORE – 575025

APRIL, 2023



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Thesis entitled, '**Interpellation of Masculinities: A Study of Select South Asian Literatures**' 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.



(PRANAMYA BHAT)

Place: NITK-Surathkal

Reg. No. 177078SM503

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023

School of Humanities, Social Sciences  
and Management



## CERTIFICATE

This is to *certify* that the Research Thesis entitled '**Interpellation of Masculinities: A Study of Select South Asian Literatures**' submitted by **Pranamya Bhat**, (Register Number: **177SN503**) 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.



**Dr. DHISHNA P.**

Research Guide



**Dr. SHEENA**

Chairman-DRPC

**Dr. Sheena** डा. शीना

Head, School of Humanities, Social Sciences & Management

विभागाध्यक्ष मानविकी, सामाजिक विज्ञान एवं प्रबंधन विद्यालय

National Institute of Technology Karnataka,

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान कर्नाटक,

Post Srinivasnagar, Surathkal D.K.- 575025

पो. श्रीनिवासनगर, सुरत्कल द.क.-५७५ ०२५

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pursuing Ph. D. at NITK has been magnificent, challenging as well as a rewarding journey. Completing the research and compiling this thesis is joint efforts of many people who have given me their support throughout the process.

*Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah* – I bow down to my gurus who have guided me so far. First and foremost, I express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Dhishna Pannikot, my supervisor, for believing in my potential and taking me as her scholar. Her timely inputs, excellent suggestions, quick responses, and meticulous corrections have greatly assisted in building and enhancing this thesis. She has also been a constant source of discipline and moral support through the ups and downs of my research journey. Heartfelt thanks to Dr. Shashikantha K., Professor, School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, NITK, and Dr. Debashree Chakraborty, Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry, as members of the Research Progress Assessment Committee (RPAC), for showing keen interest in my work and giving valuable suggestions for its improvement. I am grateful to Dr. Rajesh Acharya H., Dr. Sheena, the Head, and Dr. Kiran K. B., Professor, School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, for their support in carrying out this research. I also thank staff members of NITK, who have directly and indirectly facilitated this research work.

I express my humble gratitude to the librarians of NITK and all university libraries I had visited during course of my study to collect

resources for my work. I am also grateful to NITK Press for giving a form to my research work.

I am obliged to my fellow research scholars, especially Ms. Poulami Saha, Dr. Tanupriya , Dr. Vadivel S. M., and Dr. Veena Shenoy, for their valuable inputs during my research. I am thankful to all my friends, and fellow scholars at NITK, especially Ms. Deeksha Shetty, Ms. Sehra Sahu, and Ms. Crystal Rodriguez, as their companionship has made this journey memorable and joyful.

I owe the accomplishments of this research to my parents, Mr. P. P. Bhat and Mrs. Veena Bhat, and also my husband, Mr. Vibhu Shankar, considerably. They have funded it and encouraged me to believe in myself and perform to the best of my ability. I express humble gratitude to my in-laws, Mr. Shankaranarayana Bhat and Mrs. Sathyavathi, for making it convenient for me to pursue Ph. D. My son, Master Vedarth and my younger brother, Mr. Sathvik have added immense bliss to my life and have persuaded me to do well; I thank them for being silent contributors to my motivation. I am indebted to my cousin and a former scholar in the Department of Mathematics, NITK- Dr. Chaitanya G. K., for encouraging me to pursue Ph.D. at NITK, and providing me with necessary orientation.

I offer my humble gratitude to Mrs. Shivagami Vivekandan and Mr. Indrajeet Padhyay, my high school and Primary English teachers, who instilled in me the love for the English language, literature, and academia.

I thank the universal energy behind every miracle that has approached me in the form of people and opportunities and which has helped me complete this research.

Pranamyia Bhat





## ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze masculinity and its multifaceted semblance via a conceptual framework of ‘masculine discourse,’ ‘performativity,’ and ‘hegemony.’ It explores, observes, and analyzes the nuances of gender roles and gender identity of South Asian masculinity. Fictional writings of South Asian male novelists have been considered for this study, as they are expected to provide firsthand and unbiased expressions of masculinity. This research strives to address a few queries, such as: What are the discursive practices of masculinity in South Asia? How does South Asian masculinity deviate from the Western concept of masculinities? What is the hierarchical order of South Asian Masculinities? What are the unique attributes of South Asian masculinities? The major objectives of this study are: to understand the nature of masculinity, and its reliance on various psychological, social and cultural factors, to critically examine the prevalence of masculine ideology in South Asian society, to trace the manifestations of shades of hierarchies within male society from the select works, to explore the unique attributes of South Asian masculinities from select South Asian narratives.

This study traces the process of social and psychological factors that influence the manifestation of attributes deemed ‘manly.’ The role of discourse in the assertion of power to certain behaviors and people has also been analyzed here. The study analyzes different forms of gender performativity as observed through the select works, along with elements exclusive to South Asian masculinity. The study further discusses the concept of ‘hegemonic’ masculinity and various other kinds of masculinities. A significant difference has been observed in the manner each kind of masculinity is regarded, thereby laying down their hierarchical order. The use of ideology and repression to arrive at interpellation has been observed and recorded through this research. Violence, parental control, masculine stereotypes, and a few more themes concerning ‘masculinity’ have been explored in this study. The thesis enlists major findings and observations made during the study and suggests scope for future research.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, South Asian Masculinity, Ideology, Interpellation.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players;*

*They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many  
parts*

Shakespeare, 1623

While there are several dimensions influencing the kind of role one is expected to adopt, 'gender' becomes a vital disposition. Shakespeare had drawn attention towards the act of 'playing' a role, rather than acquiring it naturally. Similarly, 'gender' is constructed and is not entirely intrinsic in nature. It is yet another facet drawn from the cultural and social expectations of its members.

The identity of an individual is constructed chiefly based on the individual's respective gender. 'Sex' of an individual refers to the biological characteristics and is naturally acquired. Conventionally, gender has been directly linked to the 'sex' of the human body, and is in fact, a contributor to the formation of gender. Social perception of gender roles is another major component in the way society identifies the 'gender' of an individual. Male and female evolve to become men and women, respectively. Gender is often assumed to be "ordinary, dichotomous, and rooted in knowable dichotomous sexed bodies" (Duerest-Lahti 2008: 161). However, the distinction cannot be made that easily, as the two classifications are not binary opposites (Fausto-Sterling 2000) Moreover, it is not just two categories of gender that exist in human society. The 'sex' of a person is a direct reference to the physiology of the body. Gender, unlike sex, is "constructed through a long and

conflict ridden process” (Connell 2005: 9). Right from the birth of a person, various elements surrounding an individual determine the gender adopted and adapted in the behavior of the person. The gender of an individual is fluid and requires repetitions of actions and behaviors to confirm its existence. The attributes of gender, at times, appear to be driven by the ‘sex’ of the person and, therefore are often mistaken to be natural. The truth, however, is that society, culture, and guidelines on gender roles, hold a significant position in the formation of gender.

Luce Irigaray, French philosopher, psychoanalyst, and cultural theorist, speaks about the universality of sexual differences (Irigary 2016). She believes that human civilization was always centered on needs, such as the need to eat, sleep, socialize, or the need for a God, thus leading to neutralizing the rationality behind the emphasis on sexual differences. She further elaborates, “[l]anguage itself is generally restricted to the level of needs, including the need to master nature, objects and others, especially by naming them” (ibid: 43-44). This tendency has led human psychology into an unconscious habit of categorizing, shrinking the level of acceptance towards events, objects and people who show any deviance from the accepted ‘normal.’ ‘Queer’ became the umbrella term for any physical and behavioral traits that did not follow the societal guidelines on gender roles. Gender and sexual minority individuals either do not identify their gender as similar to the sex of their body or do not feel a natural inclination towards a heterosexual relationship. LGBTQAI2S+ is the acronym initial for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, asexual, intersex, two-spirit and all other sexual identities that consider themselves different from the traditional essence. This acronym came into use in the 1990s and found its origin in the word LGB, used in the 1980s. Though the understanding and awareness of gender and sexual minorities came into purview recently, the traces of its existence has been dated way past the third millennium BCE (Mussi 2001). Men, women, and transgender individuals are not as different from one another with respect to the manner in which they desire to lead their lives. The inability to view a person beyond their gender makes them seem different from one another. This tendency to bifurcate



and normalize some genders while labeling others as abnormal has further split society into many different groups. While gender critics such as Judith Butler argue that gender is entirely a social construct, recent studies claim it to be a two-way process that includes acquiring “gender competence” and performing it as an act (Connell and Pearse 2002: 100). In the work *Gender: In World Perspective* (2002) gender is described in a new light:

Though the position of women and men are not simply parallel, the principle is also true for men: one is not born masculine, but has to become a man. . . So we cannot think of womanhood or manhood as fixed by nature. But neither should we think of them as simply imposed from outside, by social norms or pressure from authorities. People construct *themselves* as masculine or feminine. We claim a place in the gender order – or respond to the place we have been given – by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life (ibid: 6).

Gender dynamics is, therefore a process of negotiation, wherein the attributes of gender are picked up at an early stage and displayed to earn appropriate gender identity. Attempts to break down the complexities of gender and resulting issues have been turned into a discipline called ‘gender studies’ to facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject.

### **1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF GENDER STUDIES**

Gender studies aims to understand how historical, social, and cultural events affect the way gender is perceived and roles are formulated by society. The field of gender studies emerged with the academic requirement to understand the gendered representation of social beings. This area of study includes women’s studies, men’s studies, queer studies and other allied identities. Although it began as a recording of the historical events concerning the liberation of women from the ages of dominance and exclusion from power, this domain slowly spread out to understand the gendering of men and transgender individuals too. Women, feminism, gender, and politics have been identified as the prime concerns of

gender studies (Wiesner-Hanks 2019) and it gained popularity in 1990s when deconstructionism began in Western Universities (Gottschall 2002). The origin of gender studies traces back to the outgrowth of women's history. The universal suffrage movement, women's liberation movement, and similar events concerning women's liberations in the nineteenth and twentieth century marked the significant scope of this area of research. The entire stream of gender studies soon found its link to feminist perspectives. The masculine orientation and privileges in varied disciplines were examined, which by the 1970s was called "male-stream scholarship" (Duerst-Lahti 2008: 167). The work, *Gender Bias in Scholarship: The Pervasive Prejudice* (1988), includes contributions from critics and scholars from disciplines of sociology, psychology, literary criticism, education, art, history, biochemistry, philosophy, and political science, that enlightened the readers on the existence of bias in every discipline, while most of them were being male-centered. Along with these disciplines, even the science of society was identified as the "male science of male society" (Bernard 1973: 777). There was a shift from the positive depiction of men in texts to their negative image after analysis. Meanwhile, feminist analysts made female pole positive and male pole negative. In the critique of gender ideology, the female pole functions as a positive one "because it is of great interest to most gender scholars." (Duerst-Lahti 2008: 166-169). Just as political science and other disciplines are not feminist and dominated by men (Sapiro 1991), gender studies has been dominated by feminists. Therefore, while other areas of studies are minimizing the polarity of gender bias, the study of gender itself must provide scope for sufficient study on all genders as the field of gender research "has mainly addressed questions about women and has mainly been developed by women." (Connell 2004:1).

A number of theoreticians have influenced the field of gender studies that includes psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Bracha Ettinger; and feminists including Juliet Mitchell, Nanacy Chodorov, Jessica Benjamin and Jane Gallop (Pollock 2007). Disciplines such as history, political science, archaeology, human geography, psychology, cultural studies, literature, etc., have significantly contributed to gender studies. Gender studies

also includes study on sexuality and provides insights on conjunctions of gender and other elements of human concern such as disability, race, class, religion, and nationality. Gender studies is not as simplified and monolithic as it appears; there are multiple perceptions such as essentialism and constructionist view point. Fundamentally, a gender study is concerned about understanding masculine and feminine apart from male and female.

## **GENDER STUDIES AND LITERATURE**

Looking back at the history of gender studies, Mary Wollstonecraft has significantly contributed to igniting the thought that women were not inferior to men. Through her seminal work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), she argued against the views of prominent writers such as Rousseau, who believed that women do not deserve education and that women were in a secondary position to men. Her theories were backed by John Stuart Mill, who believed that empowering women would account for the greater good of society at large because it would make the neglected half of the population, productive. Educating women, he believed, would make them more self - reliant and happy, and as a result, it would ensure their contribution in the progress of society. He also argued that men did know about the capabilities of women but did not want them to be empowered as that could shake the current power structure:

I deny that anyone knows or can know, the nature of two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another. If men had ever been found in society without women, or women without men, or if there had been a society of men and women in which the women were not under the control of the men, something might have been positively known about the mental and moral differences which may be inherent in the nature of each (Mill 1869: 28).

Likewise, Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Sandra

Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer And Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), and many such writings, strengthened gender studies through literature. They created a sensation among the readers and instigated awareness about gender - based oppression. Since these seminal works were largely based on understanding atrocities on women, gender studies over time, grew slightly inclined towards women's studies and later queer studies, more due to the long history of subordination suffered by them. However, this resulted in the unconscious act of perceiving men as perpetrators of the injustice suffered by them. Down the line, the motto of gender equality got sabotaged while the entire population of men got neglected academically.

In the purview of gender and sexuality studies, masculinity is a small and relatively new area. It was only since the mid-1980s that an upsurge of interest was noted in this field (Connell 2009). A significant lag has also been observed in the scholarly approach to masculinity in comparison to other areas of gender studies. Messner, a keen arbiter of masculinity studies, notes that one of the first national conferences in the USA was in the early 1980s, followed by Australia in August 1995; which was twenty years after the women's movement launched its first national forum on women's health in Australia (Messner 1997: 6).

Gender ideologies are "structured beliefs and ideas" about the arrangement of power based on the "social constructs associated with the sexed bodies" (Duerst-Lahti 2008: 160). Political structures and institutions construct gender through social and political processes, performed multiple times to enforce the practice of masculinity and femininity (Hearn 1987: 17). The 'performance' of masculinity and femininity by men and women is as elaborate as a stage performance, the only difference being that it is never-ending (Kessler 1999: 17). These social ideologies reappear in various incarnations in every society and era. The Philosopher of language, John L. Austin, was the first to define the term 'Performativity' as the capacity of speech or communication to act. Influenced by this theory, Judith Butler, philosopher and gender theorist, provided a political and social dimension to this definition. She added that these performative

languages serve to define and maintain identities. She further elaborated that the entire concept of identity is performative, which is formed by symbolic communications and speech acts. Butler also extends the theory to gender studies and emphasizes that gender must not be treated as a true nature or essence; instead, it must be treated as a performative construct (Butler 1990). Butler claims that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (ibid: 25). This notion of gender identity contributed to gender theory.

Margaret Atwood, a Canadian novelist and literary critic elaborates on the need to understand men and their problems through academic assessments; she states:

I don't think enough attention has been paid to the problems men have and/or going to have increasingly because of the changes taking place in women. Men have to be reeducated with the minimum of damage to them. These are our husbands, our sons, our lovers.... We can't live without them, and we can't go to war against them. The change must liberate them as well. (Atwood 1983: 23)

The field of gender studies has been primarily developed by and addressed to women. It is also the feminists who have made gender visible in contemporary scholarship (Connell 2004:1). Men became the cause, by default, for the subjugation and rejection suffered by other genders, especially after the acceleration of the Women's Liberation movement. The truth, however, lies in the fact that “it is not men who have dominated women, so much as the masculine that has dominated the feminine” (Hearn 1987: 13). In the wake of these movements, there was even a Men's Liberation movement in the 1970s, that attempted to reform the “male sex role,” still, it failed academically due to the “deep conceptual confusion about gender” (Connell 2005: xii). Though the lack of sufficient research failed the movement, it succeeded in initiating a political debate on “men, power and change” (ibid: xii).

## 1.2 INTERPELLATION OF GENDERED IDEOLOGIES

Interpellation is the process of participating in an ideology and not being aware of it. It is the misconception that one is acting out of free will, whereas he/she is already a subject in the ideological framework of society. This is due to the fact that interpellation begins even before one is able to comprehend the world around (Nayar 2010: 135). The moment a child is born, it is assumed that his/her gender is in alignment with the sex, and hence the “social gender” is determined (Schilt and Westbrook 2009: 441). ‘Cis-gender’ is the term that defines the state of correspondence between the sex of an individual and his/her sense of gender and it is a process, not a natural phenomenon. It begins the moment a child is labeled as a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ and is followed by expectations; and conditioning them to comply with the guidelines of the gender. A research article by Igi Moon (2018) begins with the following quote from Bornstein and Yaniv that well defines the interpellation of gendered identities:

From the moment we take our first breath... the cry ‘it’s a boy’ or ‘it’s a girl’ ushers us into this world. The genders we’re assigned at birth lock us on to a course through which we’ll be expected to become whole, well rounded, creative, loving people – *but only as men or as women* (Bornstein and Yaniv, 1998: 1).

Even the moral values taught to young children subtly include gender ideologies that must be followed by the child. “[N]ormative gender boundaries” are “enforced” upon children at a very early age by encouraging them to socialize (Robinson 2013: 139), and simultaneously, even their emotions are gendered (Root and Denham 2010).

All forms of belief are based on certain ideologies that present social and cultural practices in a manner that asserts naturalness. The naturalization of the belief system strengthens the general assumptions to the extent that, the ability to judge whether a belief is genuinely natural or culture driven is jeopardized. This system of thoughts and representations that naturalizes the inequalities and stereotypes in

society is termed 'ideology.' The belief in these ideologies makes one a "subject within ideology" (Nayar 2010: 135). The issue is that people see themselves as having voluntarily made choices of belief because those choices seemed natural. Construction of subjects through ideology is what French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser termed and defined as "interpellation... the process of consenting to ideology, accepting it and not being aware of it" (ibid: 135). Gender refers to the "social process of dividing up people ... along the lines of sexed identities. The gendering process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions it enacts" (Beasley 2005: 11). Philosophers like Karl Marx have argued that any social formation that does not reproduce its own production will cease to exist within a year (Marx and Engels 1955: 209). So, either the conditions of production must be reproduced or performed at a larger scale. In simple words, it refers to the need to constantly repeat the actions and situations that are to be instilled as an ideology, and to expand it would be a more enormous and farther step. This process would offer the instillation of ideologies as an integral part of the social system and human minds. The process of internalizing social ideologies is further explained at the functional level as Althusser provides details on how the constant relations are maintained using what he called as state apparatuses.

According to Louis Althusser, every society is a culmination of two kinds of state apparatuses: ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) and repressive state apparatuses (RSAs), representing social and political institutions, respectively. Similar to the concept of patriarchy that will be discussed later, the ISA and RSA are instrumental to the constant reproduction of society's functioning and relations (Althusser 1971). RSA refers to the power that rests in the hands of the state, and through which they can force individuals to behave in a certain way through hard power (Leitch 2001). This means they can exercise violence through institutions such as police and justice systems. It is also the gateway through which the ruling class dominates over subordinate social classes through coercive means. Interpellation in the context of Marxism is vast and applicable to every aspect of human interaction. Althusser's theory of interpellation has made a significant

impact on many theoreticians and philosophers such as Michelle Foucault, Judith Butler, Ronald Barthes, and Robert Connell (Payne 1997).

For the purpose of this study, the process of interpellation shall be explored and analyzed in terms of masculinity. The aspects of masculine ideologies that individuals internalize and simultaneously act in accordance with are the forms of interpellation considered in this research.

### **1.3 MASCULINITY STUDIES AS A DISCIPLINE**

This study distinguishes between men, i.e., the biological characteristic, from masculinity, i.e., the social ideologies constructed around a man. There are several other terms associated with a man, such as manliness which means the qualities of strength and virility, and machismo which refers to aggression accompanied with strength. According to *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, the word ‘masculinity’ is derived from the Latin word “mas” and its derivatives “masculus” and “masculus” which means ‘male’ (2007: 390). This infers that the concept of masculinity existed much before its upsurge in 1970s.

Masculinity is a social construct that refers to the set of roles, behaviors, and attitudes that are generally associated with the male members of society. Masculinity has been studied for a long time in social sciences, though indirectly. Fatherhood and youth subcultures are a few sample areas of research where masculinity is not the focus of study per se, yet the research has much to do about it. Besides gender studies, the study of masculinity is of great importance to culture, media, psychology, sociology, criminology, anthropology, and literary studies (Beynon, 2002: 54-58).

Research based on Western masculinity suggests that courage, independence, violence, and assertiveness are the commonly associated traits of masculinity (Kimmel, 1994: 119-141). In contradiction to the expressive and nurturing female, men are often labeled as rational, practical, and naturally aggressive. The position and role that men hold in their socio-economic environment determine their set of behaviors or masculine identity. The masculinity of an individual depends on the



“upbringing, family, area, work and sub cultural influences” (Edley and Wetherell 1995).

These expectations of being masculine, from the world outside (society) and within (individual psyche), created the need to adhere to the norms of masculinity. Masculinity becomes something that “men must aspire to and be prepared to defend,” but in reality, it is “impossible to live up to” (Beynon 2002:65). The failure of any man in confirming to the traits of masculinity creates a deep sense of failure (ibid: 66). R. Dyre, in his paper titled “Rock, the last guy you’d have figured?” (1993), observes a gap in the signification of masculinity. Masculinity thus signified is often deceptive of the actual self of the man. At the surface, he is portrayed as emotionless and of integrity; however, deep within, the individual might be lonely, confused, and unable to understand or communicate his inner turmoil. Masculinity is a fiction, aspired to be a reality by many, even after repeated failure of most men to realize it. The level to which an individual confirms the traits of masculinity determines the type of masculinity he represents. There are many guises in which various critics and theoreticians have presented different kinds of masculinities.

Masculinity is a social fabric woven by different threads of masculinities. In the current trend, i.e., since the late twentieth century, it is fashionable and apt to refer to it in the plural form, i.e., masculinities. Masculinity is thus a pod of different kinds of masculinities. The only common aspect between any two men and their masculinity would be their male body. The core characteristics and psychological makeup are unique and exclusive. The idea of the heterosexual men who “nurture their society by shedding their blood, their sweat and themselves, by bringing home food for both child and mother” (Gilmore 1990: 230) can no longer be generalized. “The concept of uniform masculinity... is no longer held to be fixed or innate” (Beynon, 2002: 1).

R. W. Connell, Professor of Education in Australia, has worked extensively in the field of men’s studies. According to him, recognizing multiple masculinities is commonly based on race or social standards. The task gets complicated when two

or more factors intersect (2005); for example, the definition of masculinity of a middle-class Black male is different from a White male of the same economic background. He formalized the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” that was introduced to the field of men’s studies in the 1980s. Hegemony is the “domination of particular sections of society,” not through violence or threats but through the “consent to be governed and dominated” (Nayar, 2010: 30). The concept of hegemony has been derived from Antonio Gramsci’s analysis in the field of cultural studies on class relations. Gramsci studied the manner in which a group exerts and sustains power and dominance over other groups. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the occurrence of a similar phenomenon in gender studies, where acceptance of authenticity of male superiority provides room for the actual male superiority and subjugation of women. The establishment of this dominance is possible only when there is a collective “correspondence between the cultural ideal and institutional power” (Connell, 2005: 77).

Hegemony refers to the oppression of a dominant culture in a particular space. M. W. Apple, an arbiter in the field of Marxism, posits hegemony as “a process in which dominant groups come together to form a bloc and sustain leadership over subordinate groups” (Apple, 1996: 14). Also, in his earlier work, he states that hegemony “is an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are lived,” (Apple, 1990: 5) thereby asserting the acceptance of hegemony as natural in everyday life. He has also identified schools as “agents of cultural and ideological hegemony” (1990: 6). The existence of hegemony in any society is a long process and involves social, cultural, and historical influences in its very existence.

The politics of power exists not only in the dominance of male over female, but also within the male society. Men associated with top business, military, or film industry are often viewed as superior, while homosexual men are treated to be of lower masculine standard. Connell has identified five basic types of masculinities based on the kind of relationship they share in a social setup. The three primary types are hegemony, subordination, and complicity, followed by the marginalized

and the authorized (Connell 2005). Hegemony refers to the traits of masculinity, such as heterosexuality, which is supreme, desired, and accepted to be the dominant one, even though only a few have been able to meet all traits successfully. These traits ensure the ideological sustenance of the patriarchal form of society. They play a vital role in providing a meager population of hegemony, dominance over others by staying subordinate to them. Subordination includes the remaining sections dominated by hegemony and complicity, such as homosexual men. Marginalization and authorization depend on the changes that take place in social relationship. Male, in authority at one space or in one relation, could be marginalized in the other (Connell, 2005: 76-81). Chris Beasley has made an observation on the significant difference between ‘men’s movement’ and ‘masculinity studies.’ While the men’s movement is about shoring masculinity up and projecting its contemporary status, masculinity is the academic approach to understand the functioning of this particular gender and the challenges of its past and present. It has been a significant observation that masculinity is often viewed in antagonistic light.

#### **1.4 MASCULINITY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

As there are advancements in technologies and communications, the idea of globalization has become a fully functional reality. With this conversion of the world, from a distant, spread wide across the globe, to a close circuit of the global village, the need for coordination among people from different cultures has also increased. Thomas Loren Friedman, a Pulitzer Prize winner and author, has written extensively on globalization and environmental issues. He has explained in his book *The World is Flat* that globalization, through trade and other forms of communications, has shrunk the world into a smaller form, thus providing the global village vision (Friedman 2005). Among other factors that act as a barrier between such global communications, one significant hurdle is the cultural difference. At times this difference could also negatively impact on the interaction between the societies from different parts of the world.

John Beynon, in his book, *Masculinities and Culture* had, quoted Cornwall and Lindisfarne, which is a remarkably efficient way to describe the necessity to study the male characters in the novel in their cultural context:

Not only 'being a male', but 'being male' can be interpreted differently in different circumstances . . . masculinities are performed or enacted in specific settings . . . ethnographic descriptions of masculinity need to be located squarely with respect to contested interpretations of power. (Beynon 2002: 16 quoted from Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 37)

Geography, area, and culture, therefore, play an essential role in understanding the ideology of a particular land. While it provides knowledge about the immediate surroundings of a person, in today's world of globalization, it facilitates the world to come further closer by familiarizing everyone with every corner of the world.

Culture, on the other hand, is the sum of everything possessed by humans, such as ideas, customs, and beliefs, including language, knowledge, and religious beliefs. It is the manner in which people live and could be defined as the way of life. Some anthropologists also argue that even tools must be considered under culture because different cultures use different kinds of tools. For instance, the tools used for cooking differ from cuisine to cuisine and simultaneously from culture to culture.

By culture, the reference is made to beliefs, values, discourses, and experiences that shape the way an individual or a group belonging to a particular sect interprets or assimilates a particular situation (Olaniran 2001). The place, people, culture, and their politics, therefore, matter to ensure the sustainability of global relationships. This need for globalization comes from the natural human tendency to socialize. Furthermore, socializing leads to identifying oneself in the group, as a part and also as an individual. Developing one's identity, as a result, becomes crucial, especially for young adults, because of the blurring borders of political and cultural differences across states (Suarez-Orozco 2005). Speaking of identity, a person's

description of oneself or another individual rarely leaves the domains of gender, culture, and nationality unexplored. While it is important to understand the subject of masculinity at the global level, it is equally essential to look for advancement in the area at individual levels. Men from South Asia represent one such category of non-western society, which is still in the developing phase of its academic approach to masculinity.

Finally, the concept of 'region' needs an understanding, as this forms an important aspect of any ethnographic study. It is the tool through which theoreticians spatially analyze geographic information. It is the division of an area based on some common unifying elements, such as religion, language, specific economic traits, and so on. For instance, India is usually divided into north-India and south- India largely based on the difference in language and a few other cultural aspects such as food, clothing, customs, and so on. In this research, the region of South Asia is considered, and the study is done based on fictional writings of South Asian novelists.

In the work *The Indians: Portrait of a People*, Sudhir Kakar, and Katharina Kakar argue:

A man's identity – of which the culture that he has grown up in is a vital part – is what makes him recognize himself and be recognized by the people who constitute his world. It is not something he has chosen, but something that has seized him. It can hurt, be cursed or bemoaned but cannot be discarded, though it can always be concealed from others or, more tragic, from one's own self (2007: 1-2).

The objective of this study resonates with this view and understands the importance of analyzing masculinity along with its ethnic background. The following chapters reveal the manner in which cultural aspects of South Asia influence the performativity of manliness by the male characters of the select novels. The term 'South Asia' is a culmination of unique geographic structure,

innumerable cultural variations, and a region that produces and consumes literatures in huge numbers.

The cultural region of South Asia is more affluent in exotic landscapes, cultural heritage, numerous languages spoken, geographic extremities, economic variations, history, and even in terms of its total population as compared to most other regions of the world. This fact further validates the need to study masculinity in this geographic region. The partial geographical separation of the South Asian subcontinent from the rest of the world is due to the borders on the West, North, and East by the mountain ranges and seas. This provides it a cultural unifications and common cultural elements within different countries. Recently, several studies have been conducted to make up for the dearth in the understanding of masculinity in a non-western society like South Asia (Brownell and Wasserstorm 2002, Louie and Low 2003, Chopra et al. 2004, and Srivastava 2004). Also, Sinha (1995) and O'Hanlon (1999) have provided seminal work in studying masculine hierarchies and pre-colonial codes of masculinity.

South Asia had been the trading center of the world, and for an extended period of time, it had been the land of mystics that adventurers wanted to unravel. This initiated communication between the native men and the outsiders. The introduction of Europeans and colonization by the East India Company marked a major milestone in the process of globalization. However, this did not limit to mere interaction, and the desire to rule the land led to an arrangement of the hierarchical order of masculinity between the Western oppressors and native men. Writers like Bankhim Chattopadhyay have extensively written about the manner in which white men termed the native brown men as effeminate and declared themselves as 'manly' (Chakraborty 2011). This was established so deep into the minds of the people that it became an ideology of society.

