CHAPTER-5

Masculinities and the Construction of the Nation

> Please believe that I am falling apart.
>
> I am not speaking metaphorically; nor is this the opening gambit of some melodramatic, riddling, grubby appeal for pity. I mean quite simply that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug – that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams. In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment, although there are signs of acceleration. I ask you only to accept (as I have accepted) that I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous and necessarily oblivious dust. This is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. (We are a nation of forgetters).
>
> -Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter builds upon the previous chapters by carrying the discussion forward from the private to the public sphere in the current scheme of intersectional discursive-performative inquiry. What began with the individual body and identity politics moved on to encompass bigger entities and social institutions like the family, caste, class, race, etc. While the previous chapters engaged with the study of masculinities in intersection with family, caste, class and race, this chapter will advance our understanding of masculinities from the vantage point of nation and nation building. It will engage with the performances of masculinities in juxtaposition with the hegemonic process of nation-building and try to discover if one is a metaphor for the other.

Literatures from various parts of the globe have always engaged with the imagination, formation and endurance of the nation and the sentiment of nationalism. The upholding of national identity in the larger-than-life image of a nation, the qualities required to achieve as well as sustain that identity, the degradation from that ideal, etc. are issues that have found ample space in fiction as well as non-fiction. For example,

Hitler's autobiographical treatise *Mein Kampf* (1925) contains his vision for the upliftment of the German fatherland (Deutschland) and the means to become worthy citizens of it. Again, Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda's writings stressed the shaping of the ideal man who would become the provider of the family and the servant of the nation. What is evident from these examples is that most nationalist literatures focus on a discursive-performative ideal of the ideal man, thereby upholding a special type of masculinity as the most desirable or most approved one.

In the introduction to Mrinalini Sinha's *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century* (1995), John. M. Mackenzie writes- "But issues of masculinity never operate within a vacuum: these crises were equally infused with feminine stereotypes, with broader issues of both imperial rule and domestic self-image, and also the interleaving of nationalist and traditionalist/patriarchal policies" (vii). Mackenzie's words highlight the imperial strategy of stereotyping the colonised by the colonisers and the complex dynamics of such a process as shown by Sinha's book. This strain of Sinha's thought was carried forward by Indira Chowdhury in her book *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (1998) where she recounts a complex history of socio-cultural frailty as well as resilience in colonial Bengal. Juxtaposing Vivekananda's spiritual masculinity in the wake of an intense political crisis in the early years of the 20th century, Chowdhury mirrors a highly localised context of a fairly universal phenomenon. Sikata Banerjee in *Make Me a Man: Masculinity, Hinduism and Nationalism in India* (2005) writes- "Usually, a nationalism is gendered in that it draws on socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity to shape female and male participation in nation-building as well as the manner in which the nation is embodied in the imagination of self-professed nationalists". In conjunction to it, she examines "the values defining manhood, manliness, masculinity" which are "perceived to be a collection of features necessary for being and becoming an adult male in specific cultural and historical contexts" in the narrative of nationalism in India (Banerjee 6).

In the introduction to *Masculinities and the Nation in the Modern World: Between Hegemony and Marginalization* (2015) from the Global Masculinities series, Pablo Dominguez Anderson and Simon Wendt recalls Thembisa Waetjen and writes-

> To understand hegemonic notions of masculinity and the nation, Waetjen argues, scholars need to explore the tensions and the interrelationships between these dominant ideals and their margins. Studying the history of gender and the nation from the perspective of marginalized masculinities means focusing on the conflicts among competing concepts of masculinity as well as on the differences between them. Men are far from being one ideologically monolithic bloc, and their access to and interest in nation-building power varies considerably according to such factors as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality or religion. The period between the early nineteenth century and World War II is of particular significance for an analysis of these complexities because it saw the simultaneous emergence of new forms of masculinity as well as the emergence of modern nation states. Similarly important, it was during this period that exclusionary ideologies such as scientific racism, imperialism, and eugenics became part and parcel of these gendered nation-building processes. (Anderson and Wendt 2)

The above passage focuses on the interconnected nature of masculinity studies. They argue that for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between masculinities and nation, factors like the mutual interdependence of hegemonic groups and marginalised groups, and the relationship between conflicting masculinities and that of masculinities and femininities need to be examined. They also point to the period between the early nineteenth century and World War II as a crucial era of redefining and reformulating gendered nation-building processes.

In the light of the critical theories, arguments and concepts elucidated above, this chapter will engage with individuals and groups caught in the process of nation-building in a very turbulent period of South Asian history, i.e., from the decade right after the end of the World War II when many erstwhile colonies either gained or were in the process of gaining independence to the present times. The set of texts chosen here traverses a broad spectrum of temporality and spatiality, chronologically starting from *Ice Candy Man* (1991), *Funny Boy* (1994), *Shalimar the Clown* (1995), and ending with *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). Such a diverse selection enables the understanding of the phenomenon in detail, thereby locating patterns of global concern irrespective of the modalities of time as well as space.

5.2 Knowing Fingers and Tentative Toes

Ice-Candy Man (1991), also known as *Cracking India* was Bapsi Sidhwa's third novel originally published in the year 1988. It is semi-autobiographical in nature and makes direct as well as indirect references to Sidhwa's own experiences with the partition of the subcontinent. In a 1990 interview with David Montenegro, Sidhwa recounts:

> Well, the main memory is of hearing mobs chanting slogans from a distance. It was a constant throb in the air and very threatening. Then I saw a lot of fires, it was almost like blood was in the sky, you know. And I saw a few dead bodies on my Warris Road. In fact, that's figured in two of the novels. I was actually walking to my private tutor, and there was this gunnysack lying by the roadside. The gardener, who was with me, just kicked the gunnysack, and a body spilled out, a dead body of a very good-looking man. There was a bloodless but big wound on the side of his waist, almost as if it trimmed the waist. And I felt more of a sadness than horror. It seemed so futile- even at that time when I wasn't really conscious of death- the waste of life. (518)

Sidhwa was nine years old at the time of partition and her account gives much scope to critics and scholars to read the novel as a piece of historical fiction. Consequently, we have seen the proliferation of academic writings over the years reading *Ice-Candy Man* (1991) as a partition narrative. These works have chiefly focussed on the impact of partition violence on individuals and groups, the figure of Lenny's nanny- Ayah- being the centre of most discussions. The enactment of violence on the body of Ayah is read as a metaphor for the violence enacted upon the subcontinent by dividing it into two parts- India and Pakistan. However, in this section, we will focus our attention not on the figure of the Ayah, but on the figures of two of her suitors- the Masseur and the Ice Candy Man. We will trace their transformation during the course of events in the story and analyse how the political turmoil influences their life and overall existence in the urban space of the city of Lahore. Moreover, we will also engage with the portrayals of the historical figures of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, in the context of the partition.

The readers are introduced to Masseur and Ice-Candy Man in the initial pages of the novel. They are a part of the motley group of Ayah's admirers.

The masseur and his antics are lucidly described in the novel. Following is an example of it:

> They are knowing fingers, very clever, and sometimes, late in the evening, when he and Ayah and I are alone, they massage Ayah under her sari. Her lids close. She grows still and languid. A pearly wedge gleams between her lips and she moans, a fragile, piteous sound of pleasure. (Sidhwa 18-19)

Similarly, Lenny describes the antics of the Ice Candy Man as follows:

> I keep an eye on Ice-Candy Man's toes. Sometime, in the course of an engrossing story, they travel so cautiously that both Ayah and I are taken unawares. Ice-candy man is a raconteur. He is also an absorbing gossip. When the story is extra good, and the tentative toes polite, Ayah tolerates them. (Sidhwa 19)

There is a triangular relationship among Masseur, Ayah and Ice Candy Man- Ayah enjoys the company of Masseur, while Ice- Candy Man has a love interest in Ayah. This creates jealousy between Ice Candy Man and the Masseur. However, in tracing the movements of their limbs in the above-quoted passages, we find that they have been discussed in terms of zoomorphism. Zoomorphism is a phenomenon in which animal characteristics are assigned to human beings. Words and phrases like "knowing fingers", "raconteur", "tentative toes", "the dark heat generated by Masseur's fingers", "the lightning-strikes of Ice-candy man's toes", etc have been consistently used in the initial chapters to give the readers an ominous hint of jealousy, hatred and revenge.

The progress of the chapters intensifies the zoomorphic portrayal of competing masculinities of the two suitors of Ayah. It is almost as if Masseur and Ice Candy Man are two prowling beasts hunting the same prey in a dense forest:

> Where Masseur is, Ayah is. And where Ayah is, is Ice-candy Man.
>
> I sense his presence.
>
> While Masseur's voice lures Ayah to the dizzy eminence of one minaret, it compels Ice-candy-man to climb the winding stairs to the other minaret. On the river bank I sense his stealthy presence in the tall clumps of pampas grass. He lurks in the dense shade of mangoes in the Shalimar Gardens and in the fearsome smells skirting the slaughter house… He prowls on the other side of the artificial hill behind the zoo lion's cage, and conceals himself behind the peacocks when

they spread their tail feathers and open their turquoise eyes: he has as many eyes, and they follow us. (Sidhwa 121)

Let us look at some of the specific words used to trace the movement of the two suitors of Ayah. Words like “lures”, “climb”, “stealthy presence”, “lurks”, “fearsome smells”, “prowls”, “conceals”, “eyes”, “follow”, etc confer a fearsome bestiality upon the figures of the Masseur and Ice Candy Man. The lure of the Masseur’s voice and the predatory vision of the Ice Candy Man are unmistakable signs of the dangers that will transform the lives of Ayah and Lenny in particular and the city of Lahore in general. The zoomorphic terms used here become signifiers of the imminent danger awaiting the vulnerable bodies of Ayah and Lahore.