South Asian subcontinent is panoply of rich culture and complex history. Its culture has been popular around the world for quite a long time. A significant increase in tourism and trade alliances with South Asian countries are

indicators of their growing familiarity with the rest of the world. Global recognition is not limited to the many languages, delicacies, tourism, movies, and other pop culture; it has rather expanded beyond to awarding the exclusive literary works of South Asian authors. With the never curbing appetite for South Asian fiction, authors such as Kamala Das, Devdutt Pattanaik, Haroon Khaled, Vikram Seth, Hoshang Merchant, Sudhir Kakkar and Arundhati Roy became the torch bearers of feminism; while Jhumpa Lahari, Khushwant Singh, Khaled Hosseini, Mohsin Hamid, Salman Rushdie, and Shyam Selvadurai succeeded in revealing the aesthetic beauty of South Asian culture through their writings.

The term 'South Asia' refers to many countries in the southern region of the Asian continent. However, in this research, the term refers to select countries: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka; and the socio-cultural aspects associated with these countries. While the cultural descriptions and analysis could be generalized to other countries in this geographic region, it is not to be said with surety as the works selected for this study are from the above mentioned four countries. The prime reason for selection of this geographical boundary is the need for an academic study of the literature that has a large audience but scarce critics. Also, the concept of 'masculinity' is still at its wake in South Asia. The studies on masculinity have primarily been conducted in the West and on issues concerning Western male. Non-western societies like South Asia are, therefore, in need of an academic approach to the depiction of masculinity in literature.

### **1.5 RESEARCH GAPS**

Following the earlier works of researchers in the field of masculinities, it can be eloquently articulated that there is a need to study masculinity as a subject of analysis without slipping into using it as a tool to study other genders (Willer et al. 2013; Lu and Wong 2013; Chattopadhyay 2011; Schrock 2009; Connell 2005; Lemon 1995). The amount of research available on masculinity is lesser than

required and a close look at those studies suggest that the number goes further down after elimination of those studies which are used to understand or analyze other genders through masculinity. Therefore, the first gap identified is the dearth in number of studies in masculinities that are solely concerned with men and their issues.

Out of the limited studies on masculinity, only a few have been done in English Literature. Literature is said to reflect life and the societal ideologies, therefore research based on literature is important to understand the cultural and emotional aspects of contemporary people. Also, analysis of male authors' perspective on masculinity is a lesser explored trajectory of approaching masculinity through literature (Zare 2007; Green and Van 2013). The second and third gaps include, lack of sufficient research using literature as the mode of study and also to meet the need to rely on the first hand experience of male authors to understand masculinity.

Most of the research on masculinity is founded on Western culture and society. This includes the theories as well as literature. While most gender theories on masculinity are formulated based on Western society, their application to understand masculinity is also practiced more widely on Western population. Therefore, there is ample scope for a research in non-Western sub-continent such as South Asia, as the field of study is still in its wake in these ethnic and geographic regions (Idris et al. 2019; Affleck 2018; Aslam 2014; Rajan 2006). Hence, the fourth gap identified is the limited studies on masculinity based on South Asian society.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUERIES**

Attempts to explore the ambits of masculinity and its stretch in South Asia lead to a number of queries concerning this subject. Following are the queries which instigated the undertaking of this research:

- ❖ What are the discursive practices of masculinities in South Asia?



- ❖ How does South Asian masculinity deviate from the Western concept of masculinities?
- ❖ What is the hierarchical order of masculinity in South Asia?
- ❖ What are the unique attributes of South Asian masculinities?

### **1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This research aims to understand and analyze the social and cultural perspectives of masculinities in South Asian society through select novels by South Asian male authors. The following are the objectives of this study:

- ❖ To understand the nature of masculinity, and its reliance on various psychological, social and cultural factors.
- ❖ To critically examine the prevalence of masculine ideology in South Asian society.
- ❖ To trace the manifestations of shades of hierarchies within male society.
- ❖ To explore the unique attributes of South Asian masculinities from select South Asian literatures.

### **1.8 RESEARCH METHODS**

Understanding South Asian masculinity through select literatures is a challenging task. Out of the many methods of research in English literature such as, discourse analysis, autobiography, interview method, textual analysis, etc., textual analysis, ethnography and discourse analysis methods will be used for analyzing South Asian masculinities. The collective use of these three methods is expected to provide better understanding of masculinity and its representation in the select literatures.

Textual analysis method provides close analysis of the contents, the meaning of the text along with its structure and discourse. This is an important method of data analysis in literature, cultural studies, and other qualitative fields of research. An in-depth reading of the texts, independent of the author's background, is the primary requirement for this method. As opposed to the traditional methods of

interpretation, this method functions on the belief that a work and its creator are in no ways related to each other; and that a work must be studied in isolation. The analysis is based on the relationship between the reader and the text. The text becomes the premises, and all the interpretations are based on the reader's perspective. Catherine Belsey, in her essay on "Textual Analysis as a Research Method," emphasizes the need to refer to the primary sources, i.e., the text rather than the second-hand accounts of it (2013). For this research eight novels of eminent South Asian male authors have been identified as primary texts. After a comprehensive understanding of the relevant theories on gender, masculinity and interpellations, the select literatures will be analyzed thoroughly for interpretations on the cultural realities as reflected in the novels. The application of this method is not limited to elucidating the plot of the select works but also to transcribe social, cultural and psychological undercurrents. It will further assist in viewing the novels as a reflection of the contemporary society and the attributes of masculinity that are associated with male characters in the novels. Since this method emphasizes on the subjectivity of the reader and not the author, it will further assist in deconstruction of the elements of masculinity and factors influencing it.

Ethnography, the second research method used in this research, is chiefly a qualitative method which is usually associated with the disciplines of social sciences as it works towards providing relationships between the background and the actual event. This method relies on close observation of the subject of research and the "interpretation of cultural behavior" (Alsop 2013: 113) of the subject. In a literary study such as this, ethnography method is used by placing the text as the centre and analyzing the cultural and social backgrounds that drives the courses of actions in the work. Social ideologies vary from one culture to the other and through the help of this method a conscious semblance can be derived out of the select South Asian literatures. This method will assist in viewing the select literatures as the field of research, to explore and to reveal the cultural and social elements. Understanding the unique attributes of South Asian masculinity, being one of the primary concerns of this study, this method would be an apt measure to

achieve the set objectives. It would facilitate in identifying the intersection of gender and cultural elements and the impact of the same on masculine gender role in South Asia. In addition to this, in order to understand the manner in which South Asian masculinity is uniquely interpellated, it is instrumental to understand its exclusive ethnographic background.

The third methodology applied in this research is discourse analysis method. This method observes language as both structure and event. Since discourse forms a crucial step in the formation of gendered ideologies, this method becomes an inevitable part of the process of understanding masculinity through literatures. In the context of this study, this method will facilitate in observing South Asian culture in the select novels. Conversational analysis of various characters from the novels and the free flow of language are expected to aid in the understanding of gender based conditioning. The context of discourses shall also be deemed equally important to ensure meaningful interpretations of selected conversations.

These three research methods are expected to provide a holistic approach to explore, analyze and interpret masculinity and its functioning in South Asian society.

Select South Asian male narratives have been used as primary resource for this research. This research aims to understand the cultural exclusivity of South Asian masculinity through investigation of cultural dichotomies present in the novels. The study would examine the formation of gendered ideologies in the male protégés of the ‘interpellated’ society.

In the process of mending research gaps, this study has also developed some constraints. Sincere efforts have been made to answer the research queries and to keep the study focused to its objectives. The study is restricted to male narratives of South Asia, considering the nations: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan; these countries being the major contributors of the South Asian subcontinent’s demography and also larger producers of literature. The study is further limited to select novels of Khushwanth Singh, Mohsin Hamid, Khaled

Hosseini, and Shyam Selvadurai. The vast readership and the favorable structure of the plots of their works prompted the selection of these authors, for the research, over the whole list of well acclaimed male authors of fiction.

### **1.9 AUTHORS AND WORKS SELECTED**

Several aspects were taken into consideration to select authors whose works would be analyzed for this research. To begin with, the genre of fiction is considered optimum for this research as novels provide space for the expression of true human feelings in details and depth. Jacob Abbott, a Minister, children's book author and a professor of mathematics, argued in his treatise that fictional stories are an effective way to communicate truth; also, he believed that they do it more effectively than stories of real incidents (Abbott 1833: 25-34). A similar view is shared by an American novelist, Tim O'Brien in his novel, *The Things They Carried*: "That's what fiction is for. It's for getting at the truth when the truth isn't sufficient for the truth" (O'Brien and Cranston 1990: 233). When it comes to a fictional story, including imaginary characters, it becomes easier for the reader to view the text from an objective point of view. The second step considered while selecting the works was selection of those authors who were born in South Asia and whose writings reflect acquaintance with South Asian culture. In addition to this, those authors who also had experience of living in a different society and whose works provided comparative details of how South Asian societies functioned exclusively, were identified. Male authors of fiction were selected specifically for this study. These selections were made bearing in mind the social relevance of understanding masculinity through the first-hand representation of its construction. Author and works selected for this research are: Khushwanth Singh's *Delhi: A Novel* (1990) and *The Sunset Club* (2010); Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007); Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *And The Mountains Echoed* (2013); and Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994) and *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998).

### **Khushwanth Singh (2 Feb 1915- 20 Mar 2014)**

Accepted as the most widely read columnist in the country, in his time and today, Singh was a prominent Indian novelist and journalist, well known for his weekly column “With Malice Towards One and All.” His incisive secularism, humor, political stance, and his abiding love of poetry are a few qualities that define him. His works present a witty comparison of the Western and Indian societies, and identifying the behaviors typical of each society, was his forte. Throughout his ninety-nine years of life, Singh has been actively contributing to literature and journalism. He had edited several well-known magazines such as *Hindustan Times* and *Illustrated Weekly* of India. His contributions to the literary world includes translation of several Urdu and Punjabi works along with holding the position of the historian of Sikh community. His acquaintance with Indian politics comes from his service as a member of parliament in the Rajya Sabha from 1980 to 1986. He was bestowed with many prestigious awards including Padma Bhushan and the second highest civilian award in India: Padma Vibhushan. *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1950), *The History of Sikhs* (1953), *Train To Pakistan* (1956), *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (1957), etc are a few of his works that have gained huge recognition for the factual and aesthetic contribution to the readers. While impeccably blending the richness of Indian and Sikh culture, he has extensively explored on the themes of sexuality, masculinity, patriotism, and so on.

Several awards and recognitions bagged by Kushwanth Singh’s works are a testimony to the selection of novels for this research. Keeping in focus the purpose of the research, two of his novels, *Delhi: A Novel* (1990) and *The Sunset Club* (2010) were selected for this study. *Delhi: A Novel* is written focusing on the city Delhi and its cultural history in the focus; while the narrator unveils the story of his miserable life and relationship with a eunuch, Bhagmati. *The Sunset Club* is a tale of three vibrant characters in their old age, who got together every evening to discuss critical texture of their everyday

life. Both these novels explore masculinity and gender roles at different stages in life thereby providing a deep insight into the cultural implications of the same.

### **Khaled Hosseini (4 Mar 1965- )**

Hosseini is an Afghan American novelist and physician who was born in Kabul, Afghanistan and practiced medicine in California. Along with his writings, Hosseini is also known for providing assistance to Afghanistan through his trust, Khaled Hosseini Foundation. He is also the Goodwill Envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Hosseini has written three novels, the first being *The Kite Runner* (2003), followed by *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and the third *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013).

Khaled Hosseini's works show a great inspiration from Persian poetry, as he admits dedicating most of his childhood readings to Persian literature. Hosseini's novels depict the geographical, social, and cultural features of Afghanistan. His writings on Afghanistan have provided a significant contribution in global awareness towards the atrocities created by military attacks on the land. While most war writers focused on the plight of the families directly involved and affected by the conflict, Hosseini's works stand distinct due to the portrayal of the common citizens who have to lead their routine life despite the social and political tensions. War and conflicts often appear faded somewhere in the background of the plot, and appear only as extrinsic factors responsible for a twist in the plot. Hosseini's characters are often seen adopting a matured role at a rather young age because of the need to support the family during the war situation. 'Separation' is a common theme observed in his novels. The moving away and coming together of major characters in the novels provide the room for exhibiting complex human emotions which would not have been possible otherwise due to the often reserved nature of the characters. His works are also found to travel across

nations which provides a comparative analysis of native culture and identify its uniqueness.

Two of Khaled Hosseini's works namely, *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *And The Mountains Echoed* (2013) are studied in this research: *The Kite Runner* is a novel about Amir and Hassan, two young boys who get separated in their childhood due to the traumatic situation of war in Afghanistan. Hassan's sacrifice and Amir's redemption gave their relationship the strength to move even the hardest heart. The novel explores cultural elements of the society and displays various social strata that govern the hierarchical order of its people. *And The Mountains Echoed* is an equally stirring novel, written on the painful outcomes of war in Afghanistan. The love, separation, exile and reconciling of the siblings, Abdullah and Pari, constructs the plot of the novel. Familial relationships, gender and sexuality are some of the themes of this work.

#### **Shyam Selvadurai (12 Feb 1965- )**

Shyam Selvadurai is a Sri Lankan Canadian novelist who was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He is well known throughout the world, for the contributions he has made in the advancement of education in sexual identity. In 2014, he was presented the Bonham Centre Award from The Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies for his contributions to the literary world specifically to the concept of sexual identification. He has edited a collection of short stories in 2014 and compiled them into a book titled *Story-Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers*. This work includes stories written by many well-known writers such as Hanif Kureishi, Monika Ali, and Salman Rushdie, among others. He has written four novels, namely: *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), *Swimming in the Monsoon* (2005), and *The Hungary Ghosts* (2013). Coming of age, individuals versus society, sexual identification and social rejection are the prominent themes in Selvadurai's novels. In addition to this, the concept of marginalization of boys and men in a patriarchal society is well discussed in his works.

For this research, his novels, *Funny Boy* (1994) and *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) have been selected. *Funny Boy* is a coming of age novel which questions the maturity and sexual awareness of an adult against a young seven year old boy. It explores the theme of gender and sexuality explicitly and points at the manner in which social ideologies are formulated. Similarly, *Cinnamon Gardens* also discusses on sexual identity but the latter focuses more on institutionalization of male sexuality while the former deals with the social taboos around a sexually deviant person. These novels explore the concept of patriarchy in depth and unravel the stress it creates among all genders.

### **Mohsin Hamid (23 July 1971- )**

Once a freelance journalist in Lahore and a consultant in New York, Mohsin Hamid was born in 1971 in Lahore, Pakistan. He moved to the US at the age of eighteen to study at Harvard Law School and Princeton University. Hamid's first novel *Moth Smoke* (2000) earned him popularity and several awards such as Betty Trask Award, and it was also shortlisted for the PEN/Hemingway Award. The book was also made into a tele-series in Pakistan, and it was New York Times notable book of the year 2000. Hamid published his second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, in the year 2007, which added another feather to his hat. The novel won South Bank Show Annual Award for Literature; and was shortlisted for numerous other prestigious awards such as Man Booker Prize for Fiction (2007), Commonwealth Writers Prize (2008) and James Tait Black Memorial Prize (2008). Like his first novel, this work too was adopted for a movie in 2012 with the same title. Mohsin Hamid has written two more notable novels: *How To Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) and *Exit West* (2017). While the former work won him Tiziano Terzani International Literary Prize and was shortlisted for the KLF Embassy of France Prize and the Haus der Kulturen der Welt International Literature Award, the later was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Hamid has also published a book of essays, entitled *Discontent and Its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York & London*



(2014). Although he stays in London, he returns to Pakistan time and again for writing, therefore, as a novelist he belongs to his motherland, Pakistan.

His novels represent common men and women of Pakistan and their domestic issues woven in a plot of extraordinary struggles faced by the characters. Power and corruption, survival, lust, marriage, identity, and gender issues are a few visible themes identified in his works. Anita Desai, an Indian author and winner of Booker Prize, Sahitya Akademi Award and Guardian Prize, wrote in her review of Hamid's first novel *Moth Smoke*:

One could not really continue to write or read about, the slow seasonal changes, the rural backwaters, gossipy courtyards, and traditional families in a world taken over by gun-running, drug-trafficking, large-scale industrialism, commercial entrepreneurship, tourism, new money, nightclubs, boutiques... Where was the Huxley, the Orwell, the Scott Fitzgerald, or even the Tom Wolfe, Jay McInerney, or Brett Easton Ellis to record this new world? Mohsin Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke*, set in Lahore, is one of the first pictures we have of that world. (Desai 2000)

Hamid's works selected for this research includes *Moth Smoke* (2000) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). *Moth Smoke* takes the reader along the self-inflicting life of Darashikoh, a man who lost his job in Lahore after which he makes bad choices which landed him in bad places. His inability to conform to social norms puts him against his own people. The story of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (RF) is a product of a long conversation between a bearded man and an American stranger at a Lahore cafe. Political clashes in Pakistan and the 9/11 terrorist attack on twin towers in the US form the background of the story. Most part of the novel is a monologue by the Changez, the protagonist and the novel is uniquely written in a manner that keeps the mystery of facts intact.

All the eight novels selected for this study show seminal similarities as all of them provide scope for comparison of South Asian society with Western society. The narrations of the events in the novels are seen through the lens of male characters. In addition to this, these novels vary significantly in terms of plot and socio-economic background of the characters which help in understanding masculinity from different cultural perspectives.

In the upcoming chapter, “Exploring Cultural Politics and Male Performativity” attempts will be made to analyze the social and behavioral aspects of South Asian masculinity in select South Asian male narratives. Behavioral theories and theories on sociology will be incorporated to understand masculine gender performativity in South Asia and how these factors and behaviors are results of interpellation.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EXPLORING CULTURAL POLITICS AND MALE PERFORMATIVITY**

Among the essentialists and constructionists schools of thoughts, the constructionist is formulated on the vitality of language influencing the process of social construction of gender. Essentialists believe gender to be naturally acquired and biologically determined and, the constructionists' view is in accordance to the constructed nature of gender. Modern essentialism is of the belief that certain phenomena are inevitable, natural and biologically determined. Essentialism is the essence of few scientific fields such as, evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, and genetic researches. This research relies on the constructionist ideology, and displays the various ways in which masculinity is constructed by social elements. However, the essentialist notion cannot be completely rejected as there is a significant difference between the manner in which a male responds to a situation and the way a female responds to a similar situation. The root of this difference is, undoubtedly, the natural tendencies stimulated by the presence of different hormones in male and female.

Social constructionism operates on the notion that reality is socially and culturally constructed through the mode of language. The modern sociology of gender believes that gender is not fixed or naturally acquired and that it is constructed through social and cultural interactions (Masculinities 2005; Duerst-Lahti 2008) Gender is not passively internalized, and then enacted through the knowledge gained through public interactions. It is an elaborate process of entering an institutional set up, knowing and adapting (in some cases contradicting) its norms and finally performing the gender. The concept of institution is crucial to the understanding of the role of social interactions in gender discourse. It is the

repetition of patterns of behavior in order to direct or control certain actions and reactions under certain situations. Though this theory has been used to explain the homogeneity of the concept discourse, it is also true that institutions vary over time and are frequently challenged. Therefore, the interaction and influence is both ways i.e., the institution influence the subjects and the subjects too influence the institution (Dacin et. al. 2002)

## **2.1 'BECOMING' A MAN: MASCULINE DISCOURSE**

Poststructuralists like Michael Foucault formulated the 'discourse theory' to understand the concept of gender and sexual difference between individuals. First Freud, then Lacan and later theorists in the field of discourse analysis, believed that gender is beyond intrinsic factors, set of attributes, or stereotypical roles assigned to individuals. Its boundaries further extend to involve the role of discursive practices. It refers to the process of power assertion in an interaction, through language, that creates relationships in a society. Discursive practices are the repetitive acts that bring reality to being through language. Language supports production of knowledge and lays down the rules and practices that add meaning and regulate behaviors in a particular geographical area at a particular span of time. Discourses govern the way ideas are put forth and accepted in a way that is agreed to be meaningful and rational; thus, it would be safe to say that discourse regulates conducts, i.e., the manner in which people behave in a certain way at certain situations. For instance, casual phrases such as 'be a man,' 'man up,' 'balls of steel,' and so on, are used to indicate bravery, courage and to some extent it also refers to risk taking behavior. Every time such phrases are used, a connection is made between these attributes and masculinity. In a way these words suggest that being brave or bold is the innate nature of a male and that all men must abide by it. When analyzed at a deeper level it can be said that these qualities also endorses any male to be identified as a 'man.' Such is the role of discourse in regulating human actions. Discourse is also the first step in the process of interpellation of people into believing that they are willing volunteers of a gendered living.

While it is true that discourse adds meaning and context to any object or subject, it is also a fact that these objects and subjects do exist outside of the discourse. However, it is difficult to determine what it would signify, independent of all discourses attached to it. It is when they become institutionalized, through the way they are talked about and practiced, that they gain meaning and order. Stuart Hall said that all “social practices entail meaning and meaning shapes and influences what we do --- all the practices that we have possess a discursive aspect to them” (Hall 1992: 291). Discourse also plays a key role in the formation of subjectivity. Constitution of subjectivity refers to the way an individual perceives himself/ herself. It is the “formulation of an internal life, an identity and a way of being in the world” (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 337). It is also the process through which the dialogues of the outer world become the “voices of the mind” (Wertsch: 1991) and begins to feel as one’s own thoughts and subsequently gives meaning to self and identity. Authenticating the existing communal methods, vocabularies, expressions and performances which are socially accepted or at least recognized, provide the sense of subjectivity and identity to individuals (Gergen 1994; Harré and Gillett 1994; Shotter et al. 1984). Michael Foucault’s meticulous analysis of political institutions, studied under the specific historical context has provided an indispensable theoretical understanding of the relationship between power, knowledge, gender, and sexuality. In a genealogical enquiry, he predicted the possibility of a divergent behavior outgrowing its course and jeopardizes the power structure that was the actual cause for the events to occur. The emergence of such dissonant events challenges the flow of discourse and may even reverse it, thereby threatening the existing hegemonic discourse.

R. W. Connell provides an anti- essentialist analysis of gender discourse (Connell 1987) as he thoughtfully argues that the process of becoming a man involves negotiating with hegemonic masculinity. Among the many gender discourses prescribed for masculinity, the ones that gain the stance of superiority and dominance become the hegemonic masculinity. Connell gives a sketchy account of the masculine discourse in terms of its social and psychological reproduction as he believes that the ideal form of hegemonic masculinity is not a reality or a

personality type, it is rather a prescriptive form of the goal of masculinity that men must aspire. It is a symbolic representation, a signifier, of the highest grade of masculinity. Connell leaves the edges of hegemonic masculinity blurred and does not clearly define the complete form of it. The possible explanation for this lack of definition could be the changing nature of masculinity with the change in time and geographical constraints. A simple example to understand this would be the shift in representation of hegemonic masculinity by male protagonists in movies in the present and how they had been a decade ago. A shift in time is directly proportional to the shift in gender norms of the place. A similar cross cultural study would reveal the manner in which different societies perceive masculinity differently. Also, change in geography need not be as significant as difference between masculinity in one nationality versus the other; it could be a slight variation in the space and that would be sufficient to alter the type of masculinity, a male is 'doing.' Referring to gender as a verb has been done intentionally, to remind us of its performative nature. Connell has also refrained from addressing whether at a given point of time, and under a given social set up, can only one form of hegemonic masculinity exist or could there be multiple? Connell believes that masculine characters are not provided like a guideline; instead they emerge over a period of time along with culture. Among the many ways of becoming a man, a few become "winning styles" (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 336) and it is these attributes with which the male members must engage. The discourses of masculinity are continuously contested and not automatic. The continuous challenges and resistance faced by the ideal norms of the gender discourse pave way for various types of masculinity that exist in a society. Therefore, it is observed that referring to masculinity in a plural sense would be better than singular due to the existing diversity.

A comparative study in 2010 revealed the influence of political institutions over gender discourse of subjects within and outside the institution; also it exhibits the differences in the discursive norms within and across states, across time periods and across space (Chappell 2010). Thus, it is acceptable to say that context plays a

key role in interpreting the expression of gender, the type of category to which it belong and its acceptance.

## **2.2 GENDER DISCOURSE AND PERFORMATIVITY**

Judith Butler (1956), an American philosopher and gender theorist, has explored the creation of gendered identity through her research in sex, gender and performativity. Repetition of daily activities that might seem ordinary is according to her, responsible for the social construction of gender. She explains the performative nature of gender as the enactment of gender through a set of acts and behavior. While most of it is in harmony with the traditional directives; there is also the existence of resistance and deviance from the socially and culturally prescribed formula that marks them as subversive and that which is under dispute with the existing hegemonic norms. Performance of a gender is a creative act that requires authenticating the existing socio- cultural norms as one's own, through interpretation of its deterrents. In fact, Butler considers the body itself to be constructed, referring to the corporeal presentation to comply intelligibly with the cultural signification of gender that the individual intends to do. Body thus becomes the canvas on which vivid social and cultural representations of sex and gender are depicted.

Simon de Beauvoir's 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (De Beauvoir 2010: 301) has become a literary cliché yet an indispensable quote to appraise to the thought that not only is the society constructing our gender but we are doing that to ourselves as well. The creation of culturally sanctioned corporeal presentation that gets accepted in the social context has largely been the direction where most gender based adaptations are made by individuals. Supporting and extending Beauvoir's theory, Butler meticulously infers that since gender is a 'becoming,' the quest to trace its origin would be futile and thus in 'an important sense, gender is not traceable to a definite origin; it itself is an originating activity incessantly taking place' (2009: 614). She also believes that gender 'is a contemporary way of organizing past and future cultural norms, a way of situating

oneself in and through those norms, an active style of living one's body in the world' (ibid).

Butler says that "becoming a gender is an impulsive yet mindful process of interpreting a cultural reality laden with sanctions, taboos, and prescriptions" (2009: 614-615). By this statement she calls attention to the social rejection of particular corporeal fashion that is, implicitly and explicitly, a culturally forbidden way of expressing one's gender; and it is also the byproduct of the formation of one hegemonic pattern, which governs the validity of all other methods of performing gender. Butler also emphasizes that negation or compliance to one form of gender expression is a pre-existent discourse that 'implies a world of already established corporeal styles' (ibid: 615). It is therefore a valid doubt whether there is no novel way of doing one's gender, a unique attribute that an individual designs for one's self? Is it actually limited to being a "prescriptive task we must endeavor to do, but one in which we have been endeavoring all along" (ibid) as she explains, or could it be an exclusive blend of available attributes to produce a corporeal system that either strengthens the existing hegemonic pattern or acts pervasive against it?

Social system produces subjects of gender and the subjects in turn produce the system. It is an unending vicious circle of influencing and being influenced by the discourse, and here it refers to gender discourse. Though pointing out the beginning of the discourse is out of question, and introduction of language is marked to be its early stage; it could still be studied by bifurcating various stages at which gender is performed.

The very first and crucial stage of gendering is to perceive the reality of contemporary society. As a boy shifts from his 'clean slate' like perception to understand the world around him, he is accompanied by umpteen adults, both male and female, to condition him according to the ways of the world. As Judith Butler rightly points out, as soon as one hears of a child birth, they "ask about certain sexually differentiated anatomical traits" with an assumption that those traits "in some sense determine that child's social destiny" (Butler 2009: 618).



Right from the birth of a person, along with the upbringing, many factors contribute to the formation of his/her personality and personal ideologies. For instance, in Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran is an upper caste Singhalese man born to a rich and powerful landlord and was used to subordination of people around him and also their mutual surrender to him and his family. To Bala, the existing class system and patriarchy seemed natural as they were present even before him. The narrator explains:

From the time he was a child, he had been taught to feel his superiority, his right never to be thwarted. He was free to interrupt his mother's conversation with his childish piping, sure that he would be greeted with a fond. (Selvadurai 1998: 55)

Here, his gender gave him credits more than his age could bag. Similar to most patriarchal families like a South Asian family, male members like Bala are given preference over other female members. Also, it was fine to interrupt his mother whereas the same is not applicable when he attempts to interrupt his father, as found in the later parts of the novel. Moreover, the response for his interruption was fondness, as suggested in the novel. At an early age, boys like Bala are conditioned to behave in a manner that reflects dominance of masculinity over femininity and the same is reflected in the entire society in general. This is a reflection of the manner in which young boys are conditioned from a very early age to act superior to women and other subordinate men, around them.

The nature of such conditioning however is seen to differ with a change in socio-economic status. In the previous example, the family belonged to elite class who did not face any financial issues at any point in time. Unlike the situation stated above, a poor and hardworking man like Abdullah's father, from Khaled Hosseini's *And The Mountains Echoed*, taught his son different lessons for life. Masculine norms change with the change in social strata, as is clearly evident in the following teachings of Abdullah's father: "[t]o his sons he had taught already the value of honesty, courage, friendship and hard work without complaint. They obeyed him, as good sons must, and helped their father with his crops" (Hosseini

2014: 2). Here, Abdulla's father, who was struggling to meet the ends, encouraged his sons to inculcate humane values and regarded them as above one's comfort. This attitude of self sacrifice for common good of family, is largely observed among South Asian masculinities; an idea that will be discussed in the fourth chapter. Major similarity between both the situations is the compulsion in parents, especially fathers, to train their sons according to their ideology. Both parents are looking forwards to their sons achieving certain form of upper-hand in their respective societies. While the former aims at power and dominance, the latter does so through strong character and virtues. 'Obedience' being one of the many virtues taught to his son, the father has ensured a favorable ground on which he can pass on the gendered ideologies and also patriarchal norms to his sons. The kind of conditioning that an individual is exposed to at their primitive years, explains a lot about the way in which their personality gets shaped. While Bala continues to be innocently self-centered and dominant, Abdulla proves to be a man who lived for others. Family status and money are the two factors that have made a big difference between the kinds of masculinity that the two individuals are interpellated into. This interpellation and the response for their gendered behavior is found to impact their mental health. Balendran was fortunate to have a protective family and access to all the facilities that made his life secure and comfortable such as, education, financial assistance, and access to required amenities; unlike Abdullah who had experienced poverty in its most cruel form. A close observation of both the circumstances reveals that Bala was more emotionally vulnerable whereas Abdullah had grown strong and could handle difficult situations gracefully. Therefore, exposure to difficult situations at an early stage is observed to strengthen psychological frame works of an individual; that in turn affects the kind of masculinity an individual projects at later stages of his life. Also, throughout the two works, the former is often seen complaining and expressing disappointment as a result of greater gender role stress where as the latter is seen to handle the burdens of gender role easily.

Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* has a lot to offer in understanding the role of conditioning of masculinity through the narration of incidents in the life of a

seven year old boy, Arjie. Arjie, was too young to discover his identity and inclination to gender norms. He finds it more fascinating to play ‘make belief’ games with girls, instead of outdoor games with boys. During their monthly visit to their grandparent’s house, the male and female cousins would split up and occupy different portions of the yard to play. While Arjie deviated from the general norms and joined the girl’s group his female cousin Meena joined the male group. Meena is found to be accepted in the boys’ group without any objection from other members and she is also seen participating crucially in the group’s decision making. Similarly, Arjie holds an important position in the girls’ group, though he is portrayed as a shy boy in most parts of the novel, he finds himself leading the group of girls during their games. This change in his behavior from a shy under-confident boy to a skilled group leader, probes the question whether the imposed gender norm of masculinity made him feel timid as he could not relate to masculinity naturally? Also, it is possible that his natural effeminate behavior made him comfortable among girls and brought out leadership quality in him; as admirations from his cousins for his skilled performance gave him the power to “leave constraints” and ascend into “an icon, a graceful, benevolent, perfect being upon whom the adoring eyes of the world rested” (Selvadurai 1994: 4-5). It fuelled his behavior of performing acts during the game, a behavior stereotypically considered to be feminine. He was well accepted and respected amidst the female cousins, where as insulted by the boys, with names such as “girlie-boy” (Selvadurai 1994: 25). These girls who admired his femininity were themselves too young to be interpellated by the gender norms completely, and this could be the reason for their acceptance of Arjie’s behavior. Exposure to pleasant and unpleasant stimulus from girls’ and boys’ group respectively, promoted the internal desire in him, to play with girls. Firstly, his natural tendency and fondness for feminine activities and secondly, the unpleasant and mean behavior of his male cousins, both contributed equally in stimulating Arjie’s desire to spend most of his time with his female cousins. This manipulation of behavior through rewards and punishments is a phenomenon that repeats innumerable times around every person. While rewards strengthen the behavior, punishments or undesirable

outcomes reduce certain behaviors. This process is called operant conditioning or instrumental learning which was founded by Edward L. Thordike (Thordike 1901). This mode behavior alteration can be observed as a crucial step in shaping masculinity. Arjie describes the reward or the sense of achievement he realizes when in company of the girls and how good he could perform at activities that are considered feminine in nature. He says, “[t]he reward of my leadership was that I always got to play the main part in the fantasy. If it was cooking-cooking we were playing, I was the chef; if it was Cinderella or Thumbelina, I was the much-beleaguered heroine of these tales” (Selvadurai 1994: 4). Later in the novel, Arjie was compelled to attend the Queen Victoria Academy, a school that Arjie’s father believed would force him “to become a man” (ibid: 210). This institution, as seen in the novel, would attempt at detaching those behaviors which are undesirable to patriarchal norms of masculinity, through punishments. Educational institutions, which are supposed to liberate individuals through knowledge, thus become centre of manipulation of behavior. The school becomes a centre of repressive state apparatus which is found to makes sure that all boys of the school act in accordance to hegemonic norms. Here, academic understanding is not the only learning; instead, it is the preparation of men who would safeguard the patriarchal functioning of society by ensuring the plantation of superior and dominant traits of masculinity, in adolescent boys. When Arjie asks his elder brother Diggy about complaining to their parents, regarding the appalling methods of punishments adopted by the Principal of their school, Diggy’s “eyes grew wide. “Never complain,” he said. “Once you come to The Queen Victoria Academy you are a man. Either you take it like a man or the other boys will look down on you” (ibid: 211). Here, not only Arjie, but also many boys who studied in the same school, kept their problems to themselves as that gave them the reward of ‘becoming’ a man. Use of the word ‘man’ has multiple connotations here; it not only refers to the pride of belonging to the hegemonic class of citizens but also questions the identity of a person. These boys, who identify themselves with male adults of their society and see their future in those men, could not afford to deviate from it. This incident depicts, how men at a very young age, are forced to adapt to an

unexpressive personality in order to gain the title of a ‘man.’ Not only was Arjie and other boys like him discouraged to complain against unreasonable behavior of school teachers but they were also pushed to endure all the pain, both physical and psychological, by themselves.

Similar to the example stated above, Julius Superb from *Moth Smoke* is found to be extremely pleased by an interviewer’s comments, “[y]our students speak highly of you. They say you’re a brave man” (2013: 39). This comment on being called a ‘brave man’ surprises him as he asks the interviewer “[t]hey say I’m, ah, a man. A brave man. Do they?” (ibid). This surprise is indicative of the fact that the word ‘man’ has deeper connotations than just the sex or gender of the person. It refers to the attributes of hegemonic masculinity which brings pride and honor to the male members of the society who are able to meet those criteria. Bravery is yet another quality of hegemonic masculinity that men take pride in representing. While the previous extract from *Funny Boy* displayed the manner in which young boys are motivated using the reward of being identified as a ‘man,’ this example showcases the way adults are motivated to uphold the contemporary gender norms.

It has been observed so far that most gender - related discourses are centered on strengthening patriarchy. Patriarchy is not limited to dominance of men over women and other genders; it extends to ensuring superiority of hegemonic men over other weaker men. In the context of age, older men are deemed weaker players of patriarchy as compared to young adults. Statements such as “all good Indians go to the Himalayas to die when they grow old” (Sing 2016: 16 - 17), is an example of casually made comments, but it keeps people reminded of the ways in which they are supposed to behave, dependent on their gender and age. The Himalayas is a symbolic representation of spirituality and penance, and by ‘good Indians’ going there when they grow old is an assertion to being more detached from the physical pleasure and giving up one’s possessions for the younger generation to enjoy. This discourse is mostly encouraged as it brings major benefits to the hegemonic class of men, who are mostly young adults. It ensures

power possession in the fists of the new hegemonic men and its absolute practice by removing the retired hegemonic men from the space. Another instance of conditioning through language or discursive practices, disguised as random passing statements, is the conversation between Bhagmati, the transgender prostitute, and the protagonist of the novel *Delhi*. ““All males of the species are same. One minute one woman, next minute another”” (Singh 1994: 46), says Bhagmati. Generalizing such behaviors to all men is suggestive that polygamy came to men naturally and that it was expected of them. Such statements not only encourage polygamy but also adultery. Bhagmati, who was a sexual partner of the narrator, does not make a big issue out of her partner’s infidelity. Similarly, from the novel *The Sunset Club* one of the main characters, Baig engages in adultery and despite his wife’s awareness about it, she chooses to remain silent about it. Here, the masculine courage to break self created norms and demean their partners by cheating on them is, to certain extent, encouraged by their partners. In the novel *Delhi*, Musaddi Lal, a secularist, talks about the role models and figures of admiration for people belonging to a particular religion as a problem as these leaders are the one who break social and cultural norms. Gods, kings and rulers, the ones supposed to pave the way for commoners to follow, have had the history of multiple spouses, in a society that is supposed to adopt monogamy. The expected law makers are the law breakers. The character Boota makes a generalizing statement in the later part of the novel, *The Sunset Club*. He expresses his belief that all men are of loose character and take pleasure in sexual activities at every opportunity they find it possible to carry out. He said “[a]ll males are born badmashes. As soon as they see a woman, young or old, they want to ride her. And our fellows are trained to be bullies; otherwise no one would be scared of them” (2011: 190). Similar to the examples mentioned above, generalizing statements suggesting unruly behavior of men to be in their natural tendency especially in the context of sexual behavior, further confirms the cultural ideology to promote aggression and dominance in men. In this particular example, it can be observed that abuse of power by those in charge of providing protection is justified and rationalized. These discourses of gender, the casual language of

naturalizing certain oppressing behaviors, are major cause of the very existence of masculine hegemony. Based on such ideologies, assumptions on masculinities are framed and later these ideologies are performed by individuals to provide a physical form to masculinity.

Performance of masculinity takes place at different levels and so does its conditioning. It is also about heeding to the dominant hegemonic form of masculinity. The ones deviating from the rules have to undergo severe consequences. The incident of Dara being fired from his job shows the social reaction and consequences of not paying regard to the hierarchical norms of the society. On being questioned about his failure in convincing a rich investor with unreasonable demands, Darashikoh replies with authority, instead of behaving subordinately to the alpha male in front of him. This not only costs him his job but also results in insults from his superior and the client himself. “You have a serious psychological problem, Mr. Shezad” (Hamid 2012: 25) said his superior, who could not comprehend the breaking of hierarchical norms by a man of meager position in the bank. Observing the ideologies surrounding oneself, and absorbing it to reproduce similar pattern of thinking, is found to be normal by characters like Dara’s boss and when Dara does not confirm to them, he seems to be psychologically ill in the eyes of the people around him. Also, such incidents are effective tools to not only condition the individuals involved, through punishments, but also the bystanders. Dismissal of Dara from his job became a hard unforgettable lesson for him to not break social norms and for his colleagues to not repeat the same mistake.

In a conversation between Arjie and Mr. Sunderalingam, in the novel *Funny Boy*, the later consoles distressed Arjie by explaining him the reason behind his principal’s stubborn attitude and strict behavior. It is found that the Principal, Black Tie, in his early days, was also treated by his Principal, Mr. Lawton in the same way that he treated his students now. “The values he was taught are the ones he still holds on to,” (1994: 246) says Mr. Sunderalingam to Arjie. This statement is applicable to a broader spectrum of understanding masculine gender norms.

Brainwashing young minds, into believing that one's duty and purpose of living is to uphold the superiority of men and masculinity, ultimately results in passing of the same learning to the future generations. Therefore, masculinity and its many characteristics are 'learnt behavior' and not 'operant' in nature. These beliefs about gender roles are so deep rooted that it appears to be coming naturally to individuals like the Principal of Arjie's school, Black Tie.

### **2.3 GENDER IDENTITY AND MASCULINE AGGRESSION**

O'Neil and Harway (1997) proposed that the socialized components, of male gender role norms that promote power, competition, success and control may be linked to violence against women. When these components are threatened, the man responds in defense of his masculine self-esteem; and when dialogues and conflict management techniques fail, violence may become the method to restore balance and masculine pride. Violence need not essentially be viewed in association with arrogance it can also be a symptom of underlying psychological issue. Studies have shown that men and women have equivalent rates of mental health issues, though their problems differ in kind. While anxiety disorders and psychological distress is more common among women, men are found to have higher susceptibility to substance disorder, antisocial personality disorder and aggressive behaviors (Kessler and Zhao 1999; Kessler et al. 2005; Mirowsky and Ross 2005; Eisler, Skidmore, and Ward, 1988). This study argues that it is likely that in most situations aggression is stimulated in men due to uncontrollable intrinsic or extrinsic factors; however, its persistence and the form of expression are socially and intellectually determined.

In an incident of a trespasser destroying hotel property of Arjie's father, in the novel *Funny Boy*, Jegan, a family friend appointed to take care of the hotel, uses his position to send away the trespasser. Despite several warnings, when the man refused to listen, Jegan "caught the man by his arm and, with a quick twist, threw him to the ground" and insulted him "pariah" which means an outcaste (1994: 168). This violent behavior of Jegan was appreciated and reinforced by other



family members like Perera Aunty with compliments: “[g]ood work” (ibid) which encouraged the violence in him, as if it was an acceptable trait of masculinity. Here, violence and dominance over people of socially subordinate class has been encouraged, thereby resulting in the formation of learning of this behavior and ensuring its re-emergence in similar situations. This hostile attitude towards men of subordinate social strata is an important aspect of masculine hierarchy, which will be dealt in detail in the next chapter. Arjie, the speaker, too express his “admiration” (ibid: 169) for the above mentioned actions. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the speaker tells his listener: “you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all under-cover assassins” (2008: 183). There are ample instances in the novel where the identities of the two individuals are speculated to be violent in nature, yet there is no clarity on it. This statement indicates the stereotype about Pakistani Muslims that exists worldwide. As observed in this example, identity of a South Asian man is subjected to a dual process of stereotyping; the first being his gender and the second being his ethnicity. The possibility of both of these images being interpreted as violent are higher. Be it an under-cover assassin or a terrorist, both suggest violence and is more often associated with men and masculinities than any other genders. It also reflects a concept more deep, that is the natural inclination in men towards risk taking behavior. Throughout the novel, the protagonist, Changez is found provoking the person he is speaking to, to get into action. This is a clear indicator of risk taking behavior. In an instance the narrator uses anthropomorphism to describe the situation in which the silent listener was caught up and teases him:

I hope you will not mind my saying so, but the frequency and purposefulness with which you glance about – a steady tick-tick-tick seeming to beat in your head as you move your gaze from one point to the next – rings to mind the behavior of an animal that has ventured too far from its lair and is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is predator or prey! (2008: 31).

In the above example, “liar” suggests group of animals but in between the lines, the speaker is calling out the listener as a liar for posing as a tourist while he was an assassin in reality. Changez also indicates that the other person has gone too far with the lie that he has endangered his own identity. It is also note worthy, the manner in which despite being aware of the dangers that the assassin could bring to Changez, he choses to stay and chat, and even provoke him from time to time. Studies have shown that the male hormone, testosterone in men promotes risk taking behavior (Ronay and Von Hippel 2010). Though risk taking behavior is naturally stimulated among men, the kind of risk that one indulges in is socially influenced. Verbal violence and provocative statements are common forms of risk taking behaviors observed in day today life. “Say it to my face, coward, not as you run and hide.” (Hamid 2008: 117-118) says the speaker to unknown men on streets, in a foreign land, on being passed with racist comments. Belonging to the ethnic background which was under scrutiny after the terrorist attack on twin towers, challenging men of hegemonic race and attempting to indulge in a possible crime is a risk taking behavior and probably the speaker’s coping strategy to deal with his insecurities.

Violence had also been observed as a matter of pride and honor among men. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir’s father worries over his son’s lack of violence and aggression and discusses it with his friend, Rahim Khan. “And, you know, he never fights back. Never. . . There is something missing in that boy” (2013: 21) worries the father when his son does not fight back the bullies and chose to ignore them. It was not just the matter of his son’s safety but also the fear of his son not confirming to the hegemonic norms of masculinity. Throughout Amir’s childhood, his father is found pushing him to be aggressive like other boys of his age. Amir’s fondness for poetry scared his father as he was not performing according to the social expectations. The father further asserts that “[a] boy who won’t stand up for himself becomes a man who can’t stand up to anything” (Hosseini 2013: 21- 22). To him the right way of responding to a dangerous situation was through fight, and not flight or freeze. He is found to act accordingly later in novel while could not withstand any man who failed to do so. In the work

*Cinnamon Gardens*, Annaluxmi, an educated woman who is often seen in conflicting terms with the forced gendered norms, shows appreciation for violence towards a suitor for marriage:

Murugasu's reputation had preceded him, and even before she met him, she knew him as the man who had beheaded the Gods in his family shrine before coming out to Malaya a Christian convert. . . she had glanced in his direction too, feeling admiration for the passion with which he had acted (1998: 48).

It is interesting to note that despite her understanding of people and world beyond stereotypes and conventions, she too is subjected to ideologies of male gender and deep within resonates with it. This is the way interpellation works in a society. Though one believes to be free from the ideological pattern of thinking, the truth is that it is almost inescapable due to the long exposure since birth. The above mentioned instances reveal multifaceted dimension of the concept of violence associated with masculinity. While there are many reasons behind its occurrence, there are also many kinds of reaction and responses that it results in. The appreciation for violence is also, in a way, responsible for its occurrence. As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, instrumental conditioning is an important component in encouraging as well as discouraging certain kinds of behavior, violence being one of them. Likewise, ideological state apparatus is the mode of interpellation through which these characters are persuaded to accept aggression and violence as part of masculinity.

Violence is not limited to physical attacks, and it can take several forms such as verbal violence. This discursive practice of verbal abuse has been found to favor men's masculinity whereas the same is not true for other genders (Elisson et. al. 2007). Exhibition of violence through words has been commonly observed in most of the works selected for this study. Singh's *The Sunset Club* presents the character Boota Singh who engages in verbal abuse more often than any other character. In fact, in the initial part of the novel, the character is introduced using this peculiar habit:

He is a great talker and a windbag. He makes up salacious stories of his conquests, which keep his audience spellbound. He uses bad language as if it was his birthright. When he is tired of company, he simply says, ‘Now bugger off.’ If he disapproves of a person, he calls him ‘*phuddoo*’, which is Punjabi for fucker. And every other person including him is a ‘*chootia*’ – cunt-born (Singh 2011: 10).

Here, the quality of using foul language is not perceived as undesirable instead, the character is described to be “a great talker” and this interpretation is biased towards the gender of the person. This is not the only instance when masculinity of an individual earns credits for indulgence in violence as similar results are observed in the previous example when the character Jegan uses the word “pariah” to insult a person. Likewise, Assef from *The Kite Runner* makes a pompous display of his machismo through frequent indulgence in physical and verbal abuse of people weaker than him. He belonged to the dominant community of Pashtuns and considered it to be his right to suppress people of inferior community, such as the character Ali from the novel. Violence through discourse is evident in the following extracts from the novel:

Of all the neighborhood boys who tortured Ali, Assef was by far the most relentless. He was, in fact, the originator of the Babalu jeer, *Hey, Babalu, who did you eat today? Huh? Come on, Babalu, give us a smile!* And on days when he felt particularly inspired, he spiced up his badgering a little, *Hey, you flat-nose Babalu, who did you eat today? Tell us, you slant-eyed donkey!* . . . “Good morning, *kunis!*” Assef claimed, waving. “Fag,” that was another of his favorite insults . . . “Hey, Flat-Nose” (2013: 36-37).

In this example, similar to various other instances of abuse as seen in the novels, three common elements of humiliation have been observed: race, caste, family members. Earlier, Boota Singh was found attacking on people verbally by taking about their mother’s genitals; similarly, the character Baba from *The Kite Runner* challenges a group of militants using the phrase, “I’m tearing him to pieces, goddamn his father! (2013: 107-108). These are the instances when the use of

discourse was directed towards hurting a person. There are also instances in the select texts where invectives are not directed towards a person in particular and are only reflective of the state of mind of the individuals such as, the protagonist of the novel *Delhi* as he says, “I will explain the strange paradox of my lifelong, love-hate affair with the city and the woman. It may read like a *Fucking Man’s Guide to Delhi: Past and Present* but that is not what I mean it be (2016: 2). Use of such informal slang words is found more common among male characters than female characters and to certain extent it reflects the dormant violence in men who use it. As discussed earlier, in most cases it is the stress of gender role that leads to aggression in men. This phenomenon life consuming expectations of gender role in men is called masculine gender role stress.

## **2.4 MASCULINE GENDER ROLE STRESS**

Gender role refers to the repetitive patterns in the behavior of men and women that are culturally acceptable (Addis and Mahalik 2003). Men, like women, “are not born but become” (De Beauvoir 2010: 301) or rather have to become over time. The life consuming attributes of socialization of masculine gender role is being explored in the academic terrain more and more with the growing awareness on mental and emotional health of men. Comprehensive paradigms such as the *Gender Role Strain* by Joseph Pleck (1995), *Gender Role Conflict Scale* (O’Neil et. al. 1986), *Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory* and *Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale* (Eisler and Skidmore 1987) have been developed to assess the ill effects of nonconformity to the masculine gender role norms by men. While it has been proven that adhering to traditional masculine norms have facilitated better adjustment among men (Mahalik et al. 2003), it is also observed that nonconformity to the norms show maladaptive consequences (Brown 1990; Parent and Moradi 2009).

In *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran’s father often quotes from *Tirukkural* to convey the importance of following social and cultural norms and at an instance when he was suggesting his son to give him his absolute obedience he says, “[t]he service a

son can render his father is to make men ask ‘How came this blessing?’ (1998: 28). Throughout the novel, it is observed that Bala is manipulated by his father to behave and act according to his whims and fancies. Balendran hid his homosexual identity and liberal political views under the guidelines of gender as ruled out by his father. This act of behaving in accordance to the hegemonic masculine norm is found to be stressful for Bala. In this instance and several other examples from other novels, fathers are often seen as the flag - bearers of gender role norms. For instance, Abdulla was a young boy, burdened with the pressure of responsibilities at his tender and immature age, and was often treated as an adult in the house. His tears, on losing his sister to a rich family during adoption, shocked everyone and is described in the novel that he “wept like a child” (Hosseini 2014: 51). Their father was quick to discourage his expression of pain as he says, “I won’t have any crying, Father had said. No crying. I won’t have it” (ibid: 53). Comparing his crying to that of a child makes little sense as Abdulla was in fact a child. His gender and socio-economic conditions resulted in an early imposition of emotional inexpressiveness, an attribute considered suitable for only females and children. Masculine gender role stress is seen not only among adult men but also among young boys. A few days following this emotionally painful day, Abdulla had to endure the physical pain of crossing hot desert land without proper footwear to protect his feet against the hot sand. Still, on being questioned about his discomfort his reply was a simple “No,” even though “[h]e was exhausted. And his feet hurt. It wasn’t easy crossing a desert in sandals” (Hosseini 2014: 26). It was understood that he was in pain and also that nothing could be done about it as they could not afford a pair of sandals yet this question is asked, probably to check the boy’s threshold for pain and confirm his preparedness for attaining masculinity. Somewhere between losing his sister and hurting his feet in desert, Abdullah had been sufficiently interpellated into believing that he was enduring the pain out of his willingness and because of his obligation towards his gender. This is another example of how men are expected to tolerate pain without complaining and forced to be emotionally inexpressive, is an attribute that is considered to be one of the prime reasons behind masculine gender role stress.

Being a subject within gendered ideology is not necessarily stressful at all times. Sometimes it could also act as a motivating factor and persuade people to conduct in a manner that brings them more benefits than harm. In the novel *Moth Smoke*, the character named Ozi refuses to consume alcohol saying “‘I’m a father now. I have to be responsible’” (2013: 13), where as his wife opts to indulge in intoxication, “[w]ell, I haven’t quit,” Mumtaz says, taking one. ‘And I’ve been dying for a smoke’ (ibid). Ozi, who had been described to be an outgoing person and who took pleasure in partying and intoxication, is found to lead his life in a different direction. Parenthood is the identified motivating factor and as argued earlier, it may not be a stressful obligation for some men like Ozi to act according to certain gender ideologies. Through a comparison between the two parents about their choices it is made clear that Ozi was not forced yet he made a choice willingly to act responsible in the situation. It must be noted that to choose either of the two options, i.e., to act as a responsible parent or to behave carefree and consume alcohol, would both be a result of interpellation.

With changing time and increasing awareness on necessity of expressing one’s emotions and not pushing it to the deeper and darker part of the mind, many men have accommodated themselves to this change. Unfortunately, there are more number of men who fail to do so. Two cousins, Idris and Timur are examples of the two kinds of masculinities. Idris finds himself feeling jealous of Timur’s ability to express emotions efficiently whole as “his life he’d not been able to cry in the presence of other people” (Hosseini 2014: 157). “He saw this as a minor handicap . . . he felt vaguely – resentful towards Timur for upstaging him back in the house with all the running around and dramatic sobbing” (ibid). There are two observations made here, the first is Idris’ interpretation of his inability to express as a handicap. This implies that the masculine ideology of inexpressiveness had seeped so deep in the mind of Idris that now he could not come out of it even if he wished to do so. He is interpellated to the extent that he cannot break free. The second important observation made here is Timur’s expressiveness is not interpreted as effeminate or ‘non-manly’ behavior, rather a quality that makes

Idris jealous. This can be marked as identification of the transitional phase of hegemonic masculine norms.

Similarly, in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*, a mother who is estranged from her son and finds her husband to fail in empathizing with her, as a result makes a general complaint about masculine behavior. “Nalamma sighed and said, “Men don’t understand. The cord may be cut at birth, but the attachment remains” (Selvadurai 1998: 34). She thus emphasizes on the lack of emotional coherence in men in general, suggesting it was expected and to some extent, even accepted.

Another important attribute associated with masculine gender role is the ability to secure a comfortable life for their family. A crucial aspect of providing family with their needs and comforts include providing them financial security. In *Cinnamon Gardens*, Annaluxmi’s father writes to her about a suitable boy to whom she could possibly marry and the criterion for his approval was limited to his financial status. He mentions that, ““Muttiyahha’s just secured a job,’ the letter continued. “He is at the Land Office in Kuala Lumpur on a steady salary and is able to support a wife and family”” (Selvadurai 1998: 43). Here, the discourse is centered on money and not any other aspect such as morals, principles, likes or dislikes in the context of marriage. Human relations are far more complex than the rhetoric everyday routine yet there are limited discussions on such issues. Similarly, Bhagmati who was not a wife but like one, a partner who would spend time and take care of the speaker, in the novel *Delhi*, compares and shames him for not performing well financially. She complains to him saying that, he had “the same little flat, the same *Rat- khatee* old motor every part of which makes a noise except its horn” (Singh 1994: 314). Failing to perform the role of a provider is also a stressor in abiding by the gender role norms. Women’s financial dependence on men is a crucial stem in ensuring patriarchy at both public as well as private sphere. Taking care of one’s family is of prime importance, and it can be observed even in the case of Ozi from *Moth Smoke*, as he refuses to smoke weed with his old friend saying, ““I’m a father now. I have to be responsible”” (Hamid 2012: 13). Expectations of securing one’s family was a life consuming



demand even for Abdulla's father who had to give away his daughter for adoption to ensure a better life for the entire family, especially his daughter Pari . His decision is compared to the story of a father who gave away his child to a monster called 'div' in return for the child's life. Either the child dies, or lives with the *div* and the father chose the latter option. "They said he was a coward for willingly giving away his son. That he was an unfit father. A real father would have fought the *div*" (Hosseini 2014: 7). The *div* or the monster here refers to poverty and Abdullah's father is called unfit because he could not fight it and look after his family. All the examples stated above unveil the darker side of the so called masculine privilege: the constant pressure of meeting the needs of a family single handedly. Expectations of unrealistic and heroic deeds, is yet another component of gender role stress. There are also few instances of gender stereotypes that are found to be common in South Asian society such as taking interest and mastering the skill of riding and driving. Nabi, the driver of Mr. Wahdati says about his master that "he was a rare breed of man who did not enjoy the act of operating a car" (Hosseini 2014: 87), suggesting 'driving' to be an expected attribute of masculinity. Calling him 'rare breed' suggests that this skill of driving was common among men and to not take an interest in it, was significant of some form of strangeness in him. Later in the work, it is revealed that Wahdati was a homosexual individual. His inability to drive was a foreshadowing of his deviance from the most important norm of masculinity: heterosexuality. The author's way of foreshadowing Wahdati's sexuality is an example of masculinity that is far from the hegemonic type. It is also important to observe the ideology in the narration of the story and to question the novelist's level of interpellation, as there is stereotyping evident here. Was it mere foreshadowing or was the writer too influenced by social ideology and believed that a gay man lacks other skills and capacities that are considered 'manly'? However, gender role norms are not limited to the male anatomy or sexuality; and there are multiple aspects that need to be considered while studying masculinity.

Gender intersects with various modalities such as class, religion and nationality before it can assume an identity. The definition of masculinity for an individual in

a Western society may not match with the one in an Eastern land; in fact, the idea of masculinity may differ for two individuals of the same village, but different religions. South Asia, a land of unity in diversity has a history of innumerable clashes between communities. During one such dispute, one party acted heinously violent towards the leader of the other community in order to threaten the members of the other community. In such as risky situation, all the male members of the community, including the ones considered brave and hegemonic chose to step back. Meanwhile, a man from the untouchable community seizes the opportunity to jump up to the hegemonic level of masculinity and challenge the existing hierarchy. His following words also provide an insight on how masculinity, in this part of the world, is dependent on racial identity.

Most of the Guru's disciples are high born Kshatriyas and Jat peasants who boasted loudly of their bravery. They had done nothing to save their Guru. I, an untouchable, could teach these high caste fellows how a Guru's Sikh should act. It might cost me my life, but I would win the respect of the world for my untouchable brethren (Singh 1994: 134-135).

The extract mentioned above is an example of the sudden shift in power and hierarchy in masculinity. Though this shift is temporary and may not hold a long term effect, it is still a significant act that provides insights on the process of construction of hierarchies of gender. Also, situations like this provide power only to the ones who act so exceptionally, and does not get generalized to the entire community.

Baba from the novel *The Kite Runner*, is another example of the manner in which race plays a vital role in maintaining the superiority of one's masculinity. Though he shares many memorable moments of his life with his helper - Ali, in none of his stories about their companionship, "did Baba ever refer to Ali as his friend" (Hosseini 2013: 24). A similar approach is adopted by Amir towards Ali's son, Hassan. "The curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either" (ibid) says Amir who had spent most of his childhood with Hassan. Later in the work, it is revealed that Baba was the biological father of Hassan and

despite his love for Hassan he had hid the matter to maintain his reputation and power. “It was a shameful situation. People would talk” (Hosseini 2013: 206) thus explains Rahim Kaka the necessity for the secrecy. In all the three situations taken from the novel, public image and other’s interpretation of one’s masculinity is the underlying thought. ‘Validation’ from members of society is also a crucial step in experiencing one’s masculinity. Hegemonic men endure this stress significantly higher than other men.

In the work, *And The Mountains Echoed*, Idris is disturbed by the dominance and power being practiced by his cousin, Taimur. They had returned to their native in Afghanistan for a short visit, and while they had been living a comfortable life abroad, the people in Afghanistan had been suffering through war and poverty. Taimur was treated superior, by the people as he seemed financially richer and with higher educational qualification than any, and yet was humble to them. Idris’s view about this situation is another example of masculinity functioning beyond the limits of physical body and stereotypical norms.

He has behaved like a quintessential ugly Afghan-American, Idris thinks. Tearing through the war-torn city lie he belongs here...like he’s been here all along, like he wasn’t lifting at Gold’s in San Jose, working on his pecs and abs, when these people were getting shelled, murdered, raped...We’re not like this people. We shouldn’t pretend we are. The stories these people have to tell, we’re not *entitled* to them (Hosseini 2014: 167-168).