However, as news of violence spreads across the city of Lahore, we find a gradual dwindle in the number of Ayah’s admirers. When Lenny and Ayah stopped visiting the Queen’s Garden and the Wrestler’s Restaurant, the number became even less. Now, instead of being competitors for Ayah’s undivided attention, they became rivals based on their religious affiliation- “The men appraised each other with cautious suspicion as Masseur, hitching up his lungi, hunkers down on the floor.... They look as if each is a whiskered dog circling the other – weighing in and warning his foe” (Sidhwa 151). Parallel to the violence accompanying the partition of the subcontinent, we witness a state of conflict rising among Ayah’s admirers. Startlingly, we see Ice Candy Man blatantly expressing his jealousy of Masseur when Lenny asks him about his wife living in the village:

‘Where’s your wife?’ I ask. I’ve never thought to ask him before.

‘In the village, with her mother.’

‘What if she runs away?’

‘She won’t. They have no tailors in the village. No masseurs either… with their cunning fingers taking liberties!’

Ayah looks startled. So do I. This is the first time he has openly expressed his jealousy of Masseur. (Sidhwa 125)

Such acrimony massively disrupts the personal relationship between Masseur and Ice Candy Man and culminates in the latter’s “exhilaration” at the mutilated dead body

of the former. We also doubt a role that the Ice Candy man possibly played in getting the Masseur killed. It also anticipates Ice-candy-man's role in the abduction of Ayah. Amidst the chaos of partition, she transforms from an attractive woman into a Hindu upon whose body he can exert his control and violence. Ayah's forced abduction by Ice Candy Man and his gang, her being pimped at Hira Mandi and later on, her forced marriage and religious conversion are tactics which he deployed to take revenge upon her Hindu body. Her body, therefore, becomes a site of revenge and power play.

However, when Godmother finds out the whereabouts of Ayah and goes to her house in Lahore's Hira Mandi, she finds a very different person in Ice Candy Man. He adopts a poetic persona in "flowing white muslin". Lenny who has accompanied Godmother is startled at his appearance. She narrates:

> Only now do I realise that one of the lean and languid poets flanking Ayah was Ice-Candy-Man
>
> Ice-candy-man acknowledges our presence through dreamy kohl-rimmed eyes and removing his lamb's –wool Jinnah-cap, touching his forehead in a mute and protracted salaam, squats bowed before Godmother. He has grown his hair and long oily strands curve on his cheeks. He smells of jasmine attar. (Sidhwa 244-245)

Ice Candy Man's flowy clothes, dreamy kohl-rimmed eyes, long oily hair, highlighted cheeks and perfume give him an almost feminine appearance. Now, he is neither the prowling beast, nor the snake-charmer, but a Mughal courtesan in a newly formed Muslim nation-state. The way he spouts poetry out of his thin lips and talks of his Mughal lineage with wonder in his "almond-like eyes", misleadingly evokes wonder as well as pity in the hearts of the listeners. Even Lenny falls prey to his antics. She admits to being hypnotised by him and consequently, starts pitying him. However, it is only when Godmother accosts him that the true motives of Ice Candy Man are revealed.

After Ayah is rescued from the clutches of Ice Candy Man and placed at the Recovered Women's Camp, we find him patrolling the Warris Road and following her whenever she comes out of the camp. The end of the novel portrays him as a pitiable character, a wronged lover, who pines for union with his beloved. He chants Urdu poets like Zauq, Faiz and Ghalib, throws flowers over the wall of the camp and sings songs to

shower her with love. Finally, when Ayah crosses the border to meet her family in India, Ice- candy man also disappears from the scene.