Idris is found noticing the gap between the masculinity of non-residential citizens like him and the natives and has expressed the need to not confuse between the two. While he mentions the pain experienced by them, he also reminds that its effect would be suffered in the form of gender role stress too. This could be justified using the previous argument that it is the masculine gender role to provide safety and comfort to one’s family and in a situation of anarchy such as war makes it even more difficult for men to do so.

The boundary between masculinity and male often blurs out. Though human bodies have been largely accepted to be of two major kinds, the male and the female (rest all categorized as deviant), the concept cannot be bifurcated into such easy binary fields. The characteristics of gender that are deemed to be natural for a male cannot essentially be restricted to only the 'male bodies;' likewise, femininity is not limited to a female body. Butler meticulously criticizes that "[t]he presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (Butler 2002: 9), in fact gender is largely dependent on its expression. "The constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained" (Connell 2005: 54). Gender is therefore a continuous process and not a fixed achievement that remains static forever. Masculinity is a performance which can be practiced by a female as well, for instance, Philomena Barnette opposes universal franchise as she believes in supremacy of men and letting men take all major decisions. She opposes liberal and progressive thoughts of Sonia saying, "[o]nly manly women get involved in men's affairs. Normal women think of their husbands and of their homes and nothing else" (Selvadurai 1998: 117). Here, the courage and confidence to express opinion in politics and even the act of taking interest in politics is considered masculine; and though this attribute is widely encouraged in men it is treated like a taboo when women portray it. This may not be a problem concerning male members of the society directly, but it does affect the way interaction takes place between men and others.

Likewise, after Arjie was caught cross-dressing and playing with his female cousins, he was restricted from entering his mother's room while she dressed up, as his father believed that it was his mother who encouraged "all his nonsense" (Selvadurai 1994: 14) by allowing him to enter the room while she was dressing and by letting him play with her accessories. This new rule had pulled away the experience he considered "almost religious" (ibid: 15) and made him realize the damage caused by his behavior. Here, feminine qualities could be observed in a male person and that threatens the patriarchal system and its functioning.

Therefore, even the games played by a young boy is considered a serious issue by the adults and discouraged accordingly. While interpellation exists both in accordance to hegemonic norms, as well as against it, it is the ideological state apparatus (ISA) and the repressive state apparatus (RSA) that determine its implementation. In the above two examples, it can be observed that denying voting rights to women is the use of RSA where as family pressure and teaching represents ISA.

The burden of masculinity is not limited to men but also to transgender individuals as well. In transgender individuals, masculinity and femininity are both present in missed proportions and it becomes a choice for the person to perform it in the way that suits their interest in the best way. In *Delhi a novel*, Bhagmati opts to dress and present herself as a female. And a detailed explanation for this choice can be found in the novel.

The reason why they prefer to wear women's clothes is because it being a man's world every deviation from accepted standards of masculinity are regarded as unmanly. Women are more generous (Singh 1994: 29).

This statement clearly states the significant augmentation of difficulty in performing a masculine gender role as opposed to feminine gender. Challenges of masculinities are overwhelming and consume a person's entire life to maintain a steady conformity to it. Therefore, eunuchs like Bhagmati are found preferring to enter the feminine world which is less challenging.

Hegemonic masculine gender role has been directly linked to three major social expectations: first one being status, which is the belief that men must gain respect from others; the second one is toughness, which refers to the belief that men are naturally aggressive; and the third one is anti-femininity, which is the belief that men must not engage in activities stereotypically assigned to females or considered feminine in nature (Thompson and Pleck 1986). Gaining respect from others or maintaining the status involves good communication skills and wise sense of humor with which a person can successfully showcase his intellectual

capabilities. The protagonist of the novel *Delhi*, was proud of himself because his “Oxbridge accent impressed Americans more than it did the other nationalities; to them I was a gentleman guide” (Singh 1994: 109). Intellectual superiority is one of the aspects that fulfills the first of the three requirements for actualization of masculinity i.e., social status. Similarly, Nabi feels recognized and successful when he amuses his boss, Nila. He says, “I prided myself on knowing that my clever story had given her a bit of reprieve from the discontent of her marriage” (Hosseini 2014: 99). Nabi represents the hegemonic masculinity at this point, while Nila’s husband represents the subordinate type of masculinity at this particular point of time in the novel. Unlike Nabi, Nila’s husband had “no sense of fun or adventure” (Hosseini 2014: 101) due to which, Nabi describes how “Suleiman is a brooding old man trapped in a younger man’s body” (ibid). Good sense of humor adds to the quality of superior intellect (Zahra et al. 2020) and provides the desired outcome of social recognition. Similarly, commenting on someone’s intellectual capacity becomes a way of teasing the other person effectively; as in *The Sunset Club*, Pandit Sharma teases Boota Singh by remarking, “Boota, I bet you don’t know that word --- when you get home look it up in your dictionary” (2011: 46). It has also been observed that correlation between intellectual superiority and masculinity has its own limitations, but intellectual capacity is in ironical relationship with its byproducts. Though it is considered hegemonic for men to have higher mental capacity, it is still found to be a feminine trait to engage in activities that are directly associated with it, such as opting to be a reader over a macho venture such as a sport or hunting. Balendran’s father Mudaliyar, in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens* “had considered Balendran’s love of reading and quiet activities effeminate. He had tormented Balendran over his inadequacies in sports, mocked his distaste for hunting” (Selvadurai 1998: 222-223). A similar situation was observed in case of Amir in *The Kite Runner* as discussed earlier in this chapter. Also, Arjie’s father in the novel, *Funny Boy* is found to discourage his son’s reading habits. While it is evident that hegemonic men in all the above mentioned works have condemned

reading to be suitable hobby for masculine men; it can also be seen that the evolving new generation of masculinity is deviating from the traditional norms.

Studies have revealed that sexual performance has direct link to an individual's gender role stress (Eisler 1987). An individual's ability to perform well during a sexual intercourse, and the ability to keep their partner satisfied, boosts their self image and augments confidence (Terman 2013). In *Delhi a Novel*, Musaddi Lal was found distanced by his wife for a long time, despite staying in the same house she refrained from any physical contact with him after he chose to convert to another religion. It was a long time before she forgave and accepted him; and when they slept together, he expresses his shame as he says, "no sooner did I reach between them than my seed was spent. I felt ashamed of myself" (2016: 60). This was the shame of not being able to satisfy his partner sexually and failing to perform well during sexual intercourse that made him feel ashamed. Musaddi Lal overcame this guilt by performing better the next time. Keeping his wife sexually satisfied gives him the assurance about the strength of their relationship. He describes this feeling saying, "a cry of pain escaped her lips. I knew that I had at long last made Ram Dulari mine" (ibid: 61). Here, it was not only the strengthening of the relationship but also him having an upper hand in their relationship. By saying he had finally made her "mine" he is indicating towards possessing control over her. It gave him the key to hegemonic position in the family. Similarly, in the same work, when Alice Aldwell expresses her joy and satisfaction after a sexual intercourse with George Atkins, he "looked as if his salary had been doubled and he had scored a century at a cricket match. He lay beside me taping his chest as if it were full of gold medals" (Singh 2016: 239). Another important observation that could be missed out at times is the manner in which responsibility of sexual intercourse lays on men. However, this cannot be argued explicitly because these novels do not carry the point of view of women involved in the scenario. Yet, it is clearly visible that from a masculine perspective the act of sexual intercourse is more of a venture, where men strive to prove themselves proficient. The pleasure of it is seen to be beyond physical need. In *The Sunset Club*, Boota Singh's opinion about this subject is also similar. He

says “I was flattered --- all men are flattered when a woman praises the size of their tool” (Singh 2010: 69). Just as sexual performance becomes a way of holding positive self image for men, it also becomes a sensitive topic and makes them vulnerable. Pandit Sharma, in an argument with Boota Singh, insults him saying, “I bet you can’t even get an erection any more” (Singh 2010: 13). Sexuality of an individual has very limited direct effect on other’s lives, yet it is often seen to be a topic of public interest. Boota complains to his friend Baig saying, “you keep everything to yourself” and on being questioned about what he wanted to know, Boota replies “[y]our sex life. It can’t have been limited to your Begum” (ibid: 66). Baig’s sex life is referred as ‘everything’ thus, emphasizing that a person’s sexuality forms a crucial part of his life and personality. Boota Singh was popular for his active sexual life even after crossing late adulthood and was known as “Rangeela Sardar – colourful Sikh” (ibid: 94). Though there had been many distinctive traits of his personality and many remarkable achievements to quote, his ability to perform well sexually and seduce women into sleeping with him became a highlight. Along with this, there are other attributes to one’s physical body that contributes in the performance of masculine gender ideology.

## **2.5 GENDERING THE BODY**

Talia Bettcher, a critic on gender studies, emphasizes the possibility of a person’s inability to comply his/her gender with the sex of the body i.e., it is possible for a male person to feel feminine and vice versa (2014). Arjie, for example, feels feminine naturally at a very young age and acts accordingly. He is found using his mother’s and aunt’s makeup products and dress himself in *sarees* while he takes great pleasure in doing so. Such non- masculine behavior is completely against the patriarchal norms as it encourages femininity. This threat to patriarchy and masculinity was immediately put to a stop by people around him that included his own family, especially his father. It is interesting to note that, after the entire family discovered Arjie’s indulgence in cross dressing and participation in female cousins’ games, he is shamed and humiliated with moniker “funny one” (Selvadurai 1997: 14) while Meena’s participation in boys’ group and outdoor



games was not even mentioned. Here, it was not an attack on male and neglect of female, rather an attack on femininity and encouraging of masculinity. Men and boys, in patriarchal setup are doomed with the norms of masculinity to an extent that even games played by kids could bring the fear of non-conformity among adults. As observed in the select texts, it is often the fathers who have to carry out the task of gender policing. Like fathers of Abdulla, Amir, Arjie, and Balendran, Annaluxmi's father was also held responsible for her failure to perform feminine. "He was responsible for her reckless nature, a disposition that would have been admissible, even charming, in a boy, but in a girl was surely a catastrophe" (Selvadurai 2000: 4), said her mother. Hegemonic male members of the society are found to be the gatekeepers of gendered behaviors.

Growing of facial hair, especially beard has been an important aspect of gender construction and with special reference to South Asia, it is considered as a mode of differentiation of masculinity among men of East versus the West (Wood 1986; Neave and Shields 2008). Amir, the protagonist of the novel proudly boasts about his father and the impression he created with his personality in the novel, in *The Kite Runner*, he says: "My father was a force of nature, a towering Pashtun specimen with a thick beard" (Hosseini 2013: 12). Here, beard is the symbolic representation of hegemonic masculinity; and its thickness can be directly related to the intensity with which he is able to exercise his power. Similarly, the speaker in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* had suffered racial discrimination in the US after the 9/11 attack on the twin towers. He, who was a worshipper of the West and adapted himself to their culture, slowly started shifting back to his origin. The racial comments stimulated in him the feeling of being an 'other' and shake his self image. In order to discover his own identity, he decides to grow beard like most men of his community do in South Asia:

I had not shaved my two- week- old beard. It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind . . . I did not wish to blend in with the army of clean- shaven youngsters who were my co workers, and

that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry (Hamid 2008: 130).

Here beard is used by the protagonist for gender performativity and his beard gives his masculine identity additional exclusiveness by adding details to his ethnicity. In the same novel, during his introduction to a stranger who happened to be a White man from the US, Changez says “[d]o not be afraid of my beard: I am a lover of America” says the speaker in the monologue of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (ibid: 1). This statement provides us the prominent sample required to understand shifting nature of masculinity. The aspect of bodily presentation that brings power and authority, through compliance with the hegemonic norms of a South Asian society, also brings doubt, fear and shame in terms of Western masculine standards. This observation makes it clear that performativity changes with change in ideology which in turn changes according to the change in space or culture.

Communal war in Afghanistan, mentioned in *The Kite Runner* and *And The Mountains Echoed* had pulled globalization and gender equality many steps back from where it had progressed. Assertion on male superiority and an absolute patriarchic system was to be practiced under their rule. Growing beard was an important part of this plan as beard symbolized hegemonic masculinity. They had “Beard Patrol” (Hosseini 2013: 228) to punish any man who refused to obey this rule by the oppressing group of attackers. Along with power and dominance, beard could also symbolize orthodox nature of the society in general. In a public restaurant, Changez catches a man staring at girls. “That bearded man . . . is himself unable to stop glancing over his shoulder at those girls” (Hamid 2009: 26), he thus points out the hypocrisy of an orthodox traditional man, who finds it difficult to balance between his natural desire of looking at an attractive girl and the performative act of the so called decency that he needs to put forth. The man chose to project his orthodox masculine thinking using his beard but could not abide by it through his behavior, a similar situation is observed in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*. The regard for beard extends its power over mustache as

well: “A flashlight shines into my eyes and I can make out a mustache” (Hamid 2012: 16) says Dara when he is stopped by a police officer for drinking and driving. Mustache represents the police officers who hold the power to punish those who broke the law. Mustache became a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. The moniker is used by Dara again for other police officers as well: “[0]ther mustaches gather around” (ibid: 16) he says. The creation of stereotypes and the choices people like the characters mentioned above make in order to identify themselves with the stereotypes is yet another facet of interpellation.

Body shaming has been a concern in socio-cultural research, to understand the manner in which it affects the physical and mental health of individuals. While there has not been any difference in its occurrence among two genders, it has been deduced that it can in fact affect men’s physical and mental health even more as compared to women (Dimri and Mittal 2019; Saxena et. al. 2020). Deviating from the concept of ‘fit’ and being under or over weight has been deemed less ‘manly’; and this concept leads to a negative ‘self’ image. A discussion between two friends in *Moth Smoke*, provides detailed explanation of the manner in which body shaming deconstructs the ‘self’ image:

What is fat? . . . Fat implies a certain ungainliness, an inefficiency, a sense of immobility, a lack of industry, an unpleasant, unaesthetic quality . . . when the word ‘fat’ is mentioned, people do not tend to think of the awesomely powerful rhinoceros, the supremely and efficiently magnificent sperm whale, the deadly grizzly of North America. They do not say, ‘fat as a well-fed tiger.’ No, they say, ‘fat as a pig,’ a creature which eats its own feces and has never in our literature been a symbol of dignity . . . The collective consciousness has assigned to fat a meaning . . . Fat is bad (2013: 70-71).

In an Islamic society, pig is a forbidden animal and according to their cultural norm a true Muslim must not consume its meat (Blench et al. 2006). The South Asian belief system about pigs resonates greatly with this attitude. Even at a global level, as the narrator states, literature has never given a dignified position to pig. Thus comparison of a fat man to a pig is a mode of degrading him. One’s

body, therefore, is a mode of communicating one's masculinity and also a mode of judgment of one's masculinity by others. The protagonist of the novel also expresses his pride in not sharing any commonality with this image of a fat man. Here, he is adding pride to his self image while also being judgmental about other men who are not in the desired body shape. He also indicates towards the hegemonic superiority he attains by having leaner body mass:

I possess those very qualities the lack of which is assumed by the word 'fat' : industry, drive, dexterity, cunning. I am the living embodiment of so many unfat qualities that their enumeration would be a project of enormous scope (2013: 71).

Throughout the novel there is no indication on any form of exercise routine or a balanced lifestyle of the protagonist. Moreover, there have been multiple occasions where he has engaged in intoxication using alcohol and drugs. His lean body could, therefore be a gift of his genetics and not discipline. Yet, he is found taking pride in the leanness of his body and shows aversion towards fat members of male society. This attitude is carried out by significant number of hegemonic men which results in negative self image among the rest. Voluntarily as well as involuntarily, men have been participating in the ideology of patriarchy that promotes stronger and attractive men over the others. This interpellation fuels the need to look leaner as that might fetch a man title of hegemonic masculinity. In this example the body itself is found to be the mode of gender performativity. Along with body size, clothing plays a vital role in expressing one's identity. In an example stated earlier it was seen that Bhagmati, like many other Trans individuals, prefers to dress in a saree like a female because the men's world of gender was too tough to perform. The chapter "Pigs Can't Fly" in the novel, *Funny Boy* talks of Arjie's natural inclination towards femininity and the manner in which cross-dressing gave *him the power to* "leave constraints" and ascend into "an icon, a graceful, benevolent, perfect being upon whom the adoring eyes of the world rested" (1994: 4-5). Cloths therefore act as a second skin and a powerful tool of expression. During a visit to the home of his American girlfriend,

the protagonist in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* thinks out loud while selecting the right attire for the occasion:

I took advantage of the ethnic exception clause that is written into every code of etiquette and wore a starched white kurta of delicately worked cotton over a pair of jeans. It was a testament to the open-mindedness and --- that overused word --- *cosmopolitan* nature of New York (2007: 48).

One's choice of clothing is undoubtedly an efficient mode of communicating one's masculinity. Changez uses his cloth to represent his ethnicity, youth, masculinity and a carefree attitude. While kurta represents South Asian culture, a pair of jeans adds the image of youth and Western influence in the personality of the person. The mention of the color white of the kurta, the garment worn over upper body, could be interpreted as peaceful, courageous or as Changez himself interprets- "elegant but also casual" (ibid). Here, clothes that he chose to wear helped him to convey his open minded thoughts without speaking a word on it. Unlike Changez, Murad Badshah from *Moth Smoke* despises Western culture and consoles his friend who had recently lost his job in a bank, saying "you're better off this way. Pinstriped suits are cages for the soul . . . A man who works for another man is a slave" (2013: 46). The garment of 'pinstriped suit' became a symbol of slavery here. Until Dara, the protagonist of the novel, had his job, his uniform meant him pride and loyalty, but as soon as he lost his job the same uniform reminded him of how dispensable employees like him were. Uniforms at schools or work place are meant to ensure uniformity and equality among all its students and employees respectively, but perceiving it under the view point of ideological reproduction of masculinity, it can be criticized as yet another technique to limit men from deviating from the prescribed norms by performing masculinity in diverse ways through their body or clothes. The novel *Moth Smoke*, takes a step further in displaying the role of clothes in gender performativity and also the ways in which it can shake its hierarchical order. The protagonist of the novel, Darashikoh expresses the uneasiness he experiences on seeing his servant Municci better dressed than he was:

My servant is wearing an old kurta shalwar I gave him after one of my little cousins spilled a bottle of ink on it. But Manucci must have bleached it or something, because the stain is hardly visible, and although it isn't starched, it has been freshly ironed. I look from myself, in my dirty jeans and T-shirt, to Manucci, in his crisp white cotton, and feel a strange sense of unease (2013: 212-213).

Clothes play a great role in signifying several aspects of human personality and mood. For instance, Manucci's stainless, washed and ironed garment indicates the effort he has taken to present himself well. It also shows his interest in life and discipline with which he carries out his everyday routine. On the other hand, Dara's 'dirty' jeans and T-shirt signifies his carelessness and lack of interest in life. His lack of effort to dress well is indicative of his lack of effort to make his life better as well; a fact that is confirmed in the later parts of the novel. These men are performing masculinity through their 'masculine' clothes, and there is significant difference in the manner, each one is doing it.

While it is a fact that life without discourse is nearly impossible, at the same time it is also true that a brief encounter with the real happens during the non-existential, non-materialistic episodes that are extremely brief. To work for the hegemonic motion or against it, are both discourses; but the state in which rejection of one attribute has happened and the adoption of another is yet to commence, could be the state of 'the real.' "They don't know me. None of these people have any idea who I really am" (Selvadurai 1998: 167), says Bala, who leads a dual life. Outside, in the eyes of his family and public, he is an ideal man with masculine physic, heterosexual family, and he is a social member who follows the hierarchical system of class and race division; but in secrecy, he has sexual relationship with a male prostitute, probably of a lower caste. In between these two stages of living, Bala encounters his real self for short intervals and those moments are referred by him as who he "really" (ibid) is. Bala's brother's words during his last days speaks a lot on disparity between discourse and reality of living. He says, "[y]ou have been blind to the reality of life, Bala. You have

spent your whole life living by codes everyone lays down but nobody follows” (Selvadurai 1998: 273). Their father had become the gatekeeper of patriarchy of their house and community, and also its unreasonable execution all through his life to an extent that he was “like a prisoner who had spent so much of his life in a penitentiary that he was unable to accommodate himself to a life outside of it” (Selvadurai 1998: 30).

Similar introspection and encounter with reality is observed by Arjie The withdrawal of Shehan and his love, due to Arjie’s fear of shame and rejection, resulted in the following introspection in Arjie:

Right and wrong, fair and unfair had nothing to do with how things really were. I thought of Shehan and myself. What had happened between us in the garage was not wrong. For how could loving Shehan be bad? ... I thought of how unfair this was and I was reminded of things I had seen happen to other people, like Jegan, or even Radha Aunty, who, in their own way, had experienced injustice. How was it that some people got to decide what was correct or not, just or unjust? (Selvadurai 1998: 273-274).

A young boy like Arjie is seen reflecting such deep thoughts and through these words it is seen that hegemonic masculine norms have been threatened by homosexuality, caste difference and social strata. Here, Arjie’s relationship with Shehan represents homosexuality, Radha’s love for Anil was an inter-caste relationship and Jegan’s revolt against social strata threatened hierarchical order in the society. Boota Singh mocks the contradicting position Indians have put themselves in as he says, “we preach peace to the world and prepare for war. We preach purity of mind, chastity and the virtues of celibacy; we are also obsessed with sex. That makes us interesting” (Singh 2010: 3), and though he was speaking for Indian society in particular, this irony is common in most parts of the world. The cause of this irony is natural human tendencies to fulfill their greed and the complex sophisticated plan to behave in certain decent way; i.e., “one’s rules of propriety makes one *thirst* for the improper” (Hamid 2009: 26). A subtle indication of the ways of the world is seen when a cell mate of Dara, both of them

being imprisoned for murder, suggests Dara that it is better “to laugh at what you do not understand than to take it seriously and end up giggling hysterically in a padded cell off Jail Road” (Hamid 2009: 79). Dara realizes that the prisoner had a point but he was brought up by his mother “to have a strong sense of wrong and right” (ibid) and ultimately he failed to perform aptly in the two worlds, the one inside the prison and the one outside.

As evident from this analysis, body is both a plain site where gender is constructed and also, body is a representation of the gender itself. On the one hand, it provides the surface on which culturally significant and meaningful representations are displayed, while on the other, it signifies the gender by itself, through the movements and use of the body and also through its presentation. Arjie uses his body to express the so called femininity in him through cross dressing. He dresses up not to convey his gender to others, instead he does it to please himself. As he explains in the novel, it sets him free. Here Arjie uses his body to communicate to himself. Unlike Arjie, several other characters are found using their body to communicate their gender to others. Characters like Dara, as mentioned above, make choices about their cloths and growth of facial hair to broadcast their ethnicity and belief system to every individual who looks at him. It can also be interpreted as his need to stand out in a crowd of people, where he failed to blend in. Interestingly, gendering the body is not limited to performativity by the individual alone. Hegemonic members of society are found making decisions on the manner gender performativity should be carried out by individuals of inferior gender category. ‘Beard patrol’ mentioned above and subjugation of Arjie’s gender performativity by his father, are some examples to recollect. Another important point noted here is that it is usually the male hegemonic members who control other male members and act as self declared soldiers of patriarchy.

It is also an important understanding that abiding by the hegemonic norms of masculinity is submission to the influence of gender discourse, and nonetheless opposing it. An individual may choose to adopt the unaccepted form of gender



expression which is constantly under scrutiny and rejection, yet it is also a gender discourse pre-existent in the society. It is now a fact that excessive deviation from expected social behavior leads to negative experiences. Studies have also revealed that negative social events were directly associated with poor physical and mental health (Brown and Harris 1978; Thoits 1983; Hatch and Dohrenwend 2007). Long term exposure to negative life events would eventually result in an injury, a disability, an illness or death (Cooper 2005; Cohen et. al. 2007; Turner 2010). Similarly, long term impact of stress produces adverse “psychiatric disorders, such as generalized anxiety disorder, major depression, post traumatic stress disorder, and alcohol and substance use disorders” (Thoits 2015; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1974; Brown and Harris 1978; Mirowsky and Ross 2008; Thoits 1995).

From this chapter it is also observed that agreement and disagreement to gender can both exist in the same place. Also, a person can be masculine and feminine, both at the same time, i.e., what might have been declared as purely a masculine attribute can be accompanied by the attribute considered feminine in nature, in the same body, performed by the same person. The gatekeepers of masculinity and patriarchy are not only the male members who triumphantly mirror the hegemonic attributes, but also those men who bear the pain and pressure of not being able to fulfill it; and also individuals of other genders who suffer its dominance. The sustenance of patriarchy and life consuming hegemonic expectations are combined efforts of individuals from different levels of the gender hierarchy. ‘Hegemonic masculinity,’ a deep and vast topic will be discussed, in detail, in the following chapter, as it forms the base to understand masculinity, irrespective of the cultural and geographical context in question.

In the upcoming chapter, “Analysis of Hierarchical Masculinities and the Construction of Cultural Hegemony” attempts will be made to understand the hierarchical system of sub-categories of masculinities within the male society. It will also focus on the imperialistic aspects of masculinity and the process of repression. R. W. Connell’s classification of masculinities will be analyzed in

depth in South Asian cultural context. The natural tendency of changing hierarchical positions within masculinity will also be examined.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS OF HIERARCHICAL MASCULINITIES AND CULTURAL HEGEMONIES

Gender is not merely a hallmark that labels an individual; it rather influences them throughout their day-to-day activities. Unlike feminism or gender studies, there is a dearth in the number of attempts made to understand masculinity. “Masculinity is primarily a cultural product; it exhibits a great deal of variation among and often within cultures, where its specific requirements and normative power may vary” (Calhoun 2002). This definition indicates the varying nature of Masculinity, the possibility for it to transform from time to time. There is a significant gap between the normative and practical manifestations of masculinity as it is often challenged by women and some men who are placed in a disadvantageous position due to it. This difference, results in various types of masculinities that are created based on the extent to which a man confirms to the social norms. Thus, at a given moment of time and in a specific geographic location, several forms of masculinities coexist. West and Zimmerman (1991) have stated, “Gender is an achieved status that is constructed via psychological, cultural, and social means.” Gender comprises of socially constructed beliefs that determine the behavior, activity, and attitude of a person. Every time the topic of gender emerges, its cultural origin becomes a mandatory aspect to discuss. This, as suggested by Kimmel, is because, “masculinity is not a matter of the mind, but of the body” (1996). The body of the male is meant to be a tool to gain superiority and favorable position over other sexes. It must be noted that, the society ranks men higher in terms of physical fitness and capability. The appearance of a giant, muscular strong body conveys the message that men are advantaged and women are weak and dependent.

### 3.1 PATRIARCHY

Connell states that, “men’s greater sporting prowess has become a theme of backlash against feminism. It serves as symbolic proof of men’s superiority and right to rule” “[t]he performance is symbolic and kinetic, social and bodily, at one and the same time, and these aspects depend on each other” (Connell 2005: 54). These aspects are important to understand the coordination between nature and culture to present men more powerful than women. R.W. Connell simplifies the concept by defining the predominantly discussed concept of ‘hegemonic’ masculinity and the other forms that array surrounding it. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the correctly accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell and Connell 2000: 77).

The concept of ‘Patriarchy,’ plays an important role in understanding the hierarchical order of Masculinity; and before delving into the different kinds of masculinities and the order in which they exercise power, it is important to understand patriarchy. Patriarchy is the institutionalization of men’s dominance over women and other genders. It manifests power to men by considering them stronger than women in most aspects of life, it is subtle and loud at the same time. Genders other than male are not deprived of their rights in political as well as social context in the current situation. However; they face visible subjugation from men when the exercising of those rights comes into picture. Patriarchy has its own ideological frame work that tries to justify dominance over women and inherent natural difference between the genders. The term means “the rule of the father” (Ferguson 1999: 1048), which signifies power and dominance of an elderly male over the others. It was initially used to refer to autocratic rule in domestic sphere however slowly the term started signifying social imperialism by male society. It was second wave feminists like, Kate Millett who popularized the usage of the term in this fashion. Patriarchy then became a concept to understand that male dominance is socially constructed and not biologically determined.

Sylvia Walby, a sociologist defines patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women” (1989: 223) and she also acknowledges that patriarchy is the form of power politics practiced in most societies. It is also an interesting observation that patriarchy can exist in a matrilineal society as well.

Patriarchy exists at domestic and public levels, thereby controlling all the spheres of human interaction. Schools, colleges, MNCs, and politics are all examples of ‘Public Patriarchy’ while that which happens within the four walls of a house represents ‘Domestic Patriarchy.’

### **3.2 MASCULINITY AND STATE APPARATUSES**

The first chapter has introduced the two state apparatuses that govern the manner in which interpellation functions in a society. This study finds strong association between the ideological state apparatus and domestic patriarchy, and similarly a significant correlation between repressive state apparatus and public patriarchy. While ISA and domestic patriarchy function through governing the belief system of a society, RSA and public patriarchy dealt by imposing gender norms with power and sometimes with coercive means. For instance, criminalization of homosexuality, as mentioned in *Cinnamon Gardens*, gives the power to control men and direct them to behave in accordance with the ruling ideology, i.e., patriarchy. The novel also mentions Oscar Wilde’s trial of 1895 (1998: 141), when Wilde was legally charged and imprisoned for having a sexual relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. In the novel, strikingly similar situations are observed. Just like Alfred Douglas’ father, Balendran’s father too threatens his son’s sexual partner Richard of complaining to the police, in order to hold control over his son’s sexuality. This profoundly scared Richard as homosexuality was still illegal in England. Changez from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also delivers the manner in which his actions of revolt and fundamentalism were monitored in his country and he was warned to refrain from it on several occasions: “I have received official warnings on more than one occasion” and also mentions how he had successfully “escaped suspension” (2008: 180). Here, legal warnings from

judiciary and threats of suspension from his work place are apt examples to understand RSA. Unlike RSA, ISA does not work on violence or repression, as the name suggests, it works on ideological frame works. Institutions such as religion, school and even family provide the ideologies that are dominant and acceptable and make it seem as the right way of behaving. As the discussion in this chapter unfolds; it becomes more evident how crucial it is to know the manner in which the society is interpellated with the existing ideologies. In the context of masculinity, patriarchy becomes the dominant ideology and direct application of RSA and ISA theories would be to co-relate it to public and private patriarchy, respectively. Here, the argument is that public patriarchy functions under RSA and private patriarchy under ISA, but not vice versa.

Connell quotes Richard Gruneau and David Whitson's *Hockey Night in Canada* as an example to show institutional influence and the manner in which the politics of norms is constituted. He describes the details in which aggression is promoted among players of ice hockey by the institutions of business and politics. Another influential work in this area is by Michael Messner (1992), wherein he profoundly explains that when young boys enter the field of sports, especially competitive sports, they are not just learning the rules of the game but also the norms of an organized institution. Even though only a few adopt it as a professional career, every boy is introduced to this version of Masculinity and at some point most boys would be working towards achieving the goal of Hegemonic Masculinity set by the institution. The institution of sports and politics provide the analogical inference that every institution dictates a discourse of its own and also, that every institution and its discourse is subjected to change with time and context. *Funny Boy*, could be seen as a testimonial novel to prove the relevance of this theory. 'Victoria Academy' the boys' school where young male pupil were trained to become 'men,' is the apt representation of many contemporary schools where gender training is more focused than formal education. The process begins even before young boys enter the school premises. The uniform that they are supposed to wear symbolizes many concepts in one go. Victoria Academy prescribed its students to wear full pants instead of shorts; while other neighboring schools

continued with shorts as a part of the uniform till they reached high school. This change symbolically represents the claims of the school to turn its male pupil into young men sooner than any other institution. Similar to most schools in South Asia, this school too governed the choices of physical presentation of one's body, including haircuts and length of nails. The novel has explicitly discussed on multiple ways in which students had to endure violent punishments on breaking the norms.

Domestic patriarchy is an equally tough hurdle on the path of gender equality. It is the idea that the father in a family is the head of the family, followed by the eldest and most capable son. This rule functions despite the presence of more capable women in the family. In the novel, *And The Mountains Echoed*, there was a family of four, including the father, mother, a daughter of three and a son of ten. "I am counting on you, boy, while your sister and I are away. So is your mother" said the father to his son on the previous day of their long journey to another place. It is crucial to understand the weight of the crown of patriarchy that is slammed on the tender shoulders of young boys, a concept discussed in the previous chapter as well. Even in the presence of a physically healthy adult woman, a boy of mere ten years of age is asked to take the responsibility of the house. At a young age, when the personalities and moral principles are yet to take shape, these boys are molded into believing that patriarchy is the right system of the society, or probably the only way for a society to function. The father narrates the children a story to put them to sleep. This bed time story was of Baba Ayub, a simple villager who "counted himself among the fortunate" as he was blessed with two daughters and three sons and all the children were well mannered: "To his sons he had taught already the value of honesty, courage, friendship, and hard work without complaint. They obeyed him, as good sons must, and helped their father with his crops" (2014: 2). It can be observed here that for a daughter to be counted as good, all she needed to do was to be dutiful and kind whereas the sons had to display honesty, courage and work hard. They were also denied the right to complain and had to silently endure all the responsibilities dumped on them. Burke, Kuhn and Patterson (2004), through an ethnographic research have proved

a significant relationship between bed time stories and behavior of children. Another study, by Christodulu and Durand, in the same year, has also shown the positive impact story-telling and bedtime fable narrations have on the development of 'self-concept' for children. Development of 'self-concept' is the foundational work in building an individual's personality, including gender concept. Also, fables and stories are great tools for introducing children to the cultural norms set by adults. The father's narration of a bed time tale in a manner quoted above is yet another method of imbibing the desired behavior in his children. A close observation will reveal the significant difference between the expectations between a female and a male child. While, being obedient and being respectful are the two prominent needs from the daughters; sons must be honest, courageous, obedient, hardworking, and so on, including everything they can do to make the lives of other members of the family easy. It could be observed that patriarchy has doomed not only women but also men to a great extent. These are apt examples to explain the manner in which ISA and domestic patriarchy work in manipulating individuals to behave in a certain manner.

### **3.3 HYPER MASCULINITY**

It is now well established that the concept of masculinity varies from culture to culture and from time to time. It is largely influenced by the society as it is entirely a man-made ideology. Gender-bias is the origin of the emergence of the concept of masculinity and so, its traits are largely dependent on successfully differentiating and avoiding it from femininity. The desire to hold power, and exercise dominance over women and other men, sustains masculinity and simultaneously arranges it into a hierarchical order. 'Masculinity' as observed through this study, is not a monolithic concept, especially in the context of a South Asian society. Ethnicity, class, caste and many such extrinsic factors influence the manner in which power is distributed among men (Verma et al, 2006). The greed to hold power over others often results in rigid obedience to the norms of Masculinity. In a study conducted by Abercrombie et al., it was found that, independence, activity and aggression are usually associated with



Masculinity. This can lead a man into the state of 'Hyper Masculinity.' Affinity towards risk, tough attitude and high regard for gender principles accompany Hyper Masculinity. It is the superlative form of obedience to abide by the patriarchal norms. Few male characters, from the works selected for this study, have embodied the characteristics of this sort of Masculinity. Nila Wahdati's father, in *And the Mountains Echoed*, portrays qualities of Hyper Masculinity. In an interview for a magazine, Nila describes how the presence of a strong opinionated woman was a "novelty" for her father (Hosseini 2014, 237). "He wasn't accustomed to being talked back to, certainly not by women" she said; and this made him "even more ascetic and emotionally austere" (ibid). When she went out with boys of lower social class or wore dresses which revealed more than the patriarchy of the society could handle, her father resorted to violence to control her. He used his "belt, or a closed fist" and even chased her "around the room" thinking he could "terrorize" her (238). The interviewer, Etienne Boustouler, seems to have understood the concept of Hyper Masculinity. She explains the situation to Nila as she says, "[h]e was a patriarch, was he not? And you were a direct challenge to all he knew . . . You were defying the monopoly that men like him had held for ages" (241). Her father's high regard for patriarchy and his choice to resort to violence to achieve it shows his orientation towards Hyper Masculinity. Also, trying to exercise absolute control over women in house, accompanied by a tough attitude confirms it.

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* introduces the character named Assef, a man belonging to Pashtun community which is represented as the upper dominant class. Assef is found to be a hyper masculine man who believed that he was in charge of restoring the right form of native masculinity and erase the traces of Western masculinity. He explains the reason behind him joining Taliban and says that he does so to restore "pride in your people, your customs, your language. Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage" (2013: 261). Assef and people like him believed that it was their responsibility to restore patriotism in people even if it was to be achieved by force. Even as a teenager, Assef had been a tyrant who punished boys of his age

for refusing to surrender to his orders. In an instance in the novel, Assef loses in Kite running competition to young boy of backward community, Hassan. Assef could not tolerate Hassan's win over his hegemonic self and punishes him with violent attacks. He also rapes Hassan which results in instilling a lifelong pain in Hassan's psyche. Several years later, Assef is found repeating the same ruthless behavior with Hassan's son. He had tied the young boy in chains and bells and beat him, raped him and even made the boy, Sohrab dance for his sadist entertainment. Assef carries out these spine shivering crimes in the name of religion and patriotism, whereas the truth is that it was the ugliest way of restoring absolute patriarchy by a few men like Assef. Amir, the protagonist of the novel questions Assef's intentions and tells what Assef and his men had been doing to common innocent citizens:

What mission is that? . . . Stoning adulterers? Raping children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? . . . The words spilled suddenly and unexpectedly, came out before I could yank the leash. I wished I could take them back. Swallow them. But they were out. I had crossed a line, and whatever little hope I had of getting out alive has vanished with those words. . . In the west, they have an expression for that . . . They call it ethnic cleansing" (ibid: 261).

Amir's words have brought out the unruly ways of hyper masculinity controlling women and other subordinate men. It also suggests that such acts are not limited to third world countries like in South Asia but also present in Western societies. The phrase 'ethnic cleansing' suggests the act of killing or chasing away everyone from communities other than their own and establishing imperial rule over the land. Though Assef states that he had been drawn to join the violent group of self declared reformers after he was physically assaulted by people of other community, it can be argued with sufficient reference that Assef had always shown tendency for hyper masculinity, even before he became an adult. This is because in the earlier section of the plot Assef frequently indulged in verbally abusing people of other community and on one occasion, he has also raped a

young boy when Assef was a teenager. His high social and financial status, disregard for other people, considering himself as superior to law, subjugating people weaker than him, and use of violence to achieve his means are all suggestive of his hyper masculine gender performativity. In every example of hyper masculinity it is seen that there is also a role of the person who is victimized by these men. Nila and Amir, both of these victims show considerable fear towards these men and this could be a contributing factor to the augmentation of hyper masculine attributes of these men.

Mudaliyar Navaratnam from *Cinnamon Gardens* could also be seen as exhibiting traits of Hyper Masculinity. He could be observed as projecting a tough attitude in both public and private spheres. His tough attitude towards everybody, including his own children led to separation of the family and left lifelong sadness in everybody's mind. He did everything he could to safeguard patriarchy at his level. Both his sons had been a threat to his patriarchal power at some point and in all those situations he chose chauvinism over his own blood. He banished his elder son Arul, for choosing to marry a woman from working class, named Pakkiamma; and deprived him any share in his property or asset. It is also revealed to the readers that Mudaliyar was not only Hyper-Masculine but also a hypocrite as he indulged in adultery with multiple women including his own secretary and also Pakkiamma's mother. The norms of masculinity is life consuming in itself and the standards of Hyper masculinity are so challenging that it seems impossible to live by it without contradicting oneself at one point or the other. Similar hypocrisy is observed in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when a 'bearded' man cannot refrain himself from staring at young girls:

That bearded man- who even now . . . is himself unable to stop glancing over his shoulder at those girls, fifty yards away from him. Yet they are exposing only the flesh of the neck, the face, and the lower three-quarters of the arm! It is the effect of scarcity; one's rules of propriety make one thirst for the improper (Hamid 2008: 26).

Bearded man here is the symbol of orthodox patriarchal masculinity that ensures subjugation of women under men. He is also a reminder of the impossible ideals of masculinity with which the lives of women as well as men are under constant stress. As identified in the previous example that often these men who represent hyper-masculinity are hypocrites, here too the bearded man breaks the law of refraining from any sort of attraction towards women who is not his wife, while he takes pleasure in staring at unknown girls.

In *Cinnamon Gardens*, a major threat appears on the path of Mudaliyar when he is informed of his younger son's gay life in London. Bala, his younger son was living with Richard in a happy gay relationship until Mudaliyar turned it into a nightmare. He surprised them with his visit and showered his rage on them. In conversation with his now partner Allison, Richard recollects the pain of the seven years old incident. Richard describes the cruelty with which he was treated by Mudaliyar in London:

[H]is father told me I was vile, I had ruined his son. At first I tried to assert myself, to order him out of the flat. Then he threatened to have the police charge me with sodomy . . . I had been terrified. After all, it hadn't been that long since the Wilde trial . . . our lives are so fragile. One word to the law can shatter our lives into a thousand pieces. The old man saw his advantage and he broke me down . . . soon I was on my knees pleading with him not to go to the police. He even slapped me and I did not defend myself . . . he ordered me to leave the flat. He was going to move in, take charge of his son. I obeyed his command (1998: 141).

There are multiple aspects to be considered here. First is the power Mudaliyar exercises over his son's personal (sexual) life. Blinded by his false sense of duty towards manhood, Mudaliyar forgot to draw limit to his interference in his sons' personal lives. Another important aspect is his audacity to practice violence over Richard and justifying it by blaming Richard for his son's sexuality. Throughout the novel, he has maintained his stubbornness and even during his elder son's death, instead of visiting him in his death bed, all Mudaliyar wanted was to get his

body back from India. He wanted to win over his son's death too and used power in being able to control his son's cremation. Balendran accuses his father of all the harm he had done to the family.

“Look what you've done to Seelan. To Arul. Even in his death you tried to master him, demanding that his body be returned to you . . . The same love that drove you to London to destroy my life? . . . I loved Richard. That would have been enough . . . there isn't a day that goes by that I don't live with the pain of knowing this and not being able to do anything about it.”  
(367)

Mudaliyar's response to Bala's words shows how deep rooted patriarchy is in his mind and thoughts. “How dare you speak like this in my presence. It is not true. I will not accept it” (ibid) he said to his son instead of trying to explain him the situation from his perspective or consoling his emotionally ailing son. Letting go of the sternness and talking with emotional indulgence is strictly against the concept of Hyper Masculinity and therefore Mudaliyar refrains from committing this treachery.

While the above two novels have provided us instances of practice of Hyper Masculinity in a family setup, Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* showcases the manner in which Schools, the second most important institution for a child, provides room for arrangement of hierarchies of Masculinity. Abeysinghe, Principal of a boy's school, named Victoria Academy, is the flag bearer of Hyper Masculinity in the novel. Popular among the pupils as “Black Tie,” (211) the principal instigated fear among his students through his strict behavior, emotional inexpressiveness and harsh punishments he gave the boys who did not abide by his rules. Diggy, Arjie's elder brother in the novel, explains how cruel his punishments were and says, “[o]nce, he slapped a boy and broke some of his teeth. Another boy in my class got caned so severely, his trousers tore. Then he made the boy kneel in the sun until he fainted” (ibid: 211). Instead of an educational institution, Victoria Academy became a place for the training of young boys to become the gatekeeper of masculinity and patriarchy. “The Academy will force you to become a man”

(1994: 210) admits Arjie's father. The principal of the school took the responsibility of safeguarding patriarchy very seriously. He made sure that even the uniform of the school was full length trousers (to make the boys seem manlier) and not shorts like other schools in the town. Absolute silence, correct posture, loud clear voice and trimmed hair are a few of the many rules he asserted on the students (ibid: 211).

One common thing observed here, among all the male characters practicing Hyper Masculinity is that they are men with highest power in the room. Considering age, position and financial status, these men are superior to women and other men around them. This superiority provides them the support needed to exercise absolute dominance over people around them.

### **3.4 HEIRARCHIES OF MASCULINITIES**

Out of several theories proposed by many theorists, it was R. W Connell who had provided the most systematic approach to differentiate masculinities. Connell provided a scientific categorization of different types of Masculinities and organization of their hierarchies. The four kinds of Masculine Hierarchies are:

#### **3.4.1 Hegemonic Masculinity**

Derived from Antonio Gramsci's study on class relations, the term 'hegemony' refers to a class of people who sustain leading positions in a society. In the context of Masculinity, it is the "configuration of gender practices" which ensures dominance of men and explains the "legitimacy of patriarchy" (Connell, 2005: 77). Hegemonic Masculinity patronizes women and supports their subjugation in the hands of physically strong, heterosexual men who express very less emotions. It teaches men successful ways of 'becoming a man' at the right place and in the right time (Kimmel 1994). In the process, any variation from the hegemonic qualities is rendered "inadequate and inferior" and gets categorized into "subordinate variants" (Beynon 2002, 16).

*The Kite Runner* renders its readers an apt example of a hegemonic male in Afghanistan, a symbolic representation of South Asian men. Baba, or Amir's father, in the novel is described in the following manner:

Baba's famous nickname, *Toophan agha*, or "Mr. Hurricane." It was an apt enough nickname. My father was a force of nature, a towering Pashtun specimen with a thick beard, wayward crop of curly brown hair as unruly as the man himself, hands that looked capable of uprooting a willow tree, and a black glare that would "drop the devil to his knees begging for mercy" . . . At parties, when all six-foot-five of him thundered into the room, attention shifted to him like sunflowers turning to the sun (Hosseini 2013: 13).

This description provides a deep insight into the ideal attributes of men that are considered hegemonic by the contemporary society. Height and muscular build-up of the body along with facial hair constitute the physical aspect; while, confidence and assertiveness are the intrinsic factors associated with it. This illustration further confirms the theories on body and performativity, discussed in the second chapter. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also provides instances where the characters discuss the traits in men that are regarded superior:

Two of my five colleagues were women; Wainwright and I were non-white. We were marvelously diverse . . . and yet we were not: all of us, Sherman included, hailed from the same elite universities --- Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale; we all exuded a sense of confident self satisfaction; and not one of us was either short or overweight (2008: 38).

Here, the description is about men from diverse ethnicity who had a few common qualities- both physical and intellectual. The protagonist spoke with a sense of pride while describing his companions and himself; detailing on the prestigious institutions where they managed to get their education. While he boasts about their intellectual superiority he also gets into the trivial details of physical look. Showing least regard for those who are "short" and "overweight," he represents the thought process of most people towards hegemonic traits. An influence of

western masculinity over South Asian masculinity is also observed here. To be able to study in a college situated there and be recognized among the white community brings Cangez pride.

Masculine Hegemony in Sri Lanka is also quite similar to the one mentioned above in Pakistan and the US. The female character Radha, in *Funny Boy* is presented with a marriage proposal that is considered with high regard by people around her. The check list for this high value to the gentleman suitor begins with his ethnic and linguistic origin i.e., Tamilian along with high social reputation of the family. In addition to that, he was “[a]n engineer” who was working “for big company in America. Very well off” suggesting that he had enough income to lead and provide a comfortable life to his family. Money is also an important factor considered here along with physical look and origin. Talking about his character, it is said that he doesn’t “drink or womanize. And we know for a fact that there is no insanity in the family” (1994: 42). It cannot be asserted that these are the specific qualities of a hegemonic male everywhere in Sri Lanka at the given time period, but this provides a picture of the kind of men that are considered superior to others. Also, after Arjie, the protagonist meets the suitor, Rajan, he says, “[h]e had a tall powerful physique and strong features, and I could see why Mala Aunty had described him as charming” (1994: 98). The above illustration has also emphasized the importance of money in structuring hegemonic masculinity. Money brings power and it in turn brings regard in the eyes of common people who lack it. Owning expensive vehicles, specially sports utility vehicles, symbolizes wealth and machismo. For instance, the novel *Funny Boy*, unveils the direct connection between money, sports utility vehicles and hegemony while the protagonist introduces his town: “only rich person in the town was the Banduratne Mudalali . . . we would often see him being chauffeured around in his Pajero jeep” (ibid: 170). The novel later presents the hegemonic position held by Banduratne Mudalali which further justifies the role of money and the use of it, in gender performativity. Similarly, in *Moth Smoke*, Shezad talks in metaphors as he describes the manner in which men perceive themselves: “I notice the difference in the sounds of slamming car doors: the deep thuds of the



Pajero and the Land Cruiser, the nervous cough of my Suzuki” (2013: 98). The image of a Hegemonic male is formed and sustained in a society not only because a set of people perceive them as superior but also because the ones unable to attain those attributes consider themselves inferior to the Hegemonic men. Dara, the protagonist of the novel compares the two incidents of drink and drive, wherein, the first incident was about him driving in his cheap Suzuki car while the other was about his friend driving the expensive Pajero. In the first incident Dara was caught by the same officer of law who excused him and his friend in the second incident because they were “in a Pajero, after all” (ibid: 38). This uncovers the unfortunate leniency of officers in power towards men of high social and financial status. It is found that men in power, who exercise hegemony over other less powerful men, are under constant threat of losing their authority to the subordinate kinds of masculinities. In *Cinnamon Gardens*, a meeting of the elite members in the Mudaliyar’s house, discussed about the problem of the introduction of Donoughmore Constitution Commission to Sri Lanka. This brought the concept of universal franchise that would allow subordinate Singhalese to dominate over Tamils. The Mudaliyar, who is the hegemonic male of the community said, “[t]he governor must retain all the powers he possesses. Otherwise we will replace a British Raj with a Singhalese Raj and then we Tamils will be doomed” (1998: 29- 30).

Another important factor in hegemony is male dominance over women; this is in fact the most important motto of the entire concept of masculine dominance. According to Connell (1987) the dominance over femininity is not restricted to subordination of women but also the alternative forms of masculinity such as effeminate or camp masculinity. The subjugation further extends to repress gays or homosexual men who are often perceived as ‘the other.’ In a nutshell, Hegemony is about subjugation of femininity rather than the female.

The tendency to dominate over femininity is observed among teenage boys and also among men who are themselves looked down for their effeminate behavior, like the characters Soyza and Arjie. They are found to passionately kiss each other

in a private moment as both of them were in self discovery teenage stage. Arjie was shaken by his own actions and when it was reflected in his face, Soyza discourages it by saying, “[c]ome on. Don’t be such a girl” (Selvadurai 1994: 249). Another form of male dominance is establishing male superiority over women in a polished manner. Offering to pay for bills and carrying heavier objects when in company of women, are a few examples where, consciously or unconsciously, men prove their superiority over women. The unnamed protagonist of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* describes his relationship with a woman during his stay in the US and tells him “I insisted on paying for our cab” (2008: 56) talking about the taxi he had shared with his friend Erica. Men’s duty to protect women or safeguard their chastity is another mode of exercising superiority over them. Protagonist from the same novel says that, “if a woman is harassed by a man, she has the right to appeal to the brotherly instincts of the mob, and the mob is known to beat men who annoy their sisters” (ibid: 22-23). The idea of the need of a man to protect women in distress is repeated in other works too. In *The Kite Runner*, during the flee of Amir and his father along with several other Afghan citizens, from war- stricken Afghanistan, a guard threatens the lives of men in exchange of a young woman from the troupe to quench his lust. Amir’s Baba who had been a symbol of Hegemonic masculinity, so far in the novel, takes it upon himself to protect her honor while her own family members were dumbstruck by fear. “Tell him I’ll take a thousand of his bullets before I let this indecency take place” (Hosseini, 2013: 107) he says. This instance in the novel also portrays risk taking behavior of men, a topic discussed in the previous chapter.

Khaled Hosseini’s *And The Mountains Echoed* is filled with characters whose personality and gender is well established. One such character is Nabi, a simple villager who rises to owning a big mansion in the city of Kabul. He is introduced in the novel in the following manner:

He is the family’s success story, perhaps the entire village’s too, on account of his working in Kabul, his driving into Shadbagh in his

employer's big shiny blue car with gleaming eagle's-head hood ornament, everyone gathering to watch his arrival, the village kids hollering and running alongside the car. . . Nabi is very handsome. . . with his fine chiseled cheekbones, his hazel eyes, his sideburns, and the thick wall of black hair swept back from his forehead (2014: 68).

The definition of hegemonic masculinity is subjective and alters with alteration in space. In this instance, the village of Shadbagh was poverty stricken and therefore money played an important role in determining one's superiority. Nabi's family included his two sisters, Parwana and Masooma, and Parwana's husband and children. Masooma was handicapped and Parwana's husband Saboor was a poor hard working villager, this made Nabi the richest of them all. In addition to this, he is described as "very handsome" (ibid) and well dressed in "olive-colored suit" (ibid) in the novel. Nabi's job in city, financial security, driving skills and physical personality, all add up to his hegemonic masculine trait. A well defined jaw-line evident from the manner in which his cheekbones are described, indicate towards muscular feature. As discussed in the previous chapter, not being fat is a significant physical trait of hegemonic masculinity here as well. An interesting observation about this character is that unlike any other character observed in the context of hegemonic masculinity, in all the select novels, Nabi uses his hegemonic status to do good to people. He is never seen abusing his power nor has he ever been dominating over subordinate genders. It is also important to note that Nabi did not secure his hegemonic position throughout the novel uniformly; he had rather been in and out of the status from time to time.

Masculine norms have only altered with time and not changed completely. *Delhi A Novel* gives instances to prove this phenomenon. The plot of the novel is built around two periods of time, colonial era being one of them. During this period, in the year 1918, a builder explains the manner in which hierarchy functions at the domestic level. After his community won the war for the British Empire they were rewarded with land and titles. The narrator explains:

My father, who was by now an older and a mellower man, was honored with the title of Sardar Sahib. While he was still alive, I became virtually the head of the family. I let my younger brother look after our lands and properties in the Punjab and devoted myself wholly to building work and making money to realize my ambition of having my own car to drive to the Qutub Minar (2016: 332).

Multiple aspects governing hegemonic masculinity have been stated together in the above quote. The first one being age, as it is clearly said that the speaker was only the virtual head of the family while he carried out all the functions that a leader is supposed to carry out. In addition to this, power assertion through the way in which he takes charge of his younger brother's fate further strengthens the regard for age while determining hierarchy of masculinity. Greater regard for job in urban area in comparison to job in rural area is also noted here. This could be because of a close resemblance of Western culture through urban living that draws more admiration in people, a concept which will be dealt in detail in the next chapter. Also, making money plays an important role in bringing pride and respect which has been observed on several occasions throughout the thesis. This could also be because money brings with itself the power to purchase services and products that one cannot produce by himself. The narrator's dream of car and driving it to Qutub Minar, the monument symbolic of success and power due to its height, resonates with the concept of 'American Dream.' Hegemonic masculinity, as observed here, is not only about relishing the power it brings but also about the unending struggle to maintain it.

Khuswant Singh's *The Sunset Club* presents a very realistic account of a hegemonic man of the present urban world. The character Nawab Barkatullah Baig Dehlavi is found to perform hegemonic masculinity in the novel. In fact he is the only protagonist among all the select works for this study, who is found to portray his superiority throughout. He does not significantly shift in terms of expression of his masculinity. Belonging to the forwards community of Sunni Muslims and inheriting ancestral money gave him the credits required for the title

of hegemonic masculinity. In addition to this he was “a powerfully built six-footer with grey-white hair, a handlebar moustache and a short clipped beard” (2011: 7). Thus, his physical features too added to his superior form of masculinity. Also, throughout the novel, he is found to be composed and in well control of his emotions and opinions. Baig had successfully fulfilled the requirements of hegemonic masculinity.

The attribute of restriction of emotional expressions has been a topic of great interest to several researchers. For instance, Eisler and Skidmore in 1987 have designed a scale called *The Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale*, which has since then proven affective during multiple studies conducted in different parts of the world on people of different ethnicities. And in this scale, emotional expressiveness is considered an important variable to assess stress associated with masculinity. Also, restricted expression of emotions is associated with hegemonic masculinity. Amir’s father, in *The Kite Runner* had been an example of hegemonic masculinity to all men and young boys. Once he was deeply saddened by separation from Ali and Hassan, his servants were close to him like family members. “Then I saw Baba do something I had never seen him do before: He cried. It scared me a little, seeing a grown man sob. Fathers weren’t supposed to cry” (2013: 100) says Amir who had earlier described his father as an alpha male. This example indicates that expression of one’s emotions such as sadness which is considered feminine is natural to men as it is to any other gender. Also, expression of such tender emotions from a tough man is considered abnormal due to lesser men who indulge in manifesting such emotions. Control over the expression of emotions is so deep rooted in the current human psyche that it has developed a fear of emotions in men. They are trained for it in such a manner that, not only do they fail in purgation of piled up emotions, but also fear about its expression (Jakupcak 2003). Likewise, in *Funny Boy* Arjie and his elder brother Diggy had been discussing about the unruly way of punishing in their school. On being questioned of complaining about it to higher authorities, Diggy warns his brother: “[h]is eyes grew wide. “Never complain,” he said. “Once you come to The Queen Victoria Academy you are a man. Either you take it like a man or the

other boys will look down on you.” (1994: 211). The need to control emotions and limit the pain to oneself is used to define the term ‘man’ here. Thus, the more tolerant a male is to these emotions the manlier he is.

Another important aspect of hegemony is to stay in the company of people of hegemony, and in case of interaction with men of lower masculine strata there is a significant display of power as observed in the select literatures. When Arjie, from *Funny Boy* refuses to practice this unsaid rule, he is warned by his elder brother, Diggy. Their schoolmate Soyza who was known to be effeminate and indulge in homosexual activities was avoided by everyone except Arjie. Diggy warns Arjie about his involvement and says “people will think you are like him and you’ll become the laughing-stock of the whole school” (1994: 232). Peer pressure has been observed as an important factor in influencing masculinity of an individual. While many men acquire the status of hegemonic man through virtue of their birth in a family of high reputation and a strong attractive physis, emotional and behavioral aspects such as inexpressiveness, indulgence in verbal and physical violence and also substance use, could be due to peer pressure. For instance, in the novel *Moth Smoke*, Ozi refuses his friend’s offer for consuming alcohol and drugs, and this takes him aback. Dara says, “I can see I’m going to have to be firm with him” as he believed that his friend had “forgotten his roots” (2013: 31). Ozi’s decision to give up intoxication of all sorts was a noble initiation as he wanted to be more available to his family. However, it was against the trend of portraying a carefree, cool attitude that was a privilege only for the rich hegemonic men. This is because such forms of intoxications are mentioned to be illegal in the novel but the law became flexible for powerful people like Ozi. Dara and people like him believe that it was the right of powerful male members of society to abuse law when opportunity to do so was easily available, refusing to do so meant moving away from one’s roots. Interference and involvement has been seen at different levels, especially from family members and friends in keeping a hegemonic man intact in his position.

### 3.4.2 Complicit Masculinity

Though only a small percentage of men satisfy the requirements of hegemonic masculinity, it still persists due to a huge percentage of men who “benefit from the patriarchal dividend” (Connell 2005: 79). The dividend is the advantage of overall dominance of men over women. These men also have the escape from the responsibilities of patriarchy (as it is the burden of hegemonic masculine men). It refers to the kind of Masculinity which is not identical to the traits of Hegemonic Masculinity, but is in its support. There is an admiration for the Hegemonic Masculine traits even though the person fails to practice it himself. Balendran from Selvadurai’s *Cinnamon Gardens* acts as a complicit masculine man in the presence of his father and his colleagues. He is found to be subordinate to his father and his orders and does not dare to oppose him even when both of their principles contradict. Rest all the qualities such as financial accomplishments, educational background, physical appearance, a heterosexual relationship, and so on are all found to be superior to others around him, with the exception of his father and therefore in the shadow of his father all he could accomplish with his gender performativity was ‘complicit masculinity.’