Thus, in the transformation of Ice Candy Man, we discover a metaphor for the nation. The transformation of Ice Candy Man's masculinity- from the heterosexual, zoomorphic figure to a heavily made-up Mughal courtesan chanting Urdu poets- can be juxtaposed with the transformation of the Indian subcontinent both politically as well as socio-culturally. On the one hand, the partition of the Indian sub-continent represented the age-old (very often, armed) conflict among religious communities and on the other, it stood for the continued rivalries between the two nations. History stands witness to the temporary nature of a limited period of post-partition stupor as India and Pakistan have engaged in several wars over the decades. Although Ice Candy Man accepts the religious-cultural identity of the newly formed Pakistan, he seems to be unable to erase his heterosexual, secular identity in his attachment towards the *Hindu* and *Indian* Ayah. His separation from Ayah at the end of the novel dismantles the notion of a peaceful coexistence where a Pakistani Muslim can cohabit with an Indian Hindu. Sidhwa's narrative doesn't provide any easy resolution to the story of Ayah, Ice Candy Man and Masseur. The politically volatile nature of the times that she writes about prevents her from fictionalising an ideal masculine/feminine existence in a peaceful nation-state.

In contrast to the beast-like portrayal of Ice Candy Man and Masseur, the novel incorporates the images of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah. Although they are not characters in the novel, being a work of historical fiction, the novel makes multiple references to their role in Indian subcontinental politics. Lenny describes Gandhi as:

> Turning up my nose and looking down severely at this improbable toss-up between a clown and a demon I am puzzled why he's so famous- ... The pure shaft of humour, compassion, tolerance and understanding he directs at me fuses me to everything that is feminine, funny, gentle, loving. He is a man who loves women. And lame children. And the untouchable sweeper- so he will love the untouchable sweeper's constipated girl-child best. (Sidhwa 87)

As shown by the above passage, Lenny's understanding of the image of Gandhi is a curious mix of "a clown and a demon" with an emaciated half-naked body that managed to draw thousands of followers for himself. She describes her first vision of Gandhi as- "He is knitting. Sitting cross-legged on the marble floor of a palatial veranda,

he is surrounded by women… He wears only the loin-cloth and his black and thin torso is naked" (Sidhwa 85-86). Engaging himself in "knitting" and extensive dieting, he counselled women (including Lenny's mother) to flush their system with enemas regularly. He even administered them himself saying that there was no shame in doing so as he was like their mother. Lenny understands that the feminine persona of Gandhi leads him closer to other women and their children. Moreover, the image of his emaciated half-naked body takes him closer to the disadvantaged groups of society.

Unlike Gandhi, Sidhwa's novel projects Nehru as a Casanova with "red carnations in the buttonholes of his ivory jackets" and glowing pink cheeks who "bandies words with Lady Mountbatten". "Suave, Cambridge-polished, he carries about him an aura of power and a presence that flatters anyone he compliments tenfold. He doles out promises, smiles, kisses-on-cheeks. He is in the prime of his Brahmin manhood" (Sidhwa 159). His image of refinement is in complete contrast to the emaciated figure of Gandhi and therefore places him among the elite class of society.

Deviating from the extremes of the portrayal of Gandhi and Nehru, the image of Jinnah is given a very subtle touch by Sidhwa:

> Jinnah is incapable of compliments. Austere, driven, pukka-sahib accented, deathly ill: incapable of cheek-kissing. Instead of carnations he wears a karakuli cap, sombre with tight, grey lamb's-wool curls: and instead of pale jackets, black achkan coats. He is past the prime of his elegant manhood. Sallow, whip-thin, sharp tongued, uncompromising. His training at the Old Bailey and practice in English courtrooms has given him faith in constitutional means, and he puts his misplaced hopes and tall standards of upright justice. The fading Empire sacrifices his cause to their shifting allegiances. (Sidhwa 160)

In sharp contrast to the villainous portrayal of Jinnah in numerous books and films (the most famous being Nehru's autobiography) on Gandhi and the partition of the subcontinent, Sidhwa, in her novel, praises him as the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity". She quotes Sarojini Naidu where she praises Jinnah as "pre-eminently rational and practical, discreet and dispassionate in his estimate and acceptance of life, the obvious sanity and serenity of his worldly wisdom effectually disguise a shy and splendid idealism which is of the very essence of the man" (Sidhwa 161). In *Ice Candy Man*, Sidhwa contrasts the personality of Jinnah with that of Gandhi and Nehru and they

become representatives of the two newly-formed nations. The stark contrast between Gandhi's emaciated figure and Nehru's lavish refinement highlights the growing divide between the rich and the poor classes in India. Sidhwa hints at the bias and betrayal faced by Jinnah when the British Raj granted Gurdaspur and Pathankot to Nehru. According to her narrative, Jinnah's "inability to compliment" (unlike Nehru) led to "the fading Empire sacrifice his cause to their shifting allegiances" (Sidhwa 160). While Jinnah's ideals formed the foundation for the Islamic nation-state Pakistan, Gandhi and Nehru led the creation of a secular India. In this way, Sidhwa's novel juxtaposes the personalities of the masculine leaders vis-à-vis the nature of the two nation-states created by bifurcating the subcontinent.