In the novel *Funny Boy* Arjie argues with his mother saying, “I don’t want to play with them. I hate cricket!” to which she replies that she doesn’t care what he wants. “It’s good for you” she said. And on being questioned why he must play with boys and not girls, she adds furiously “[b]ecause the sky is so high and pigs can’t fly, that’s why” (Selvadurai 1994: 19). “You’re a big boy now. And big boys must play with other boys” she further tries to explain and when he doesn’t agree she says, “[i]t doesn’t matter. Life is full of stupid things and sometimes we just have to do them” (20). Here, the mother is aware that her son cannot make it to the Hegemonic category of Masculinity. She is forcing him, at the very least, to imitate men who are hegemonic and gain the status of Complicit Masculinity. Here, the fear of losing her son to the subordinate categories of masculinity is encouraging her to push her son to behave in more socially accepted manner,

despite his strong dislike for it and by calling it stupid, she reveals her dislike towards the socio-cultural gender norms.

It could be inferred that a small percentage of men make it to the Hegemonic Masculine category and a huge population remains in the complicit category due to the lack of a few traits. For example, Daryl Uncle couldn't become a Hegemonic figure because of his race while Arjie's father failed because of his "balding head, thin legs, slight paunch, and abrupt way of talking to Amma," (Selvadurai 1994: 116). Both these men and many others who cannot fulfill all the aspects but have an admiration for them form the complicit category.

Nabi from *And the Mountains Echoed* also represents men with Complicit Masculine traits. He was a chauffeur and servant at the house of the elite Wahdatis, and followed on their footsteps with great admiration for them. Like a true complicit male, he remained obedient to them while practicing qualities associated with hegemonic masculinity at his own level. He has been observed as a hegemonic man in the previous section, but that was limited to only his village. As he moved to the city, he moved to the status of complicit masculinity. He lacked the courage to take risks and govern his own decisions, also with backward social and financial status as compared to others around him, he could make into only the complicit category of masculinity. It could come across as confusing to find characters like Nabi, being mentioned in two or more categories. This is due to the fluid nature of masculinity which keeps changing with change in space or time, a phenomenon discussed by the end of this chapter.

Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* has a complicit masculine man as its protagonist, named Dara Shikoh. Dara is found to be a man of intelligence supported by good educational background. He is also described to be a man with attractive physical features and a personality that delights women. His open-minded and frank approach seduces his best friend's wife into having an affair with him. However, like a complicit male he was always under one or the other hegemonic male guardian. First it was his college professor, followed by his boss at work place and later his friend Ozi. And when his bad behavior chases all of these men away



from his life, one by one, he is left in a prison cell for criminal offence and that pulls him further down from the complicit to subordinate masculinity. He is also found to be irresponsible with his money and life, to the point that he goes bankrupt and shows very little motivation to turn his life into a better direction. He enjoys the patriarchal dividends by staying in company of his hegemonic male friend.

Pandit Preetam Sharma and Sardar Boota Singh from *The Sunset Club* are apt examples for this type of masculinity. While the former was a “Punjabi Brahmi, an Oxford graduate . . . rose to the highest position in the Ministry of education before he retired” (2011: 5-6) the later was educated in England and “served with Indian mission in London and Paris before he returned to Delhi and took to writing for newspapers” (ibid: 8). Their age and accompanying loss of physical fitness accounts for Complicit nature of their masculinity. However, their actions stand according to the norms of masculinity values by the hegemonic kind. At their personal space, in their home and during their interaction with audience, they are seen exercising power and dominance like a hegemonic man would do. Therefore, as suggested in the definition of Complicit Masculinity, they enjoy the patriarchal dividends while not having to bother about its responsibilities.

### **3.4.3 Marginalized Masculinity**

This class of masculinity is exclusive and unique in comparison to all other forms of masculinity as unlike other hierarchies of masculinities it is not internal in nature and interacts with external factors as well. There is also interplay with other structures such as race or class. This does not mean that these multiple aspects of masculine personalities are stagnant; rather they can all keep changing from person to person or from time to time in various new permutations and combinations. For instance, in Afghanistan, as described in *The Kite Runner*, men born in Hazara community have no way of gaining superiority in terms of masculine status as the dominant race of Pashtuns would not allow them to do so. The Hazaras, like Ali and Hassan, two important male characters in the text, were mocked by the Pashtuns, who “called Hazaras *mice-eating, flat-nosed, load-*

*carrying donkeys*” (2014: 9) because they were “Mogul descendants, and that they looked a little like Chinese people” (ibid: 8). Along with race, caste is another important reason behind the marginalization of Hazars. Amir, the speaker of the novel explains, “part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi’a” (ibid: 9). Marginalized Masculinity is thus a wide range covering a huge population of men as any man belonging to socially backward community or subjugated social cast falls under this category. As observed in the novel, Hassan who was introduced as a Hazara boy, serving the house of Pashtuns was of the same age as his master. He was also more skilled at games and was physically powerful unlike his master, Amir. Amir did not have an appetite for sports that included violence or skill to run fast and compete with other boys on street; these are the qualities of hegemonic masculinity and despite Hassan’s hold on them, he was considered Marginalized because of the community in which he was born. Ironically, by the end of the novel the author provides a justification of Hassan’s natural superior biology, by revealing that he was actually the son of Amir’s father- a Pashtun blood. Deliberate or not, the author did indirectly hint the natural superiority of Pashtun males.

Likewise in the novel *Delhi*, an individual of a backward untouchable community exclaims the manner in which his life and the lives of other people of his community are under the control of the rulers of the land:

‘What have we poor untouchables to do with kings!’ I remember my *Bapu* saying. ‘They are all the same to us. One goes, another comes, *zulum* goes on.’ I did not know who *zulum* was. When I was a little older my *Bapu* told me that *zulum* was not a man but what the rich did to the poor. We untouchables were the poorest of the poor. No one did anything to us except run away if we came near them. That, said my *Bapu*, was also a kind of *zulum* (2010: 8).

Repeated use of the word ‘zulum’ in this dialogue re-emphasizes the pain instilled by discrimination. In the case of a marginalized man from the most backwards community, double oppression can be observed; first from the people of

hegemonic communities, and the second from hegemonic masculinities. While the former pressure is from outside, experienced directly from dominating hegemonic men, the latter is a result of psychological distress, created as a result of failure to meet the hegemonic masculine expectations. Undoubtedly this category of masculinities fits well with the description of the marginalized masculinity category, but the extent to which some men from the same kind of masculinity are oppressed may vary from the kind of subjugation experienced by other men of marginalized masculinity.

Similar to complicit masculinity, traits of marginalized masculinity show inclination for Hegemonic traits, yet cannot confirm to them due to unavoidable circumstances such as disability, or race. They subscribe to these qualities despite not falling into the category of Hegemonic Masculinity.

Anil, from Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* represents the lower class in the hierarchical order of Masculinity. Since the novel is centered on Sri Lankan Tamilians, who considered themselves superior to Sinhalese, Anil's poor Sinhalese background puts him in a disadvantageous position. His love for Radha, a rich Tamilian woman, educated in America, was rejected by her family, despite their mutual liking for each other. Similarly in the same book, Arjie's mother recollects the manner in which her love for Daryl was not accepted in her family because he was of Portuguese descent and looked like a white man even though his ancestors had settled there and he was now a Sri Lankan. Arjie's father too had an affair during his stay in England for higher education. In a conversation with Jegan, a family friend, his father recollects, "she was from a working-class family, and "low class was low class whether it was English or Sri Lankan" (1994: 164).

Darashikoh from the novel *Moth Smoke* remarks, "I don't like it when low-class types forget their place and try to become too frank with you. But it's my fault, I suppose: the price of being a nice guy" (2013: 48). The concept that a man from lower economic background or backwards community must surrender to his employer and must not behave like an equal is so deep rooted that even well educated men like Darashikoh consider it to be normal. Later in the novel, when

his servant, Manucci asks for his pay which was due two months, he treats Manucci poorly:

I raise my hand and he flinches, but I don't hit him. 'Enough. I'll pay you when I pay you. I don't want to hear another word about it.' . . . I tell myself I did the right thing. Servants have to be kept in line (2013: 201).

Darashikoh openly and proudly exercises dominance over a fellow human being because he belonged to the hegemonic masculine category and Manucci, a marginalized masculine man could only look upset in return. The power of masculine ideology is so high that people, who are well aware of human and employee rights, tend to get blinded by it. A policing attitude and self declaration of right to govern the lives of other people is commonly observed among hegemonic men. Also, the subordination from the Marginalized masculine men is an equal, if not greater reason behind this stratification of men and masculinities.

#### **3.4.4 Subordinate Masculinity**

Herbert Sussman in *Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness* makes a statement on the attempts made by men to be accepted as 'real men' by the society:

"Not all men are men." This paradox that we seldom think about but always act upon – not all men in the sense of persons born biologically male become "men" or "real men" living up to the socially constructed ideal set for males that we call manliness (2012: 1).

This statement instigates the fact that not all men experience their gender in similar manner; moreover, several men may not even identify with the gender norms expected of their biological sex. This leads to the fourth category of masculinities from the range of masculinities. Men with Subordinate Masculinity show traits completely opposite to the Hegemonic Masculinity. These men might not fit into the gender role; they could be very emotionally expressive, physically weak or could be homosexual. These men also indulge in more socially

considered feminine behaviors; therefore, “from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity” (Connell 2005: 78).

Arjie, from Selvadurai’s debut novel, exhibited more feminine qualities and often became a laughing stock at social gatherings. During one of the many monthly get together at his grandparents’ house, Arji was caught cross-dressing and when noticed by elders, he was treated like a criminal caught in action. His aunt Kanthi drags him into the living room where all adults were seated and announces, ““See what I found!”” (1994: 13); the use of ‘what’ implies the reduction of Arjie’s presence into a spectacle. He was seen just as a defective object of display by his own relatives because his actions deviated from the conventional ways. His uncle Cyril, too pounces at the opportunity and insults Arjie’s father saying, “looks like you have a funny one here” (ibid: 14). The masculine ideology is so deep rooted in the society that even children’s thought process is influenced by it. Kanthi aunty’s daughter, called as Her Fatness by the children, abuses Arjie with slang expressions - “pansy” and “faggot” and when the two didn’t seem to work she even calls him “sissy” (ibid: 11). To act deviant from the expected gender norms shocks people and this applies even to children. Arjie expresses his desire to act as a bride in the make belief game he and his female cousins played, but it was not received well by everyone. ““A bride is a girl, not a boy”. . . “A boy cannot be the bride,” she said with deep conviction. “A girl must be the bride”” (1994: 11) says Her Fatness in Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*, who could not accept a boy in a feminine role. And while acting feminine came naturally to Arjie, it was not understood by most people around him, including his own parents. Failure to meet the hegemony expectations discourages him to the extent that he says “I would be caught between the boy’s and the girl’s worlds, not belonging or wanted in either” (ibid: 39).

Similarly, Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi A Novel*, introduces the readers to Bhagmati, a eunuch, who like the city of Delhi, “been long misused by rough people” has now learnt to “conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness” (2016: 1). The protagonist of the novel is an elite male journalist who was in an

active sexual relationship with Bhagmati. Though the protagonist was a man with qualities of superior category, his choice of partner demoted him to the Subordinate kind. Even the watchman of his building, who saluted him every time he passed by him and barely spoke to his master, gained the audacity to advise the speaker of the novel. “‘Excuse me,’ he confides to my beard, ‘everyone is talking about it. They say, take woman, take boy – okay! But a hijda! That’s not nice. Don’t mind my saying so!’” (2016: 5-6). A man with healthy physical personality, wealth, high education and reputed job, in addition to being born in a high class family couldn’t compensate to his personal choice of sexuality. The words of the watchman, Budh Singh describes the order in which various kinds of sexuality are valued. The highest and most reputed is the heterosexual relationship i.e., the intercourse between a man and a woman. The next and shameful act is the homosexual kind. However, according to Budh Singh and the people of his locality, which is a parallel representation of contemporary society, the worst kind would be to involve with a transgender person. ‘Skoliosexual’ a term emerged in recent times to describe people who are attracted to transgender or non-binary people is described as the forbidden path for any man. Similar discussion is observed in Singh’s second novel, *The Sunset Club*. The High court of Delhi pronounces the decriminalization of sodomy with mutual consent, and the three retired friends discuss on the topic one evening in their usual meeting place. The author describes the situation as:

“It is nothing new for the Western world where gay marriages have been legalized, but it remains unacceptable in the Orient, particularly in Islamic countries. It is also not acceptable to most religious-minded people, be they Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Sikh; nor even to the common man in the street, though he himself may have indulged in *Laudebaazi* – making love to boys. Any adult who has access to women and yet continues to engage in sex with his own gender is known as gandoo-bugger” (2011: 126).

Khushwant Singh has courageously discussed on themes that were considered taboo by his contemporary writers and a discussion on individual's freedom on his sexuality is a common theme in both the novels discussed here. The two works were written a decade apart and though both have reflected the society's stereotypical reaction to homosexuality; it is only in the later text that Singh's character raises voice against it. Boota, one of the three old friends in *The Sunset Club* protests that "[h]omosexuality is not against the order of nature, as you say. Making it into a crime by man-made law is against the law of nature" (2011: 126-127). Boota's two friends, Baig and Sharma, agree to this perspective. They discuss the matter further and ponder about its very existence. They question the teaching of religions and the practicality of homosexuality in today's world. They even discuss the benefit of legalizing homosexuality: "May be that is the order of nature. But why then do all religions condemn it? Remember, the Bible has the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Koran also condemns it" (ibid: 127). Religion is an institution which directly controls the minds of its believers, without letting them rationally question it.

While legalizing homosexuality is an important step towards gender equality and stability; this alone is not enough, social antipathy towards it must also be removed. Homophobia is still existent in several parts of the world as seen in the novel. As it is known, that the definition of Masculinity and Hegemonic Masculinity changes from time to time, it is possible that in a decade or two, Hegemonic masculinity would be determined irrespective of an individual's sexuality, and homosexuality which would no longer be marginalized.

### **3.4.5 'Miscellaneous' Masculinity**

The four categories of masculinities formulated by Connell is a smart bifurcation and yet it is not sufficient to rely only on it to understand hierarchy. To a certain extent these categories are a safe attempt as they are large umbrella terms for many shades of masculinities. In most situations, it is easy to distinguish between the kinds of masculinities being performed by a male at a given point of time and in a given place but there are also a few circumstances where pin pointing the

exact kind of masculinity becomes a herculean task. Masculinity is under constant transformation and hence the definition of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ keeps changing with time; with the change in hegemonic masculinities other kinds of masculinities too differ in their definition. In *Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness*, Herbert Sussman makes meticulous assessment of the current state of men and masculinities:

For instance, the “big boys don’t cry” mentality isn’t accurate anymore . . . On the other end of the spectrum, the current cultural push to “feminize” males isn’t very comfortable either . . . Now some people are looking to define men that exhibit a type of masculinity that combines the best of traditional manliness (strength, honor, character) with positive traits traditionally associated with females (nurturance, communicativeness, cooperation) – sort of an ubersexual man (Sussman 2012: 36).

Considering the entire population of men in South Asian, the number of men who still abide by traditional norms is significantly less in number as compared to the number of men who have developed sensitivity towards equality of all genders. This is clearly evident through the select literatures as the instances of hyper or hegemonic masculinity i.e., absolute dominance of male members over female or subordinate male members, were mostly practiced by men of older generation. The newer generation of adults have shown significant deviation from traditional norms. Shyam Selvadurai’s characters like Balendran and Arul show sensitivity towards the pain of people who worked under them and as observed in the novel, they treat their respective wives with respect and dignity. These male characters have also displayed compassion for other women, like Annalukshmi who belong to lower social strata, but work to compete in the male world. They could even be called feminists as they support education and financial independence of women. Similarly, the principal narrator of the novel *Delhi*, and Boota Singh from *The Sunset Club*, of Khushwant Singh are found to value the expectations of their sexual partners and are also seen to treat them with equality in situations of decision making. Likewise, Khaled Hosseini’s and Mohsin Hamid’s characters,



Amir, Abdulla, Sulaiman Wahdati, Darashikoh, who are all educated men, treat their women and their helpers in a manner that is considered apt for a descent man of this era. Along with these observations on the progressive changes in men, the clause of exceptions under rare circumstances is also accompanied. There have been a few instances where these male characters have asserted their power and practiced hegemony; however, it cannot essentially be differentiated as an act of gender bias. It could be the individual's natural instinct to survive through the situation. For instance, in an example observed earlier, Balendran shuns his wife from interfering in matters concerning him, his father and their financial decisions, but instead of labeling the act as misogynistic it could also be perceived as his priority to value his elders and their decisions. The situation demanded him to choose between his father and his wife, and in a position of threat he reacted in an unusual manner. This situation could be considered as a rare occurrence. It was discussed earlier that characters like Amir, Arjie and Balendran shared a common habit of reading as a hobby which was condemned by their hegemonic fathers. These men are found to grow into adults who stick to such traits that are not essentially manly yet they also refrain from presenting it as a feminine trait. A significant shift from traditional stereotyped norms to a subtler version of masculinity is observed here.

It is argued here, that South Asian masculinity has also evolved with time and male characters such as Boota Singh from *The Sunset Club*, Amir from *The Kite Runner*, Darashikoh and Ozi from *The Moth Smoke* and Balendran and Arul from *Cinnamon Gardens*, have all painted the picture of the above mentioned 'ubersexual' man or "new man-ism (men as more caring, sensitive, domesticated and expressive)" as stated by Beynon (2002: 17).

### **3.5 SHIFTING NATURE OF MASCULINITY**

The changing structure of masculinities is one of its prominent features and is clearly displayed in select novels. Men have been found to transcend from one category to another with changing time, place and circumstances.

“Masculinity is positioned in time in two senses: it changes *around* the individual man and *for him* as he ages” (Beynon 2002, 17). A simple act of transformation in masculinity could be observed in the pattern of school uniform of children. “The uniform at St. Gabriel’s was shorts and a shirt, and this would be the first time I’d be wearing long trousers to school” (Selvadurai 1994: 213), says Arjie who notices the sudden shift in the role that he need to play. He was being admitted to the new school to learn to become a man and likewise the school made his pupils to wear full length trousers like a man, unlike other schools where boys wore shorts.

Balendran from *Cinnamon Gardens*, has been described extensively in the novel and this provides us the room to observe the shifting nature of his Masculinity. While every male character from all the eight novels studied in this research, has transitioned to not more than three types of Masculinities; Balendran has repositioned himself in all the four categories at some point. In the beginning of the novel, Bala is introduced from a third person’s perspective. He is seen as a well accomplished man from the reputed family of Kandiah, rich landlords of Ceylon. Educated from abroad, well spoken, and rich, married to an educated woman and had a son, who was pursuing his education abroad; an external view of Bala’s life represents the perfect picture of a Hegemonic male, but as the courses of his life unravel, other shades of Masculinities are visible to the readers. In conversation with his father, Mudaliar Navaratnam, Bala’s manhood acts are similar to the behavior of Complicit Masculinity. He is not in a superior position; however he is working in the shadow of his father’s hegemony. Bala assumes the powerful position of revenue collection from village dwellers of Jaffna. Visiting them personally, listening to and trying to solve their issues, collecting money, etc; on behalf of his father (hegemonic male), puts Bala in a Complicit position. Here, he is enjoying the benefits of patriarchy while the responsibility of it rests on his father’s shoulder. Space is observed as an important aspect responsible in the shifting of Masculinity. During his stay in London for higher studies, Bala did not receive any special treatment because of his caste, as he did in Ceylon. A brown man in Western land, during the post colonial period, was looked at as a

man with marginalized Masculinity; the kind of masculinity that cannot attain the status of Hegemony, in that specific geographic area at that particular time.

In London, Bala lived with his partner Richard, in secrecy from his family. Unexpectedly, he was caught off guard by his father who violently chased away Richard from his house and psychologically tormented Bala to the extent that he drenched himself in rain for hours and caught pneumonia. Failure in defending his partner, disclosure of his homosexuality and sickness, all together accounted in positioning Bala in a Subordinate category of Masculine hierarchy. Similarly, during his visit to his elder brother Arul, who lived in India with his poor family, Bala experiences Subordinate Masculinity. In another country, where his caste and money had no power over others and in front of his brother who was well aware of Bala's natural tendency for homosexuality, Bala found himself in a Subordinate position.

The character Nabi from Hosseini's *And The Mountains Echoed* has shown significant shift in masculine hierarchy. In the introductory chapter it is found that he was the most successful person of his village because of his job in the city, Kabul. His race, wealth, clothing, personality and every other attribute was superior enough for people in his village to see him as a hegemonic man. Ironically it was the exact same attributes because of which he was perceived as a complicit male in the urban setup. People around him in his work place were much more rich, polished in their manners and possessed the power in their hands which had left Nabi in complicit category. A drive of a few hours from the city to his village could easily alter his masculine status. It can therefore be said that a man can be perceived to belong to multiple categories of masculinities at the same time, but by different people. Similarly, Dara Shikoh from the work *Moth Smoke* transits between Complicit masculinity and Subordinate masculinity. It has been observed in previous discussions on the character that he underwent a phase of self - destruction and it is this self - destruction that brings him from complicit masculinity to subordinate kind. His rebellious act to defy hegemonic norms could no longer bag him the title of complicit masculinity and that pushed him to

the category of masculinity which challenges the idea of men being superior to other genders; that in turn threatens patriarchy.

During the outbreak of clashes between Tamilians and Singhalese, mentioned in the novel *Funny Boy*, Arjie's mother insists on shifting to the US for a more peaceful life. However, his father rejects the idea and questions her, "[h]ow can you want to emigrate? You saw the way our friends lived when we went to America. They come here and flash their dollars around, but over there they are nothing" (1994: 195-196). The juxtaposition of the two images, one where people settled abroad are hegemonic in their native country and the manner in which they are treated in the foreign land unveils the fluctuating nature of hegemony. Also, Arjie's father's words hint towards the desire for power he could exercise only in his native land. To him, living in peace and providing security to his family comes secondary to holding on to his masculine power and dominance. Similarly, in the novel *The Kite Runner*, the father of the protagonist called Baba, had been portrayed as a hegemonic man of South Asia who was called "Mr. Hurricane" (2013: 12) and he drew admiration from everyone he met. But as they moved to the US, he could not take his hegemonic title with him. Being a brown man in the land of Whites, he was found to be a marginalized masculine man, the type that can never make it to the hegemonic masculinity because of the race of the person, and its lack of coherence with the hegemonic norms of the land.

Any man is an embodiment of multiple Masculinities; all contesting in varied circumstances. Oversimplification of a man's gender pattern as monolithic, singular masculine character could also be misleading. The shift in types of Masculinity is not simple like the change of masks or transition of a personality from one form to another. This chapter facilitates in perceiving Masculinity in a longitudinal view, wherein hierarchy of masculinity of one man is determined by the qualities of men around him. It is a comparative perspective or cumulative inference drawn and not in isolation. Therefore, in order to identify the type of masculinity of an individual, adhering to the determinants of each category alone is not enough. A Masculine personality is not the same, always and everywhere,

as observed in this chapter. Male characters, who acquired hegemonic position in certain situations, remained complicit in the other. Male characters like Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are testimony to this thought. Changez starts off as a hegemonic man due to his royal race and scholarship abroad, but as he shifts to a land where his race was the subordinate one, he shifts to the marginalized category; however, he rises again to the complicit kind by securing good job and reputation only to lose it all again because of his fundamental political views. This constant ‘back and forth’ movement of Changez’s masculinity is not an odd occurrence. This is a common phenomenon that happens to a lot of people, especially the ones who relocate.

The division of Masculinities into various types, explained in this chapter, is the ones identified by Connell based on his observations of Masculinity patterns in an individualistic culture of Western society. While extending this framework to understand men and their Manhood acts in other parts of the world is justifiable; it would still be incomplete if the unique configurations of gender of these men are neglected. Hence the following chapter analyzes South Asian Masculinities and discusses in details about the unique ideologies and attributions associated with their ethnicity. The fourth chapter, “Interpreting the Interpellation of South Asian Masculinities” will focus on the unique attributes of South Asian masculinity and interpellation of gender stereotypes. It will further attempt to trace the ‘taken – for – granted’ gendered ideologies that have become a part of everyday life. The chapter will discuss additional view points to understand masculinities.



## CHAPTER 4

### INTERPRETING THE INTERPELLATION OF SOUTH ASIAN MASCULINITIES

Socializing promotes identification of differences and similarities between genders and mutual encouragement to carry out the performance of gender. It is also argued that emotions are not only gendered but cis-gendered (Kiar et al. 2022). The crux of this line of thinking is the manner in which some emotions are restricted to one gender while encouraged among others. Of course, this has cultural implications to be considered as well. For instance, *And The Mountains Echoed* introduces its readers to two friends Idris and Timur, who can be seen as presenting two different kinds of Masculinities throughout the novel. While Idris had spent more time in Afghanistan, Timur has been in the West for most of his life and behaved in a manner that was not very Afghan in nature. After the unexpected demise of Idris's father, Timur visits him at the funeral, cried and "kept wiping his tears with the palm of his free hand" (2014: 157). Timur's tears irritated him as in his "whole life he'd not been able to cry in the presence of other people, at events where it was called for such as funerals. He saw this as a minor handicap, like colour blindness" (ibid). Since the awareness about emotional expressiveness is more in the West while there is lot more rigidity in carrying a strict, unexpressive attitude in Southern Asia, there is such an evident difference in the two reactions. Also, importantly, Idris does provide an insight on the discomfort it causes in men to hold back their emotions.

Centuries of such enforcement of gender will take at least a couple of decades to deconstruct. Thanks to the many post-structuralist gender theoreticians, writers and critics, as the process of 'ungendering' has already begun. Attempts are being made to detach 'masculinity' from a 'man' (Halberstam 1998), and 'femininity'

from ‘femaleness’ (Bornstein et al. 1998). This study is another attempt to do so in the field of masculinities, especially South Asian masculinities.

So far, South Asian masculinity has been observed in accordance with existing Western theories. This chapter attempts to interpret specific characteristics, commonly found in South Asian men that have not yet been explicitly discussed.

#### **4.1 THE LANGUAGE OF SOUTH ASIAN CULTURE**

South Asian culture is believed to celebrate its unity in diversity. This could imply the diverse variety of languages, art forms, cuisines, races, economic status, whether conditions, and so on, that could be found in this region of the world. For instance, Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* describes to an American that his white skin tone was common among the natives as well, as he says “we have a range of complexions in this country, and yours occurs often among the people of our northwest frontier” (2008: 1). Here it could be observed that South Asians, who are known to be brown skinned people, are actually not limited by a single skin color; and just like the multiple shades of masculinities, innumerable shades of skin tone are present in this region. Performativity is not only limited to the gender but also to the ethnic identity of the person. The kind of clothes one wears, the manner in which one presents himself or the choices of food one makes, are all modes of portraying one’s unique masculinity in association with ethnicity. For instance, Changez explains his newly discovered pride for his motherland after his return from abroad. He describes the irreplaceable comfort he gains from his country in his description:

The sky was a brilliant blue, so different from the orange, dusky sky above us today, and I felt something well up inside me, a sense of pride so strong. . . Princeton made everything possible for me. But it did not, *could* not, make me forget such things as how much I enjoy the tea in this, the city of my birth, steeped long enough to acquire a rich, dark color, and made creamy with fresh, full-fat milk (Hamid 2008: 14-15).



Here the description of sky at Princeton using the shades of blue could be interpreted as cold and unfriendly. Whereas warm colors such as orange has been used to describe the sky at his native place. Sky, the symbol of eternity and also an emotional state is used to describe belongingness, towards his culture, with which the character identifies himself. The South Asian tea, also known as ‘chai’ is well known globally and the mention of its “rich, dark color” (ibid) symbolizes the rich cultural heritage in the land of dark skinned men and women.

Masculinity and manliness take different forms in different cultures; they change their shape with the change in culture. Herbert Sussman re-emphasizes the multiplicity of masculinities and with instances assesses its evolving nature:

[S]cripts of manliness are inflected by social class (working-class, middle-class, old wealth), by region (New England, Texas, Midwest), or ethnicity (Latino, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Italian). Furthermore, in real life, masculine identities within a single person almost always take a hybrid form in combining multiple scripts into innumerable forms of a life of manliness. (Sussman 2012: 9)

Sussman’s views on combining multiple scripts to create a hybrid form of masculinity are true in the case of South Asian culture as well. For instance, in *The Sunset Club* Pandit Preetam Sharma is furious on his sister for adding dictions from Hindi language while speaking English and this leads to the following debate:

‘Who who was there?’ asks Sunita.

Sharma’s temper rises. ‘How many times have I told you not to say who-who? One who is enough.’ . . . Who-who for *kaun kaun*. What is so wrong with it?. . . His servant says he doesn’t bathe for two-two three-three days. He must smell.’

‘Again two-two, three-three days! You will never learn.’

Sunita decides to end the debate. ‘You take it from me, this is the kind of English we Indian will speak – Hinglish, (2011: 15).

Sunita makes an important point as she says ‘Hinglish’ i.e., the combination of Hindi and English, will be the language spoken by most native speakers; it is almost impossible to detach from one’s culture completely. Human beings are social animals and therefore often associated with one or the other culture. The element of language from several other aspects of culture has been discussed here. It is symbolic to the act of masculinity too because language become the discourse that assigns power to certain words and objects, and in this context it is patriarchy. Though one may choose to adopt another cultural element into socializing however, it produces a hybrid form that rests between the two cultures.

Similarly, as described in *And The Mountains Echoed*, culture forms an important aspect of a person’s identity:

I begged Baba to end the Farsi classes, but he refused. He said I would appreciate later the gift he was giving me. He said that if culture was a house, then language was the key to the front door, to all the rooms inside. Without it, he said, you ended up wayward, without a proper home or a legitimate identity (Hosseini 2014: 417).

The quote mentioned here is from a situation where a father of South Asian origin, settled with in the West with his family, is forcing his children to take classes in Farsi language, a subject of no direct benefit to them. He justifies his choices by stating the role played by one’s language in determining one’s identity. Despite moving to the West for good, the father is not willing to adopt the new culture as part of his identity and prefers to keep his children, the second generation emigrants, also reminded of the same. It is also possible that familiarity to a language paves way to study and understand the culture that comes along with the language. The importance of language has been well established in other select works for this study as well. The novel *Cinnamon Gardens* uses translated quotes from Tamil literature, *The Tirukkural*, a classic

text with 1330 couplets which was originally written in Tamil language. Its diction and content reflect South Asian culture despite translation into a foreign language. The novel reflects South Asian culture and keeps its readers intact with its richness by beginning each chapter with a verse from *The Tirukkural*. For instance the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter, the one where the protagonist Balendran discovers his father's ugly truths and undergoes revelations about his own life begins as "[T]he mark of wisdom is to see reality Behind each appearance" (1998: 262). The elder brother, who is directly found in conversation with his younger brother for the first time since they became adults, appears to be a wise man as he understood the ways of the world soon and acted upon it. He had learnt the art of interpreting cultural implication and when it was not in his favor he chose to move away from it by relocating.

In a similar fashion, each novel portrays elements of culture and that influences greatly the form of masculinity that is being practiced. As this chapter unfolds other aspects of South Asian culture and its implications on masculinity will be revealed.

#### **4.2 ASSOCIATION WITH THE WEST**

A postcolonial perspective is crucial to understand the influence of the West on previously colonized regions of the world. Third world countries like the one being considered here had long been under the oppression of colonizers who had made sure to colonize minds along with geography. Mrinalini Sinha, a postcolonial critic on masculinity, argues that colonizers successfully tamed the colonized people into believing that the white were the adventurous heroic male who were set on a mission to tame the savage, dark and effeminate men (1995). Similarly, R. W. Connell in his essay "Globalization, Imperialism and Masculinities" states, [t]he imperial social order created a scale of masculinities as it created a scale of communities and races. The colonizers distinguished "more manly" from "less manly" groups among their subjects (Connell 2004: 75). The aftermath of colonization is still visible in the manner in which Western masculinity is treated superior to the native South Asian masculinity. Post-

colonialism, therefore may not essentially mean end of colonialism as the minds are yet to set free.

Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*, travels through time and narrates a six hundred years old story and even the novel reflects contemporary ideologies such as deeming white men to be wiser than the native brown people. Masculine superiority of the West over the East is evident when a soldier named Nihal Singh expresses the manner in which he values the words of the colonizers over his parents' words; as he believes "what sahib says must be true because the sahibs are wise people" (2016: 274). The world, especially the South Asian part of it, has not moved too far from this attitude. This seed of Western superiority sowed during the colonial period still bears its fruits in the current times. This has been observed in the works selected for this research. In the novel *The Kite Runner*, Amir's baba is described as a hegemonic man from Afghanistan who by the standards of South Asian masculinity was definitely on top of the list. But when it comes to his opinion he describes the power structure in the following manner:

"There are only three real men in this world, Amir," he'd say. He'd count them off on his fingers: America the brash savior, Britain, and Israel. "The rest of them-" he use to wave his hand and make a *phht* sound "-they're like gossiping old women (2013: 116).

Here "real men" is the term used to define the Western countries while others are described using multiple adjectives to farther push downward the standards of the rest of the world. This example leads to the argument that since Western ideologies take up a superior position in the minds of the native men, it is possible that they make attempts to imitate them, or at least admire them. It is a direct attack on the masculinity of native men who are not affiliated to Western culture or education. This facet is visible in many characters, including Changez from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. On meeting his American girlfriend, Erica's parents for the first time, he made sure to act according to what he felt was the best picture of self. When he is offered a drink he does not refuse even though it was against his Pakistani culture as he wanted to blend in with the Western

culture. He also takes pride in being educated from the West and makes very little mention of his South Asian origin. “You drink?” “He’s twenty- two,” Erica’s mother said on my behalf, in a tone that suggested, *So of course he drinks*. “I had a Pakistani working for me once,” Erica’s father said. “Never drank.” “I do, sir,” I assured him. “Thank you” (Hamid 2008: 53). After symbolically establishing his new association with the Western culture he further adds to define himself by saying “not all of our drinkers are western - educated urbanites such as myself;” (ibid: 54). This second example gives us a broader picture of the masculine hierarchy in this region. For a man to be considered ‘hegemonic South Asian male’ he first needs to be of South Asian origin; therefore, the colonized mind looks for traits that connects a person to the West and simultaneously regard it as superior. Another example of the supremacy of anything Western is the significant difference in the manner in which Idris, an American citizen of Afghan origin, is treated by the locals, in the novel *And The Mountains Echoed*. In the following example, the look, clothes, behavior, etc are Western enough to indicate Idri’s identity to the locals:

When Idris enters, the man quickly gets up, flattens a hand against his chest, and bows. Idris is struck again by how easily the locals can tell he is westernized Afghan, how the whiff of money and power affords him unwarranted privilege in the city (2014: 173).

Similarly, Changez, a Pakistani student too finds it fascinating to be able to get educated abroad and work there, despite his awareness about the ‘brain-drain’ situation caused. He explains:

Students like me were given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid, mind you, and even invited into the ranks of the meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were joining. And for the most part, we were happy to do so (Hamid 2008: 4).

On multiple occasions, Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* has also shown this unique attribute of South Asian masculinity i.e., to identify with the West for more attention and better reputation in the native. A young school boy, Arjie gets excited about his father going to Europe for promoting his business in hotels. Arjie would not be accompanying him and moreover he would be away from his father for a long time, still the dividend of being able to show off his family's connection with the West made him happy. "Our affluence seemed to reach a new height when my father announced that he was going to Europe to promote the hotel and also to take a holiday" (1994: 103). Later in the novel, his mother's close friend, Daryl goes missing and the authorities were unwilling to help them find him. He was a man whose ancestors were Portuguese and thus, looked like a man from the West and this fact helped them catch the attention of the policemen. "At the words "white man" the policeman's attitude immediately changed and he became more helpful" (ibid: 126). People in authority are of a superior position in South Asia and when they show significant admiration for 'West,' it become further concrete that South Asian masculinity considers 'association with the 'West' as an important trait of Hegemony; and in this case, Daryl's Western appearance gave him advantage.

This fascination for the West is rather the image of the West in people's mind which tends to change when they encounter Western society for real. The novel *The Kite Runner* shows a clear difference in the manner in which Amir and his father practiced masculinity in South Asia versus their performativity when they shifted to the US, for good. Throughout their stay in South Asia, Amir's father, Baba is seen worried about his son lacking violence in him. In the second chapter it has been observed how he discourages his son's reading habits and forces him to watch violent games that involve bloodshed so as to make his son manlier. But this friction reduces once they shift to the West. The probable cause could be a change in gender ideology with the change in geographical space. What meant masculine in South Asia probably did not matter in the US. This example also reminds us of the crucial role played by ideologies in altering the behavior of individuals.

Mohsin Hamid's novels have shown a significant awe at the image of West through South Asian eyes, as in one of the works, the character calls the US "most technologically advanced civilization, our species had ever known" (2008: 34). It is a reflection of the third world impression of the West and its 'developed' status. However, this feeling of superiority and the ideology functions only in South Asian region. During his stay in the US he could not feel the same power and prestige that he felt in his native due to his 'western association' because there were actual White men whom he considered superior. No matter how hard he tried to identify himself with his friends and colleagues, he could not feel belonged. "Because I grew up on the other side. For half my life, I was outside the candy store, looking in, kid" (2013: 70) he explains. Here, the issue is his ideology and ways of perceiving the world, as until the point of this discussion in the novel; he was treated equally by everyone.

#### **4.3 THE 'JATI' SYSTEM AND MASCULINE HIERARCHY**

In a multi ethnic or multi cultural region, terms like race and caste comes to play. Race refers to identifying individuals based on their physical appearance where as caste is the process of stratification based on birth of the person. Here, race is biologically determined and caste is socially determined based on the family of the person and the reputation of the community to which the family shows affiliation. These aspects can often become tools of discrimination and mode of arranging hierarchies.

South Asia has been a land of "social stratification" (Bose and Jalal 2004: 50) based on the birth of an individual. "*Jati*" (ibid: 10) is the word for the caste of a person which he attains by the virtue of his birth in a particular family and that determines his fate for the rest of his life unless he miraculously detaches from his background. The previous chapter has dealt with the concept of 'marginalized masculinity' and this marginalization also takes place due to one's caste. Though stratification exists in other parts of the world too, it is profound enough, even to this day, in South Asia to pick it as a unique trait of masculinity here. In the novel *The Sunset Club*, the three friends, Baig, Boota and Sharma, get into an argument

about the caste system in India and Sharma has the upper hand because of the knowledge about the history of Indian caste system he had accumulated over his decades of academic years. Sharma elucidates the relevance of caste system in India while his friends observe his own caste as a supporting component for his opinion:

Sharma knows he has got the better of his friends in the debate. That should have been expected; he is a Brahmin and Brahmins are the brainiest people in the world. As Sharma has often explained in his lectures, India's caste system can be compared to the human body. The head is Brahmin, the arms and torso are Kshatriyas-the fighting types like Rajputs, Marathas, Sikhs. The pelvis and thighs are Vaishyas-the trading caste like Banias and Marwaris who look after the economy of the country. Shudras are the legs and feet on which the body stands. They do menial jobs-they are sweepers, cobblers, removers of carcasses. It is a division based on functions expected to be performed, so the caste system cannot be dismissed as outdated rubbish" (2011: 99).

Here, the discussion is on the Hindu caste system and the metaphoric representation of the caste system explained above is greatly inspired from Manusmriti (Naegele 2008). Similarly, caste based hierarchical divisions have also been seen in other parts of South Asia too, such as Sri Lanka. In an incident from the novel *Funny Boy*, Arjie asks his mother if she knew *The King and I*, and in response to her positive reply, he questions if the governess in the story marries the king at the end? But his mother calls him "mad" for asking such a question as "at that time people didn't marry outside their race" and she also confesses that the situation for same even in modern times as "most people marry their own kind" (1994: 54). This incident reflects values that have been embedded deep into the minds of men and women to ensure the sustenance of hierarchy. The institution of marriage is an important area of operation for confirming hegemony of certain kind of people throughout until a revolution breaks its inertia. The general idea of marriage always begins with the presence of a man and a woman,



therefore heterosexuality is an understood norm as in a homosexual family if two women were to get married, there is no man to rule and if two men were to be married to each other, there is too much competition for power. Following heterosexuality, the second most important trait is for the two people to belong to the same caste. This is due to the farsighted objective of patriarchy to rule out any confusion on power, once these marriages produce children. It would be difficult to assume the superiority or inferiority of a person born from parents of two different *jatis*.

Another important aspect of the caste system is the preference shown by the upper class to keep company with the people of the same social strata. Preferring the company of hegemonic male members is an unsaid masculine norm observed in the select narratives. Shame is associated with keeping company of men from lower caste. For instance, in *The Kite Runner*, neither Amir nor his Baba mentioned Ali or Hassan as their friends, though they shared a relationship which looked close to friendship. “Baba would laugh and throw his arms around Ali. . . But in none of his stories did Baba ever refer to Ali as his friend. . . I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either” (24) so explains Amir. Ali and Hassan belonged to the Hazzara community which was inferior to the Pashtuns, also they were financially poorer than Amir and his father, as a result they belonged to the Marginalized Masculinity. Therefore, despite significant bonding between them, they could not relate to each other as friends. Similarly, Hassan referred to Assef, a Pashtun boy of the same age, as “Agha,” (ibid: 39) a word used to refer someone senior or superior. The necessity to reflect hierarchy, in a situation where power had a very negligible role to play, shows the underlying need of repression and dominance in South Asian Masculinity. “He’d referred to Assef as “Agha,” and I wondered briefly what it must be like to live with such an ingrained sense of one’s place in a hierarchy,” exclaims Amir (39). As observed, not only is it important to categorize masculinity, but also to keep everyone reminded of it from time to time. Most South Asian languages use words such as ‘Agha’ or ‘Anna’ or ‘Saab’ as found in the novels *The Kite Runner*, *Cinnamon Gardens* and *Delhi A Novel*, respectively; the use of these words instead of the

names, symbolize the superiority of the person to whom it is addressed and the repression of the ones speaking. It is usually the people of working class, or backward castes, irrespective of their age, who denote the hegemonic men from upper class with these titles. In Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, racial remarks are also seen as a way to identify individuals of backward caste and to threaten them. It is a reminder to them of their lack of power and need for subordination. "“You pariah, wait and see what'll happen to you,”" said Jegan, a Tamil employee in a hotel in Sri Lanka, to a trespasser who was trying to destroy the property despite several warnings (1994: 168). Tamils in Sri Lanka are a minority but they are often regarded as people of higher social strata in literature. This could be further confirmed when another character in the novel, Radha was denied marriage to her lover Anil, because he was not a Tamilian, rather a Singhalese.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also reminds of the same kind of denial towards inter-community marriages and reflects its existence since ancient times. The novel mentions details about the name and reason behind the name of a district: "“Old Anarkali-named, as you may be aware, after a courtesan immured for loving a prince”" (2008: 2) and sets a reminder of the hierarchies social strata and the consequence of disregarding it. Whenever there is a stratification of people based on race or culture, there is an immediate arrangement of hierarchy which leads to dominance of one group over the other. During instances where people chose to break norms of stratification, it is usually the people from lower strata who suffer more, like Anarkali in this novel.

#### **4.4 HEIGHTENED SENSE OF MALE ‘HONOUR’**

Middle East and South Asia have been ranked as the regions with highest number of honor- related ritual murders and studies have also shown that it is highest among the Muslim community, which accounts for a great portion of South Asian population (Chesler and Bloom 2012). The concept of honor is deeply embedded in South Asian ideologies and in surprisingly intense passion. The United Kingdom was taken aback by the shocking act of honor related domestic violence, suffered by the South Asian actress Afshan Azad, who worked in the prestigious

*Harry Potter* series and became famous worldwide. She was “beaten and threatened with death in 2010 by her father and brother for dating a non-Muslim” (Chesler and Bloom 2012: 43). Unfortunately, similar instances have been found in select works. In the novel *And The Mountains Echoed*, Nila Wahdati stays for most of her life in Afghanistan, and during her late adulthood she shifts to Paris. She describes how she was humiliated by her father who used physical and verbal violence to resist her act of dating men of her choice, especially the ones who were of lower social strata. To have sexual relationship outside marriage is a matter of great injury to honor and consequences of the same is suffered in terms of violence by both men and women (Bell and Whaley 2017). In an interview, Nila reveals the pains of her past and describes the incidents in the following manner:

I arranged clandestine rendezvous and slipped away from home . . . someone would inform my father . . . they always put it like that- I was “cavorting.” Or else they would say I was “parading” myself. . . He would lock me up. For days. He would say from the other side of the door, *You humiliate me. Why do you humiliate me so? What will I do about you?* (237-238)

Her father felt humiliated because he did not have a hold over his daughter’s sexuality and this imperialism is justified by the false sense of honor associated with masculinity and repression. In addition to her sexual life, her work of art was also under public scrutiny because of its erotic nature. She wrote poems which became famous and received appreciation from her audience in Paris unlike Afghanistan. She was questioned about her character, by people in authority, especially her father, and appreciation was a very distant unaccomplished dream. Nila recollects the reception of her poems:

No one in Kabul considered me a pioneer of anything but bad taste, debauchery, and immoral character. Not least of all, my father, he said my writings were the ramblings of a *whore*. He used that word precisely. He

said I'd damaged his family name beyond repair. He said I had betrayed him (240).

While Nila understood the situation only after she experienced it in a painful manner, Arjie from *Funny Boy* estimated the consequences of breaking patriarchal norms even before his actions were discovered by anyone. Arjie was caught in dilemma for a long frustrating time after he had spent few intimate moments with Shehan. He was well aware about the shame it would bring to his family if anyone found out that he was a gay. He expresses his guilt as he says, "I looked around at my family and saw that I had committed a terrible crime against them, against the trust and love they had given me" (1994: 262). In fact, throughout the novel, he is seen caught up in dilemma between his natural physical desire and his family's honor.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has also deconstructed the pseudo honor showcased in the novel by the protagonist's family. "But status, as in any traditional, class-conscious society, declines more slowly than wealth" (10). He explains that his family had been losing money from generation to generation and though his forefathers were rich and royal, by the time he had to go to college, his family could not even afford his college fees. However, no one knew about their financial status as he says that, "we retained our Punjab Club membership. We continue to be invited to the function and weddings and parties of the city's elite" (ibid); and so they successfully kept their power over the middle or lower class by pretending to be upper class.

Similar heightened sense of honor is seen in the novel *The Kite Runner*. Amir, the protagonist of the story proposes to a girl named Soraya with the risk of rejection. And rejection was not a solo entity as it was accompanied with shame and looking down by a woman and that, could hurt his ego. He explains "all I had risked was a bruised ego. Bruises healed. Reputations did not" (135). It was therefore, a matter of reputation and honor for him to risk it all and propose to a girl openly. Honor, was also the reason behind Amir's Baba hiding the fact that Hassan, who was

considered the son of his servant, was actually his own blood. “It was a shameful situation. People would talk. All that a man had back then, all that he was, was his honor, his name, and if people talked . . .” (206) said Rahim Khan, a friend of his father to Amir. This was the manner in which Rahim justified the secrecy maintained by Amir’s father till his death and also till Hassan died. Honor, here was greater than Hassan’s safety and freedom. Hassan lived the life of a slave as his father was scared to accept him as a son. In the same novel, Ali discovers his wife’s sexual relationship with his master and that is perceived as dishonoring rather than cheating; it is said, “he had been dishonored by his master in the single worst way an Afghan man can be dishonored” (208). Here two unique attributes of South Asian Masculinity can be observed i.e., the juxtaposition of sexuality and honor. The manliness of Ali is hurt by his master’s sexual conduct and yet he keeps it a secret throughout his life to safeguard his honor in the eyes of the people. Instead of viewing it as a matter of dishonesty and adultery, it is viewed as a matter of reputation. Such is the regard for public opinion and sense of honor in South Asia and this governs the manhood acts in great deal. This behavior could also be the result of the South Asian ideology of keeping matters in the house, as proven in several researches (Shahani 2013, Segal 1991, Sharma and Oommen 2000). This example also suggests the high sense of obedience towards hegemonic characters and letting them decide the life of others.

Another interesting observation is that this sense of honor comes from both the ends. There are enough number of people who abide by the norms to maintain reputation, and this strengthens the determination of the hegemonic men to continue doing so. Hassan, unlike his young master Amir never got involved in any mischievous activities at his will. Though he did not want to throw stones at dogs or shine mirror on other’s face, he did so under Amir’s order. When caught and confronted, he always took the responsibility for all the deeds because of his loyalty (4). And this action brought the false sense of maintaining honor of the family and as mentioned above, keeping the matters of the family within the house. Likewise, *The Sunset Club* describes the silent surrendering of Baig’s wife to her husband, the hegemonic master of the house and his adultery:

Sakina had a woman's sixth sense about her husband's infidelities but never questioned him. As long as he did not bring in a second wife, it was okay by her. That was the way of the nawabs, rajas and rich businessmen. He was both a nawab and a man of substance" (23).

Similar to the example stated before, here the issues of the house are kept within the four walls and the so called honor is preserved.

#### **4.5 INTERFERENCE, OBEDIENCE AND REPRESSION THROUGH MASCULINITY**

It is paramount relevance in South Asian culture to show obedience and self sacrifice towards elders. People of this region are less individualistically oriented compared to other parts of the world. For instance, in *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran's opinions and principles differ from his father's opinions on multiple instances, it is completely in contradiction with what he believes; yet he behaved in complete obedience towards his father. This situation confused his wife, who was a Western educated Sri Lankan woman. "It makes me sick at heart. Why do you allow him to treat you like that?... Why this terrible sense of duty? This absolute obedience to him? It makes no sense" (1998: 138) so she questions Bala's surrender to his father. To this encountering question thrown towards him by his wife, Bala replies, "He is my father. It is our way. Perhaps you can't understand it." He spoke as if contemptuous of the fact that she was half British" (ibid). Here, his wife Sonia identifies the absolute obedience shown by Balendran, as a South Asian son towards his father unconditionally. An element of sacrifice is also evident from the manner in which he opts to put aside his political views and conducts himself in a manner that is beneficial to his father's system of socializing. This characteristic of South Asian masculinity results in additional burdening and leads to gender role stress in men. Later in the novel, it is observed that the innate need to abide by the desires of elders and series of sacrifices causes deep frustration in Bala. He is found confused at times and reflects lack of fulfillment in the life he had been leading.

The closely knit lives of different members of a family is well evident in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when Erica, a female character from Western society, identifies the image of a huge family bonding being reflected in Changez's behavior: "[y]ou give off this strong sense of home," she said. "You know that? This I'm-from-a-big-family vibe. It's nice. It makes you feel solid" (Hamid 2008: 19). The unique attribute of South Asian culture to be deeply involved in the matters of all family members, has its own pros and cons. Later in the chapter, the manner in which it complicated South Asian masculine gender roles is observed; but this example shows the positive side of it. As Erica identifies, it gives immense support to a person to know that he is backed by his family in times of need and makes one feel "solid" (ibid).

The involvement of elders, especially parents in the lives of their children is observed to be far more in South Asia; and it is also South Asian first generation immigrants who seek the highest amount of counseling due to the cultural conflict of parenting (Abouguendia and Noels 2001). South Asian culture is not homogeneous (Ibrahim et. al. 1997) and people vary with varying languages, religions, places, and so on. Therefore, the argument here is not that every individual is the same, but since a significant number of people have been observed practicing this aspect of masculinity, it is crucial to understand it. Studies have shown that in cases of conflict of interest between an individual and a group, the individual is expected to sacrifice (Almeida and Verissimo 1996, Ibrahim et. al. 1997, Segal 1991) and to perceive one's goals without family's consent is deemed selfish (Segal 1991). The novel, *Funny Boy*, on multiple occasions, reflects on deep emotional attachments among people. Along with this, it is also found that there is an innate desire to control the younger members of the family, and emotional dependency is higher in South Asia. "As I gazed at Amma, I felt a sudden sadness . . . I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me" (1994: 284- 285), says Arjie after he finally decides to accept his homosexuality and live with it. This unique attribute of South Asian masculinity to be deeply connected to the family and to make every important decision with

their approval is made evident by the comparative difference between the way adults are treated by the younger generation in West and in South Asian society. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the protagonist explains the cultural shock he experienced as he sees his colleagues, who are of his same age, ordering workers older than him. In South Asia and many other parts of Asia, age is considered as an important factor while addressing a person. There are also vocabularies built around it as most South Asian languages and dialects use different pronouns depending on the person's age being greater than or lesser than the person spoken to. The protagonist says:

I will admit that there were *details* which annoyed me . . . self-righteousness in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service. “But you *told* us,” they would say to Greeks twice their age, before insisting thing to be done their way. I, with my finite and depleting reserve of cash and my traditional sense of deference to one's seniors, found myself wondering by what quirk of human history my companions . . . were in a position to conduct themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class (21).

Relating to strangers as one's own relatives and considering it appropriate to make decisions or act on their behalf; especially the hegemonic members doing so for the inferior members of the society, is considered quiet normal in a South Asian setup. For instance, “if a woman is harassed by a man, she has the right to appeal to the brotherly instincts of the mob, and the mob is known to beat men who annoy their sisters” (22-23) says the narrator of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Here, the use of the word “instinct” refers to the natural tendency in men to participate in the lives of other people, especially a situation, as mentioned above, where they get to project their machismo. Likewise, in Singh's *Delhi*, during the colonial period, under the orders of White men, Nihal Singh, a dutiful Indian soldier had held a woman captive because of her opposition to the rules of the land. She was ill treated by his fellow soldiers, both native and colonizers, and Nihal Singh was against this treatment. Finally, when he gained



the courage to protect her from his own people he helped her to escape. He explained: “I put my carbine on the ground and touch her feet. ‘Forgive us for the way we treated you ... forgive us for the hard words we used ... you are like our mother’” (2016; 287). In both the situations, strangers are treated like family members or at least compared to one. This is also accompanied by the sense of duty towards the people in need.

South Asian hegemonic masculinity is so deeply associated with the duty to protect the weaker members of the society that failing to do so is treated as either unnatural or becomes a reason sufficient to categorize the person as not masculine enough to be hegemonic. *The Kite Runner* presents a situation where the character Amir and his father, Baba flee from Afghanistan to the US for survival against the war situation in the country. This expedition was being carried out in secrecy and in hiding from the imperial group of attackers as well as the ineffective government. On one occasion when the escaping troupe including Amir, his Baba and several other men and women were caught by the fundamentalist militants, they were threatened in different forms; however, the militants were ready to trade the lives of people in return of raping a woman from the troupe. Amir’s Baba, being the hegemonic male member of his community and the escaping group, could not bear to stand as a mere bystander. He responds in the following manner:

“Tell him I’ll take a thousand of his bullets before I let this indecency take place,” Baba said. My mind flashed to that winter day six years ago. Me, peering around the corner in the alley. Kamal and Wali holding Hassan down. . . Some hero I had been, fretting about the kite. Sometimes, I too wondered if I was really Baba’s son . . . The bulldog-faced Russian raised his gun. . . He turned to the grinning soldier. “Tell him he would better kill me good with that first shot. Because I don’t go down, I’m tearing him to pieces, goddamn his father! (107-108).

Risk taking behavior is common to masculinity all around the world and therefore it cannot be declared as a unique attribute of South Asian Masculinity. However,

the strong sense of duty to protect a woman's honor at the risk of his son's and his own life is quite unique to South Asian society. Here Amir's father is aware of the lack in strength on his side as compared to the armed militants standing against him; yet he opts to challenge them with violent words. Similarly, in *Moth Smoke*, in an attempt to interview a prostitute, Dilaram, Mumtaz runs to the Heera Mandi. This was the red light area of the part of Pakistan mentioned in the novel, where the main character Dara accompanied his female friend, Mumtaz. He offers to accompany her inside and she hesitantly accepts with the condition saying, "only if you promise not to do anything macho" (56). Mumtaz's words direct towards the phenomena discussed above. South Asian men could have a tendency to take responsibility and act in situations where they could be mere bystanders, or that does not demand their direct involvement.

Involvement and interference is divided by a very thin line of the receiving party's consent. What could be interpreted as involvement in one culture could become interference in another. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez made a very wise statement: "what is natural in one place can seem unnatural in another and some concepts travel rather poorly, if at all" (2008: 126). This statement hits at the many contradictions in parenting observed in South Asia and the rest of the world. Changez from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* describes the parental involvement in their child's dating life in South Asia saying, "[m]any parents were strict, and sometimes weeks would pass without us being able to meet those we thought of as our girlfriends. So we learnt to *savor* the denial of gratification – that most un-American of pleasures!" (ibid: 69); and by using the term "un-American" he makes it clear how the two cultures differed. Similarly, Nila who had suffered greatly because of her father's involvement in her dating life in South Asia presents a complete contradicting life of her own daughter as they had then moved to France. She explains it in an interview: "[w]hether I approve or not is irrelevant. This is France, Monsieur Boustouler, not Afghanistan. Young people don't live or die by the stamp of parental approval" (2014: 221-222).

Every coin has two sides. Likewise, with power comes the responsibility and this could be observed as Jegan, a young man with hot blood, is reminded by his father's friend about making safer choices that do not contradict social expectations. "It's good to have ideals, but now you're a man, son. Soon you will become a husband and a father, and you must think about what that means" (Selvadurai 1994: 174), and by this statement the speaker also advised Jegan to make choices that sets him as an example for the rest of his family as he would be in the hegemonic position and caretaker of patriarchy. It has been widely discussed that men get the power and position of a leader in most situations, be it the public or domestic sphere; however, the discussion on the financial and psychological stress that it brings them is far less explored. Victor Seidler claims that "[m]asculinities become performative often as a way of concealing inner emotional turmoil from others" (2006: 99-100). It is also suggested to categorize such men who are victims of patriarchal norms as "third sex" i.e., "the weaker men who are psychologically traumatized by the patriarchal values of their societies but suffer in silence because it is unmanly to express emotion" (Clemence and Jairos 2011: 60). Several instances of men trying to conceal their emotions of sorrow, fear and pain have been observed in previous discussions. Several male characters are found to conceal their pain and overburden themselves with responsibilities of patriarchy along with their family's well being. For example, Abdullah's father was consumed with the pain of loss of a child. He could not and did not express bereavement and suffered in silence. It was not just the loss of a child but the guilt associated with it. He considered himself the sole reason for all that had happened to his family. This pain that he suffered by himself was understood by his son without any words because he was a man-in-making and was well acquainted with what was coming forth. The narrator explains the situation as he says:

Abdullah knew that father blamed himself for Omar. If he had found more work, or better work, he could have bought the baby better winter clothes, heavier blankets, maybe even a proper stove to warm the house. This was what father thought (Hosseini 2014: 31).

Nabi, a chauffeur to a wealthy family in the city, had a sister in the village who dwelt in poverty to the extent that she lost a child as they could not afford enough clothing or fuel to keep it warm during winter nights. Her husband Saboor chose not to take help from anyone as it would affect his pride. Saboor is the person discussed in the above example. To many South Asian men, pride comes with the ability to provide for and to be able to protect the family. Nabi describes the context and says:

But Saboor, like many of my countrymen, had the affliction of pride, an affliction both misbegotten and unshakable. He would never take money from me. When he married Parwana, he even put an end to the small remittances I had been giving her. He was a man and he would provide for his own family. And he died doing just that, when he was not yet forty, collapsing one day while he was out harvesting a field of sugar beets somewhere near Baghlam. I heard he died with the beet hook still in his blistered, bleeding hands (ibid: 115).

It is indeed mindboggling to see the lack of awareness about men's pains and sufferings. In return of the so called pride, men have been losing their life to the race of constantly performing better and better each day and to be able to provide for their families comfort. While there have been umpteen discussions on why and how patriarchy has restricted women from working and earning, there is far less information on the ways in which supporting the family singlehandedly has impacted men's health- both physically and psychologically. The above illustration has given a clear picture of the same and its life consuming consequence.

The unique quality of South Asian masculinity to strongly believe in protecting and involving in the matters of family members and those whom they considered family has been observed through the above examples.