To conclude this section, Sidhwa's novel traces the transformation of the city of Lahore following the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. It reveals how an otherwise amicable existence turns volatile and violent in the subcontinent's political chaos. The growing jealousy between Masseur and Ice Candy Man disrupts their personal relationship and culminates in the latter's "exhilaration" at the sight of the mutilated dead body of the former. It also anticipates Ice-candy-man's role in the abduction of Ayah. Ayah's forced abduction, her being pimped at Hira Mandi and later on, her forced marriage and religious conversion are ways in which Ice Candy Man takes revenge upon her Hindu body. Her body, therefore, becomes a site of revenge and power play for him. But, the process through which he takes revenge upon her, also transforms him strikingly. He is now no longer the beast prowling around Ayah, but a courtesan with kohl-rimmed eyes and poetic taste. The transformation of Ice Candy Man's masculinity- from the heterosexual, zoomorphic figure to a heavily made-up Mughal courtesan- can be juxtaposed with the socio-political and cultural transformation of the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, the novel incorporates the contrasting images of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah in the process of creating two new nation-states. While Jinnah's ideals formed the foundation for the Islamic nation-state Pakistan, Gandhi and Nehru led the creation of a secular India. However, none of these identities should be considered rigid representations of a national masculine (or feminine) identity. In the unfinished closure of Ayah and Ice Candy Man's love story and the fact that the two nations have still not made peace with each other's existence even after seventy-five years, we are reminded of the unstable nature and fluidity of all nationalist ideals, including masculinity.

5.3 That Boy Worries Me!

In a previous chapter of this thesis, we read Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994) as a bildungsroman which charted the development of Arjie's masculinity amidst familial as well as societal pressures. We became aware of the processes which moulded him into adolescence. However, in this section, we will analyse masculinities caught under the hegemonic forces of nation-building in Sri Lanka, especially during the tumultuous years of the Tamil-Sinhala riots, as depicted in Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy* (1994).

The Tamil-Sinhala riots were the result of a long-drawn rivalry between the Tamils and the Sinhalese over the selection of the official language of Sri Lanka and the inequalities of socio-political and economic opportunities between the two major ethnic groups. However, the immediate cause of the premeditated pogrom was the deadly ambush of thirteen Sri Lankan army soldiers by the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) on 23rd July 1983. Although initially facilitated by members of the ruling political party of Sri Lanka, the pogrom soon escalated into spontaneous mass violence with significant public participation and resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and properties of Tamils. Many Tamils were also forced to migrate to countries like Canada, USA and Europe. After almost 26 years, the civil war came to an end when the Sri Lanka Armed Forces defeated the LTTE in 2009. The events of the Black July pogrom form the climax of Selvadurai's novel.

From the initial pages of the novel, we get a hint of the Chelvaratnam family's cold suspicion and hatred towards the Sinhalese. When Arjie's family gets to know about Radha Aunty's affair with Anil Jayasinghe, all the elders object to her relationship with him. Ammachi becomes furious and comments, "Only a Sinhalese would be impertinent enough to offer an unmarried girl a lift" (Selvadurai 58). Upon Radha Aunty's question, Janaki explains the reason for Ammachi's hatred towards the Sinhalese. According to her, Ammachi's father was killed during the initial days of the violent civil riots between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. The dead body which was brought home looked "as if someone had taken the lid of a tin can and cut pieces out of him" (Selvadurai 59).

Janaki's words explain the reason for Ammachi's excessive admiration and support for the Tamil Tigers. She "declared that if they (the Tamils) did get a separate state, which they would call Eelam, she would be the first to go and live in it"

(Selvadurai 61). Every time the incident was recounted, Ammachi would long for a separate Tamil Eelam where Tamils like the Chelvaratnams would live with dignity and fearlessness.

However, to thwart Radha Aunty's any further liaison with Anil Jayasinghe, she is at first sent to her relatives' place at Jaffna and then brought back to Colombo to quickly marry her off to a Tamil man named Rajan Nagendra. Her marriage with a Tamil upholds the ego of Ammachi and restores the dignity of the Chelvaratnam family but, in the process sacrifices her unconditional inter-ethnic love in the name of extreme linguistic nationalism.

During Radha Aunty's return from Jaffna to Colombo, her train is attacked by Sinhalese rioters at the Anuradhapura station. She did not know how to speak Sinhala and preferred to speak only in Tamil and English. She was also distant from the conventional Tamil identity with her unconventional "karapi" features. This made her occupy a very problematic space in the broad spectrum of a Sri Lankan national identity, more so, when the country was rife with violent Tamil-Sinhala riots. Although she was attacked and wounded, she gets saved largely due to the Sinhalese-speaking skills of Mr Rasiah. Mr Rasiah was a Tamil who could pass off as a Sinhalese because of his excellent fluency in the Sinhalese language. While the act of his playing the card of Sinhalese linguistic nationalism to save Radha Aunty is valorised in the novel, her affair with an actual Sinhalese, Anil Jayasinghe, is broken off to coerce her into an engagement with a Tamil man.

To secure a safe place in Sri Lankan society, Arjie's father decides to put him in a Sinhala class at the Victoria Academy. He believes Arjie would be able to get a respectable place among the Sinhalese liberals. But, on the first day itself, Arjie is accosted by the leader of the Sinhala group, Salgado, and denied entry into the class:

> "How come you're in a Sinhala class?" Salgado asked me.
>
> "My parents put me in a Sinhala class from grade one because they wanted me to learn Sinhalese", I said.
>
> …
>
> "We don't want you here", Salgado said, and he stood in front of the doorway. "Go to the Tamil class". (Selvadurai 215)

Just then, the Sinhalese boy Soyza comes to the rescue of Arjie by defending his cause to learn Sinhalese. In the two separate instances concerning Mr Rasiah and Soyza, the novel shows us avenues where language facilitates a temporary crossing over of national identity. Although Mr Rasiah was a Tamil and Radha Aunty had unconventional physical features, his Sinhalese speaking skills saved him as well as Radha Aunty. Similarly, Soyza defended Arjie's desire (or rather, need!) to learn Sinhalese, thereby saving him from the big bad bully of the class. However, we need to note that the nature of these avenues was purely temporary and both Radha Aunty and Arjie had to face victimhood later in the story because of their Tamil identity.

It is interesting to note that, a boy like Soyza, who was himself considered to be a sham among the Sinhalese, associates himself with Arjie. Soyza, an "ills and burden" student of Victoria Academy dis-identifies himself with Sinhalese masculinity and comes closer to the non-normative Arjie. Their failures in performing their gendered ethnicities bring them closer to each other. Despite their displacements in their respective families, they seek comfort in each other's company. But, towards the end of the novel, we realise Arjie's imminent separation from Soyza as he and his family become a victim of the Sinhala atrocities. There is no mellow farewell scene that takes place between Arjie and Soyza before Arjie relocates to Canada with his family. Rather, when he visits his charred house, the thought of Soyza's Sinhala identity and his relationship with him stings him. This is almost similar to Radha Aunty being disgraced by Anil's father when she visits his home to seek apologies for the insult hurled at him by her family members for his Sinhala identity.

Another person who is crushed under the forces of the riots is Daryl Uncle. He is a descendant of the Burghers and was an object of Amma's love interest during their younger years. In the novel, he is portrayed as a journalist working in Australia who has now returned to Sri Lanka to investigate the nature of the riots. He develops an extra-marital affair with Amma when she takes Arjie to convalesce at the hill-side farmhouse. This affair, however, is given an abrupt end in the novel when at first, he goes missing and then, finally, gets killed in Jaffna. Even after Amma's desperate attempts, the police do nothing to investigate the circumstances revolving around his death. The police officer even tried to blackmail her when she tried to dig deep into the matter. Later, she realised that Daryl's death was a government-orchestrated killing which was carried out as he was a potential threat to the Sri Lankan Government. His reporting would reveal

the actual motives of the Sinhalese favouring government and hence, they got him killed in Jaffna. The crushing of Daryl's body can be read as a mechanism of disciplining a subversive masculine body. First of all, Daryl was a burgher who did not rightfully belong to the Sri Lankan identity and hence, was inessential to the formation of the nation. Secondly, he was a journalist who was about to report the government's biases and wrongdoings to the global audience. Finally, he was an outsider who was about to disrupt the conventional Tamil patriarchal family of the Chelvaratnams. Thus, the death of Daryl Uncle can be read as the nation's attempt at violently crushing his deviant masculinity.

Just like Daryl Uncle, the story of Jegan Parameswaran is an instance where hegemonic nation-building crushes all forms of deviant masculinities. Jegan is the son of Mr Chelvaratnam's deceased friend, Buddy Parameswaran, who comes to him in search of a job opportunity. Out of goodwill, Chelvaratnam offers him the job of a supervisor in his newly started luxury hotel. The fact that he was a Tamil who was made the in-charge of a group of Sinhala employees earned him considerable jealousy as well as antagonism. Moreover, the novel hints that he had a previous affiliation with the Tamil Tigers, although he admits himself to be previously a part of the Gandhian Movement. His affiliation with the tigers and his important place among the employees earned him the wrath of the Sinhalese *goondas*. They vandalised his room on the hotel premises and wrote the words "Death to all Tamil pariahs" in Sinhalese across the window. Consequently, Mr Chelvaratnam was forced to fire Jegan from his job although he had a cordial relationship with Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty who were Sinhalese partners in Mr. Chelvaratnam's business.