#### 4.6 ECO-MASCULINE PERSPECTIVES

Traces of ‘eco-masculinity’ have also been observed in some of the novels selected for the study. Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* compares two kinds of masculinities personified as bats and butterflies; and concludes greater chances of survival of just one type:

But bats have survived here. They are successful urban dwellers, like you and I, swift enough to escape detection and canny enough to hunt among a crowd. . . Butterflies, on the other hand, tend to splatter on the windshields of passing automobiles, and I have once seen a firefly bumping repeatedly against the window of a house, unable to comprehend the glass that barred its way (2008: 63).

Harmless and meek creatures like fireflies and butterflies represent the subordinate kind of masculinities, who are milder in their behavior as compared to bats which represents adamant, stubborn and ‘manly’ men who dominate over others for their benefits. Singh’s *The Sunset Club* discusses on the manner in which literature has often used seasons as a mode of conveying one’s emotions, and of all the seasons, “sawan” or monsoon (2011: 129) is the most popular topic. The narrator, Boota quotes from the poetry of Amaru, a poet of ninth century AD:

*The summer sun, who robbed the pleasant nights,  
And plundered all the water of the rivers,  
And burned the earth, and scorched the forest-trees  
Is now in hiding; and the black clouds,  
Spread thick across the sky to track him down,  
Hunt for the criminal with lightening flashes (ibid).*

Here, the prolonged summer heat and the destruction it brings along, is given a masculine form. It is called “criminal” and there is a hint of violence in the illustrative description of the manner in which it is hunt down by the approaching monsoon clouds. Though not evident, the “black clouds” which are viewed policing down the “hiding” summer sun could also be considered masculine; and even this personification presents masculinity in an attacking, guarding and hegemonic position. Later in the same novel, Kalidasa the great Indian poet is quoted in the following manner:

*The autumn comes, a maiden fair*

*In slenderness and grace,*

*With nodding rice-stems in her hair,*

*And lilies in her face*

*In flowers of grasses she is clad*

*And as she moves along,*

*Birds greet her with their cooling glad*

*Like bracelets' tinkling song.*

Similar to the previous extract from the novel, the poet here has personified season as a living being and brought out deep emotions associated with it. The difference however, is that gender is assigned based on the kind of emotions being transported through the poetry. Here the season, which represents tender and positive romantic emotions, is represented as feminine and elements of nature which could be both feminine and masculine are given the monolithic feminine form. This comparative analysis further strengthens the argument that literature has shown a bias towards masculinity and a significant inclination towards painting the picture of masculinity and femininity as black and white respectively.

There are several other instances when natural elements are used to represent masculinity in other select works. For instance, comparison of a man's cruel act of killing a young boy under negligence while driving is described in the following manner:

The accused has stretched out his neck beneath the heavy blade of justice, and there is no question but that this blade must fall. For he has blood on his hands, Milord. Young blood. The blood of a child. He killed not out of anger, nor out of scheme or plan or design. He killed as a serpent kills that which it does not intend to eat: he killed out of indifference. He killed because his nature is to kill, because the death of a child has no meaning for him (Hamid 2013: 7).

Guilt of the accused man was yet to be proved still the opponent lawyer chose to declare him as the murderer because of the kind of masculinity he had been projecting. Darashikoh, the accused had been used to acting as a hegemonic male member in the room and this altered his attitude even when he was being perceived as a suspect for murder. He did not shift his act of masculinity with the change in circumstances and as a result, his behavior of superiority was being interpreted as acts of a ruthless serpent. An in-depth assessment of the select texts from the perspective of eco-masculinity can be exhaustive enough to form an entire study. The use of serpent to represent dark side of masculinity has also been noted in Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* during a discussion on strict principal and teachers in a school. "He's a snake in the grass" is the phrase use to describe the Vice Principal of the school, when asked if he too gave punishments like the Principal did. Here, the word snake is used to symbolize a treacherous act of acting behind the back and not showing one's true intentions openly. The use of elements of nature to highlight characteristics of masculine gender that are nurturing or beneficial to everyone in general are scarce, especially in the context of the select novels. The same cannot be said for femininity and therefore it is crucial to bring to the light, this bias in literature towards masculinity. Undoubtedly, masculinity has been largely associated to subjugation of women

and other less assertive genders. However; it is not the only characteristic of masculinity, men and masculinities have also been providers and care takers at domestic and public spheres in addition to few other traits that are beneficial to mankind in general. Literature reflects life and over ages, mankind has sought solace in literature. Therefore, the use of literature to appreciate attributes of masculinity that are empowering to all genders in general must be encouraged. Also, perceiving men in isolation of power, is the need of the hour since, men are either seen as dominating or as weak in front of other dominating men, but rarely in the absence of power politics.

#### **4.7 MASCULINITY THROUGH THE FEMALE LENS**

Another important perspective that has been found is the presence of strong female characters in the select novels. This study acknowledges feminine perspective as a part of understanding ideological frame work of masculine gender. There are very powerful women in these works who have opposed the flow of patriarchy in their contemporary societies such Nila Wahdati, and Annalukshmi. Representation of progressive men, the ones defying the hegemonic masculine norms is also noted and analyzed through this study. However, it is worth noting that most of these characters, who are in constant attempt to liberate themselves from the hegemonic norms, end up in a position that appeared to be more challenging than they had it before. Characters such as Nila Wahdati and Pari from *And the Mountains Echoed* are examples of independent women who have liberated themselves from the clutches of patriarchy and experienced their life on their own terms as both have fought against their parent's unreasonable restrictions and interference in their lives and thrived to succeed. While Nila managed to excel through her poetries, Pari made a successful career in academics. Likewise, Sanaubar from *The Kite Runner* presents an image of a rebellious woman. She does not appear anywhere in the novel and it is only her descriptions through other characters that assist in understanding her. Sanaubar is not a character that can be celebrated for her virtues as she chose to abandon her new born and her husband without a closure, to roam around the world with



nomads. Though this seems to be an extreme step, it could be a result of the societal condition at that time. Divorce and financial independence were both out of question and so her resentment for the institution of marriage is overcome by running away with the nomadic troupe. Another reason for terming these female characters as strong women is because they challenged the dominating aspect of masculinity in men around them and to a great extent, exposed their patriarchal intentions.

Similarly, Radha from *Funny Boy*, and Annalukshmi, Sonia and Miss Lawton from *Cinnamon Gardens* display the role of women in the development of a society. They play a crucial role in understanding masculinity as time and again these characters have successfully challenged men around them. These characters have also helped in deconstructing the societal stereotypes about gender and exhibited ways in which women can prove themselves competent in the patriarchal world.

#### **4.8 MASCULINITY, TO BE OR NOT TO BE**

Not only the above mentioned female characters, but also several male characters have acted rebellious by deviating from societal expectations. Arul from *Cinnamon Gardens*, who is depicted only for a short instance in the novel, he had set an example for his younger brother on the consequences of defying social norms. He fell in love with a woman of the lower caste and when confronted and opposed by his hyper-masculine father, unlike his younger brother he did not give up. Instead he left his family and all the inheritance that he could have enjoyed, had he agreed to abide by his father's orders. Arul lived in poverty, away from his people and native, for the rest of his life and is later found to die of an incurable disease, in a gloomy small house. This was an important learning for bystanders like Balendran, Arul's younger brother to not commit a similar mistake. Likewise, when Balendran was caught having a gay relationship by his father, he chose to surrender and lead a life of deception. He acted as a heterosexual man, got married and even had a son. He mentions the pain he feels throughout and is not found to be happy with his life. Contradictory to this, Arul had expressed

contempt with leading life on his own terms even though it had put him through many struggles.

Though several characters are found contradicting gender norms and defying its hierarchical order, the comparative number of characters who have tried to oppose or reform them is far less. Despite experiencing the pain of irrational oppression under social ideologies, most characters are observed to abide by it and also police people around them to do so. A few characters such as Arjie, Darashikoh, and Changez marked the exception by breaking rules and leading their life on their own terms. The rest of the individuals could have possibly embraced subjugation to avoid the painful consequences of behaving otherwise. In the novel, *Moth Smoke*, Murad Badshah makes a remark on the manner a man must conduct in a jail cell and says “[t]here is no moral issue here. Better to laugh at what you do not understand than to take it seriously and end up giggling hysterically in a padded cell of jail road” (2013: 79). This statement could be perceived at a broader level. Murad Badshah was a hegemonic male member of the society and though he broke several legal norms, he always stayed close to hegemonic masculine attributes. During a discussion on right and wrong, he expresses his views and points towards the adverse result of responding towards unreasonable societal ideology with seriousness. The words “giggling hysterically” and “padded cell” refers to the two worst cases for a socially inclined man: madness and crime. He agrees that the ideology is so deep rooted that opposing it completely, would either lead to madness or might force an individual to commit crime. A similar view is shared by Arjie’s mother in the novel *Funny Boy*. Arjie’s behavior and choices of activities were feminine and when he was denied from acting in that manner, he questions his mother. She admits her lack of reason behind it but forces her son anyways by saying “[l]ife is full of stupid things and sometimes we just have to do them” (1994: 20). In both the cases the characters blindly abide by gender norms and also try to impose similar attitudes on others. Psychoanalysts like Carl Jung have argued that every person is capable of being an exception (Jung 2012). Without an argument this statement can be considered true and it is also admissible that this fact makes it difficult to categorize and limit people into

different ‘types.’ Nonetheless, it does not stop researchers from coming up with different ways to measure elements of human personality.

The upcoming chapter, “Conclusion” visits the understanding of South Asian masculinity and its nuances as a whole, and provides findings and recommendations of this research. The chapter further explicates scope for future research.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Gender has always been an interesting site of exploration for researchers from varied domains with diverse perspectives. This research has brought out the constructionist point of view to analyze South Asian masculinities. The palimpsestic co-existence of language, culture, ethnicity and social strata, is found to determine masculinity and its normative construction. The women's movement of 1960's emphasized on the constructed nature of gender and paved hope for gender to gain egalitarianism. Tracing the creation of gender ideology has revealed its continual performative act and through this study the finer issues of men and masculinity are made known. This research has examined the constructed nature of masculine gender through several theories and concepts on gender and culture. It has revealed the social and ideological process of construction of masculinities, with special reference to South Asian masculinity. Some of the concepts explored in this thesis are violence, homosexuality, parental control, gender-power hierarchy, combating gender stereotypes and repression.

All the eight works studied for this research are written by contemporary writers, with post modern thinking and visibly progressive views. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, all the authors whose works are considered for this research have been in the West for a considerable amount of time. This aspect is reflected in their works, which has facilitated in distinguishing between the two cultures. This has also brought out varied characters, each one with their own uniqueness. The purpose of this study was not limited to examining South Asian novels as representation of cultural realities of masculinities, but to explore the path of interpellation through performative production of gendered discourses. The main objective was to discover the constitutive force that drives South Asian ethnicity within the broader discourse of masculine interpellations.

## 5.1 SUMMARY OF THE WORK

The introductory chapter to this thesis laid down the incipient questions and objectives that formulated theoretical frame work of this research. Concepts critical to this research, such as gender and masculinity theories proposed by Judith Butler, R. W. Connell, and Margaret Atwood were discussed along with the theories, instrumental to support arguments in the research, proposed by Louis Pierre Althusser, Karl Marx, and Michelle Foucault. The chapter also explains research gaps, research queries, research objectives, and research methods. It put forth the background of the study and addressed the different trajectories involved in the social and cultural construction of masculinities. This chapter comprehended the concepts of ‘gender ideologies’ and ‘gender discourses’ along with ‘interpellation,’ as these framed the fundamental arguments of the study. The two state apparatuses and the role of ideologies and repressions in performative production were also explored in the chapter. Later, a background on South Asia, select novelists and the eight works selected for this study were discussed.

The second chapter, “Exploring Cultural politics and male performativity” analyzed the role of discourses in framing gender ideology. Using supportive arguments from Foucault’s theory on discourse, the chapter acknowledged language as a mode of determining power to specific objects and people, and how discourses shaped relationships. These gender discourses marked the basis of interpellation of individuals into gendered categories. This chapter examined the select works and found the different ways in which South Asian masculinities are performed. Butler’s theory on performativity is analyzed in the context of the select literatures to determine the various trajectories of gender expression by the characters of the select works. Body has been noted as an important mode of projecting a male’s self concept of gender and ethnicity. The chapter argued that performance of masculinity invites its conditioning from the world outside, this is seen to cause friction in the path of the self concept, thereby leading to ‘gender role stress.’ The chapter later addressed masculine aggression as an undesirable

outcome of this stress; along with men's agreement and disagreement to the existing masculine norms.

The third chapter, "Analysis of hierarchical masculinities and cultural hegemonies" addressed the crucial question whether the hierarchies of masculinity in South Asia exist in accordance with the prescribed order based on Western masculinity? This chapter elaborated on the concept of patriarchy and drew a convincing connection between types of patriarchy and the two state apparatuses. Marxian concept of hegemony and its extension to the field of masculinities by theoreticians like Connell have been extensively used to frame the arguments here. This chapter traced Althusser's concept on interpellation and the two kinds of state apparatuses, introduced in the first chapter, and argued that domestic patriarchy directly influenced ideological state apparatus (ISA) while public patriarchy influenced repressive state apparatus (RSA). Further in the chapter, different kinds of masculinities that result from patriarchal expectations were elaborated. R. W. Connell's four kinds of masculinities were used to assimilate the varied versions of masculinities in South Asia. The chapter further added to the existing theory by suggesting the evolution of a transcending type of masculinity that is not limited to some specific attributes of gender. This chapter also highlights the shifting nature of masculinities and displayed its fluid nature.

The fourth chapter titled, "Interpreting the interpellation of South Asian masculinities" delineated conceptualization of interpellation, in its exclusive form, in South Asian culture. Role of such interpellations on individual's expression of emotions were discussed in the chapter. The chapter further aimed at seeking out the unique attributes of South Asian masculinities and how it differed from the Western concept. In the process, the chapter encountered significant influence of colonial past in shaping South Asian ideologies on masculinity. It further attempted to trace the 'taken – for – granted' gendered ideologies that have become a part of everyday life; such as the attitude of several men to forcibly take charge of situations where they are expected to be mere bystanders. The chapter discussed additional view points to understand masculinities that are beyond the

objectives of this research, such as eco-masculinity and masculinity through female perspectives.

## **5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Thematic semblance has been observed in the works of all four authors. The select literatures being male centric and written by male authors have provided sufficient scope for apprehending male masculinity in South Asia. Applying masculinity studies in the select South Asian novels has shown that the concept of masculinity is not monolithic to patriarchy.

The study found a profound relationship between discourse and conduct. It is seen that gender discourse drive the behavior of individuals and hence language plays a vital role in establishing one's identity. The same is found true while exploring the unique attributes of South Asian masculinity. Hegemonic South Asian masculinity is asserted through imposing the burden of native language even when language was of no use to the characters in their day to day life. Language is seen as a carrier of culture which assists in successful interpellation of the subjects. While examining various types of masculine performativity and social behavior, the male body was found to be an important mode of gender expression. Agreeing to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, this study has also observed how men use their body to project their gender and in some cases, body is used to represent one's ethnicity. Physical manifestation of masculinity is seen to be an important part of masculine gender performativity here. In the context of South Asia, it is found that growing facial hair such as beard and moustache represent male power. Also, clothes such as 'kurta' that is unique to South Asian identity is used as an attribute to project their ethnic choices.

Both essentialism and constructionists' perspectives have been found to play a vital role in determining masculinity of an individual. Male characters, in the select literatures, are found to be bound by several unsaid regulations which shaped their behavior in a certain situation at a particular point of time. Irrespective of their age, men were found to control their emotions forcefully and



were expected to maintain a composed response even during painful situations such as separation, or death of a loved one. In addition to this, the essentialist need of a maturing body, such as desire for courting, has also been observed to impact manhood. The desire for a partner, as found in the novels, has driven the male characters to project several attributes of masculinity that were not evident otherwise. Essentialism and constructionism is found to interact in situations where age becomes a factor of determination of masculine hierarchy. While young adults who are physically fit and have acquired favorable physical features become hegemonic, remaining is seen to belong to different subordinate categories. This research has found a strong connection between sexuality of an individual and the power that he holds in his social circle. The image of heterosexual strong male is persistent with the idea of hegemonic masculinity and therefore, any deviation from this is condemned as either immoral or stupid, this is found through examples of men involving in physical relationship with other men as well as transgender individuals. The study also shows the importance of sexual performance in establishing self image among men. Male characters are found to celebrate their success and are observed to have a confident masculine image after they pleased their partners during a sexual intercourse.

One of the most important findings of this research is about the shifting nature of masculinity. Through this research the fluid nature of masculinity is brought out. Recurring shifts in the hierarchical position with changing time, space and age, has been established. Unlike the essentialists' arguments, masculinity is proved to be largely driven by social ideologies. Several characters are found taking up different hierarchical positions in masculinity in different situations. This is a result of the interplay of social elements such as class and race. A man is seen to be dominant in a situation where as subordinate in the other. The thesis also traces how this shifting of power takes place.

This research has also laid out the influences of discursive practices of masculinity in South Asia and supports the theoretical claims of post structuralists such as Michelle Foucault, that language adds meaning and power to objects and

subjects. Hegemonic male characters are found to assert the importance of language and culture to the newer generation. The role of ISA and RSA in subjecting people to abide by the gender norms is also observed. This research has also dealt in depths on gendered behaviors and revealed the controlling factor of 'patriarchy' and its representations in the select works. While studying this concept and simultaneously describing the two state apparatuses, a strong connection has been observed between the ideological state apparatus and domestic patriarchy, and also between repressive state apparatus and public patriarchy.

The thesis also lays down the concept of hyper masculinity and provides instances of men practicing it. It is argued here, that hyper masculinity is in a pseudo-real state which lasts for a short duration till the man in action is able to exercise his unruly power over others. This study also highlights the hypocritical nature of hyper masculinity. R.W. Connell's four types of masculinities is found to be valid in studying South Asian masculinities as well. Irrespective of their ethnicity and cultural background, men are found to arrange themselves and others in the hierarchical order to function in a system of power and position. The study further confirms the theory on hierarchy proposed by Connell by displaying the manner in which only a few men are capable of practicing hegemonic masculinity while many others enjoy the dividends of masculinity without having to carry out the painful task of performing hegemonic masculinity. It is also found that multiple social factors intersect with gender attributes to determine the kind of masculinity an individual is performing at a particular point in time, at a particular place and at a fixed stage of his life.

The characters in the novels represent ordinary men and women, in ordinary situations of everyday life. While Khushwanth Singh's characters have openly argued about gender stereotypes, the rest of the authors have opted for more subtle manner to represent gender issues. A high regard for Western attributes has been observed and ordinary characters in the novels are found to be of the impression that anything Western is superior to the one in the native. In

accordance to the claims of a few post-colonial writers, the seed of manly impression of the West is still persistent in South Asian minds, several characters in the select works are observed to show excitement and respect towards Western men, education, money, job, and so on. However, it cannot be ignored that there are also characters, including leading male characters who defy the idea of Western superiority, but due to the presence of a significantly huge number of characters reflecting the former concept, it can be considered as an active ideology of South Asian society.

Another prevalent ideology of South Asian masculinity, as observed in this study, is the absolute obedience towards elders, specially the hegemonic male member of the individual's primary care givers. There are enough instances quoted in the thesis to establish this unique trait of masculinity in South Asia. The masculinity of men in this region is also found to resonate with heightened machismo. Male characters have been found, on several occasions to, participate in risky situations and on a few occasions they also invite dangers along the way. This quality is found to function in coordination with the South Asian trait of brotherhood. South Asian masculinity is also found to have an instinctive response towards strangers, or mere acquaintances, as one's own kin. A significant reliance on social stratification to determine the hegemonic masculinity has been found in South Asian masculinities. Though the concept of association of social stratification with hierarchies of masculinities is not new, the exclusive kind of stratification in South Asia, makes it unique. In addition to these traits, a heightened sense of 'honor' or rather 'dishonor' is found among South Asian men in this research. Men in South Asia are found to be deeply affected by the conduct of other men and women. In agreement with the existing studies on the concepts of honor and violence, this research has also observed that men too are equal victims of honor and gender based violence. Hegemonic as well as hyper- masculine men, found it their duty to correct, and if necessary, to also punish those who tamper the honor of family, society or masculinity in general.

With change in time and increasing awareness about gender equality, the characters have shown an evolved version of masculinity that is more inclusive in nature. This change is not sudden and therefore is found to exist more among the newer generation of male characters as they have greater exposure and suggestibility to the transforming gender situations. This research has also exhibited minor observations on a few other aspects of masculinity, such as the prevalence of body shaming in men, as popularly observed in women. There are also instances of female masculinity that have been assessed in the study. A hint of eco-masculinity too has been discussed in the fourth chapter. It is observed that since the existence of literature, male-female bifurcation has also been established. Also, those elements of nature that signify destruction are associated with hegemonic masculinity. These aspects of masculinities are so profound that they could be framed into an independent study.

### **5.3 SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

With significant dearth in studying masculinities as an area of research, this study has aimed at bridging the gap and providing new insights to the concept. The use of body to display one's masculinity and South Asian ethnicity at the same time has been identified in the study; and it has also pointed out an observation that an individual's body is used as a mode to determine his position in the hierarchical order of masculinity.

While masculine gender roles are imposed on individuals, the study has brought out an argument that it could also be a survival technique or a mode of achieving a sense of belonging. Defying the monolithic view points of perceiving masculinity either through essentialism or constructionism, this research states the role of both essentialism and constructionism, in mixed proportions, to determine the kinds of masculinities that are being practiced by individuals. The argument is strengthened by illustrating the role of essentialism in masculine aggression and the role of constructionism in the expression of this aggression.

This research has presented the manner in which men in South Asia experience hegemonic masculinity and counts the many attributes that determine hegemonic masculinity. Pointing out a new form of masculinity in South Asian culture, that transcends over different kinds of masculinities and defied the traditional norms while maintaining superior position, can be deemed as a contribution of this study. Connell's definition of 'marginalized' masculinity, stating it can never assume a hegemonic position, has been proved otherwise in this research. The shift in masculine hierarchy experienced by the various characters in select literatures, through change in place and age, has assisted in arguing that shifting nature of masculinity is vividly possible and not restricted to only a few select kinds.

With special reference to South Asian culture, this study has further stretched the concept of masculinity to accommodate the possibility of new shades of masculinities that defies masculine gender norms and yet sustains its position in the hierarchical order. As the name suggests the 'miscellaneous' category represents the newer generation of men who are more inclined towards fluid nature of gender and yet do not essentially give-up the traditional norms completely. Similar to the bigger concept of masculinities, this subcategory is also a pod of many masculinities that are more adaptive to the changing world and significantly more inclusive than the kind of masculinities recorded in the past.

Identifying unique attributes of masculinities that are exclusive to South Asian men is an important part of this study. A high regard for Western image is an important attribute observed through this research. In addition to this, valuing one's male elders over personal opinions and acting in a manner that ensures it are found to contribute towards existing patriarchal norms and also shape South Asian masculinity. The role of ideology and repression is also displayed in the way South Asian men involve and interfere in situations, uninvited; even when the situation is evidently dangerous. Another unique attribute of masculinity in this subcontinent is the manner in which it is built around the concept of honor

and dishonor. Men are seen driven to behave in a certain way to safeguard the social concept of reputation or honor.

#### **5.4 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Since this study is based on male authors' perspectives on masculinity, future research could investigate the concepts of masculinity from female authors' perspectives. Also, trajectories of masculinities, such as eco-masculinity, female-masculinity; that have only been identified in traces in this research, could be considered as an exclusive area for future research. There is also ample scope for a comparative study of masculinity and femininity within texts, or a comparison of gender representation in male v/s female writers' works.

This research is the conceptualization of the intersection of three key viewpoints: 'masculinities,' 'South Asian culture,' and 'interpellation' which are instrumental in understanding the building-up of gendered ideologies and the way in which individuals are subjected to become a part of the system. This research was specifically aimed at approaching masculinities in South Asian men while masculinities being a concept is still at its wake. This research aimed at contributing various resolutions to approach the lesser explored concept of masculinity in a third world subcontinent like South Asia; and while doing so, the question whether conditioning through gendered discourses, to fall into patterns of masculinities, is detrimental and remains open ended; as masculinities are fluid, it is ever-evolving and bring unique outcomes to different individuals. The thesis concludes with reiteration of the pivotal argument of this research i.e., to abide by or to defy the hegemonic masculine norms, are both ideologies and to believe otherwise would be yet another case of interpellation.

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## BRIEF BIO-DATA

### Pranamyia Bhat

Marangad House, Berinja, Kodi

P.O. Vorkady, Kasaragod Dist., Kerala

India

[mailpranamyabhat@gmail.com](mailto:mailpranamyabhat@gmail.com)

**Phone:** 9740952462

#### Work Experience:

Lecturer in English                      NITTE Deemed to be University (September 2022- )

#### Education Qualifications:

M.A.                                      English Literature, St. Aloysius College, Mangalore, 2015-2017

B.A.                                      English, Psychology, and Journalism, Alva's College, Moodbidri, 2012-2015

(8<sup>th</sup> Rank 2015, Mangalore University)

12<sup>th</sup>                                      Science, Sharada Vidyalaya, Mangalore, 2012

10<sup>th</sup>                                      CBSE, The Aditya Birla Public School, Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu, 2010

(CGPA 9.6)

#### Conference Presentations:

- Presented a paper titled, "Exploring Eco- Masculinity: A Select Study of Mohsin Hamid's Works" in the Pan-NIT Humanities and Social Sciences Research Conclave (HSSRC) organized by Department of Humanities and

Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology Warangal from 08-10 January 2021.

- Presented a paper titled, “The Performative Construct of Masculinity in Select Works of Hosseini” in the International Conference on Language Literature and Culture, organized by Institute of Advanced Studies in English from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2017 at Yashada, Aundh, Pune.

**Publications:**

- Bhat, Pranamya and Pannikot, Dhishna “To Become A Man: Rewards, Punishments and Masculinities in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*.” *Journal of Positive School Psychology*; 6(2) 4456 - 4467.
- Bhat, Pranamya and Pannikot, Dhishna “The Performative Construct of Masculinity in Select Works of Hosseini.” *Asian Quarterly: An International Journal of Contemporary Issues*; 15(4), 100-109.

**Workshops Attended:**

- Participated in a Workshop titled “Research Colloquium on Business & Social Sciences” from 29<sup>th</sup> November to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 conducted by Department of Management Studies, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Department of Architecture; at National Institute of Technology Tiruchirapalli.
- Participated in GIAN Workshop on “Affirmations of Female Strength in Selected Literary Works from Post-Colonial India, Africa (Nigeria) and Australia” from 24<sup>th</sup> October to 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 at Department of English, Mangalore University, Mangalore, Karnataka.

**Internships:**

- Psychiatric observership, K. S. Hegde Medical Academy, Deralakatte.  
May 2015

- Training on special education for differently abled, SWASTHA Centre for Special Education, Coorg. June, 2014
- Training on Skill development, Saanidhya Residential School and Training Centre for Mentally Challenged, Mangalore. November, 2012

NITK/SHSSM/2023/1410  
Date: 24/03/2023

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KARNATAKA, SURATHKAL

**Report of DTAC on Ph.D. Research Thesis Defense/Viva-Voce Exam**

[PhD Scholar → Guide → DTAC → ... (In sealed cover) ... → Director]

[To be filled-in by the Ph.D. Scholar]

**Name of the Scholar:** Mrs. Pranamya Bhat

**Register No.:** 177078SM503

**Department:** School of HSSM

**Date of joining:** 26-07-2017

**Name of Research Guide(s):** Dr. Dhishna Pannikot

**Title of the Thesis:** "Interpellation of Masculinities: A Study of Select South Asian Literatures."

**Signature of the Scholar, with Date:**

 24/04/23

[Recommendation by DTAC]

**Date of Thesis Defense /Viva-Voce Exam:** 24.04.2023

**Date of DTAC meeting:** 24.04.2023

**Decision of DTAC:** *The Research Thesis is satisfactory/not satisfactory*  
(if not satisfactory, specific reasons must be furnished separately)

**Names & Signatures of DTAC members**

1) Dr. Sheena  
(Chairman, DTAC)

: 

2) Prof. Binod Mishra, DTAC Member  
(IIT Roorkee)

: 

3) Dr. Aparna P.  
(DTAC Member)

: 

4) Dr. Rashmi Uchil  
(DTAC Member)

: 

5) Dr. Dhishna Pannikot  
(Research Guide)

: 

[Forwarding by the DRPC]

DTAC report is being forwarded to the Director

  
Secretary -DRPC

Date

  
Chairman - DRPC

[Approval]

Director

Note: A brief, one-page report with recommendations by the DTAC is to be attached with this form.



**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND MANAGEMENT**  
**PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS ASSESSMENT**  
**COMMITTEE (DTAC)**

**Date: 24/04/2023**

**Name of the Research Scholar:** Mrs. Pranamya Bhat

**Register No.:** 177078SM503


**Title of the Thesis:** Interpellation of Masculinities: A Study of Select South Asian Literatures.


The DTAC meeting was held on 24/04/2023 at 11.00 AM in the Central Digital Library. The following members of the DTAC attended the defense of the dissertation work:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) Dr. Sheena           | - Chairman               |
| (2) Prof. Binod Mishra   | - External Referee       |
| (3) Dr. Aparna P.        | - From outside the Dept. |
| (4) Dr. Rashmi Uchil     | - From the same Dept.    |
| (5) Dr. Dhishna Pannikot | - Guide                  |


**Observations:**


1. The research scholar has presented and defended her research work satisfactorily.
2. The introduction, literature review, research methodology, results, a summary of findings, and conclusion are presented in a systematic manner.
3. The research scholar has answered all the questions that were asked during the viva-voce examination.
4. The members of DTAC, expressed that the Thesis work done by Mrs. Pranamya Bhat can be accepted and published.
5. The thesis is recommended for the award of a Doctoral Degree.

  
**Dr. Dhishna Pannikot**  
Member, DTAC

  
**Prof. Binod Mishra**  
Member, DTAC

  
**Dr. Rashmi Uchil**  
Member, DTAC

  
**Dr. Aparna P.**  
Member, DTAC

  
**Dr. Sheena**  
Chairman, DTAC

— Thesis defence / viva voce —

To, The Director  
NITK Surathkal

NITK/SHSSM/2023 / 1410  
Date : 24 / 03 / 2023



For