Apart from his Tamil identity and possible affiliation with the LTTE, what made Jegan deviant was his psycho-social understanding of masculinities. After Radha Aunty and Soyza, he was the only person who was closer to Arjie. The following conversation between Mr Chelvaratnam and Jegan regarding Arjie would highlight this aspect:

"I'm glad you take an interest in him", he said. "That boy worries me."

I leaned forward, wondering what it was that worried him.

"Why, Uncle?" Jegan asked.

My father was silent for a moment. “From the time he was small he has shown certain tendencies.”

“What do you mean, tendencies?” Jegan asked.

“You know… he used to play with dolls, always reading.”

…

“Maybe you’ll help him outgrow this phase.”

“I don’t think there’s anything wrong with him”, Jegan said. (Selvadurai 166)

Although we are not given a clear idea of Jegan’s sexuality or sexual preference, his reply to Mr Chelvaratnam shows that he empathises with Arjie. He understands Arjie like none in his family and probably aligns with his masculinity. Unlike Mr. Chelvaratnam and other uncles and aunts, Jegan doesn’t think that Arjie’s “tendencies” are wrong and harmful for his growth into adulthood. Hence, Arjie feels very safe and secure with him and consequently develops a strong bond with him. However, even with his cordial relationship with Arjie and his family, Jegan is not able to escape persecution because of his racial identity. He is considered to be a discordant and hence, dangerous element in the imagination and building of the ideal heterosexual Sinhala nation. His presence would endanger the lives of all those who are close to him- be it the Chelvaratnam family or the business enterprise of Mr Chelvaratnam and Sena Uncle. Hence, like Anil Jayasinghe, he is systematically erased from the scene by getting him dismissed from Mr. Chelvaratnam’s business enterprise.

Thus, the above section explores masculinities caught under the hegemonic forces of nation-building in Sri Lanka, especially during the tumultuous years of the Tamil-Sinhala riots, as depicted in Selvadurai’s novel *Funny Boy*. It first highlights how and why Radha Aunty has to sacrifice her unconditional inter-ethnic love for Anil Jayasinghe in the name of linguistic chauvinism. Then, it contrasts the efforts of Mr Rasiah and Anil when it came to protecting Radha Aunty. While Mr Rasiah can play the card of Sinhalese linguistic nationalism to save Radha Aunty, Anil Jayasinghe’s actual Sinhalese identity proves detrimental to his relationship with her. In Mr Rasiah’s timely action to save Radha Aunty and Soyza’s defence of Arjie, the above discussion portrays how language facilitates a temporary crossing over of national identity. The preceding analysis also highlights the growing affinity between Arjie and Soyza because of their

deviant sexualities. But, this affinity reaches an abrupt end when Arjie and his family become victims of the Sinhala atrocities and consequently migrates to Canada. Moreover, the crushing of Daryl Uncle's body and Jegan's dismissal from the job can be read as systematically orchestrated mechanisms of disciplining deviant masculine bodies by the nation and its institutions. They are considered discordant and hence, dangerous elements in the process of nation-building. Their presence will endanger the lives of all those who are close to them- be it the Chelvaratnam family or the business enterprise of Mr. Chelvaratnam and Sena Uncle. Hence, they are systematically erased from the story by either breaking up a relationship or getting them dismissed or even murdered, never to be found again.

5.4 A Kashmiri Coward

Salman Rushdie's 2005 novel *Shalimar the Clown* is a dark tale of irrevocable fissures and personal vengeance. Within the broader plot of the fissure of Kashmir and the loss of "Kashmiriyat" due to communal tension and violence, the novel tells the story of Shalimar the Clown who joins various terrorist organisations and takes revenge upon his cuckolding wife, Boonyi and her lover, Max Ophuls by killing them. The novel ends on a cliffhanger when Shalimar and his daughter Kashmira confront to kill each other in a lift of her apartment.

As with the other novels of Salman Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) has been the subject of serious critical discussions, especially for its treatment of subject matter and narration. The historical backdrop of this novel is the partition of India and the rise of violence from the deployment of Indian troops in the Kashmir valley in October 1947 to Pakistan's cooperation with the Bush administration during the 2001 war in Afghanistan. Unlike other partition novels, the events of the novel stretch a longer period in time and also encompasses a wider area of the globe including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the USA, Europe, etc. However, the focal point of the novel is the valley of Kashmir where most events take place or have their roots.

Just like Khushwant Singh's Mano Majra in *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Rushdie's Pachigam is a sliver of paradise in *Shalimar the Clown* (2005). It is an Eden caught between the forces of globalisation on one hand, and practices of hegemonic nation-building on the other. The beginning of the novel portrays it as an ideal place where the Hindu and Muslim families led by the village *sarpanch* Abdullah Sher Noman and the

great *pandit* Pyarelal Kaul lived together in harmony exemplifying unity in diversity. They took pride in *Kashmiriyat* or the essence of Kashmir. According to Abdullah Noman, *Kashmiriyat* or "Kashmiriness" was "the belief that at the heart of Kashmiri culture, there was a common bond that transcended all other differences" (Rushdie 110).

Pachigam was a village of the *bhand pather* performers and the *wazwan* chefs. The *bhand pather* performers specialised in the performance of grand stories from the subcontinent's history and Hindu mythology, while the chefs of *wazwan* specialised in preparing the Banquet of Thirty-Six Courses Minimum. The following words of Pandit Pyarelal Kaul, who headed the group of performers, reflect the religious harmony of Pachigam:

> "Just consider for a moment!" cried Pyarelal. "Today our Muslim village, in the service of our Hindu maharaja, will cook and act in a Mughal- That is to say Muslim- garden, to celebrate the anniversary of the day on which Ram marched against Ravan to rescue Sita. What is more, two plays are to be performed: our traditional Ram Leela, and also Budshah, the tale of a Muslim sultan. Who tonight are the Hindus? Who are the Muslims? Here in Kashmir, our stories sit happily side by side on the same double bill, we eat from the same dishes, we laugh at the same jokes. We will joyfully celebrate the reign of the good king Zain-ul-abidin, and as for our Muslim brothers and sisters, no problem! They all like to see Sita rescued from the demon-king, and besides, there will be fireworks". (Rushdie 71)

Religious syncretism blurs the differences between the Hindus and Muslims of Pachigam. Just like the inhabitants of Khushwant Singh's Mano Majra, the inhabitants of Rushdie's Pachigam live and thrive under the identity of *Kashmiriyat*, performing plays from the Hindu mythology and Mughal history as well as organising grand feasts at Hindu and Muslim Festivals.

However, Rushdie's novel portrays the changes that the fictional village of Pachigam undergoes when Kashmir emerges as a contentious space in the politics of the subcontinent. As Kashmir gets caught in the tug of war between India and Pakistan, equations between the religious communities change. Consequent to the attack by the *kabailis* (insurgent tribals) from Pakistan, the Dogra king asks for help from the Indian government. As a result, the Indian government annexes the territory of Kashmir and

starts controlling it. When the Iron Mullah tried to free Kashmir from the clutches of the Indian government, the people started hearing new words like *kabailis*, *kafirs*, Pakistan, etc. He tried injecting fear into the consciousness of the villagers and, as a result, a deep communal rift occurred in the otherwise peaceful village of Pachigam. The following instance when the television entertainment at Firdaus Noman's home becomes a site of communal abuse reflects the rift:

> The Muslim majority eyed their Hindu pandit opponents with a sudden distrust that crept uncomfortably close to open hostility. Yet a few minutes earlier they had been smoking and gossiping together outside the tent. It was suddenly oppressive to be there in that ugly crowd. Wordless, as if some sort of vote had been taken, every member of the pandit community rose up and left the tent. Firdaus remembered Nazarebaddoor's last prophecy- "what's coming is so terrible that no prophet will have the words to foretell it"- and her appetite for further TV entertainment disappeared. (Rushdie 247)

With the growing enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims, Firdaus realises that Nazarebaddoor's prophecy has come true in the village of Pachigam. When the Indian government declared Kashmir as a disturbed area where the Armed Forces Special Power Act started operating, many innocent civilians were tortured and killed under the suspicion of terrorists. The violence inflicted upon Kashmiri pandits and numerous atrocities on women carried out by the Indian army as well as terrorist groups, robbed Kashmir of its *Kashmiriyat* so much that it could not be recreated even in fiction. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator fails thrice in describing the village of Pachigam in the Eden of Kashmir:

> The village of Pachigam still exists on the official maps of Kashmir, due south of Srinagar and west of Shirmal near the Anantnag road. In such public records as are still available for inspection its population is given as three hundred and fifty, and in a few guides for the benefit of visitors, there are passing references to the *bhand pather*, a dying folk art, and to the dwindling number of dedicated troupes that seek to preserve it. This official existence, this paper self is its only memorial…
>
> So, to repeat: there was no Pachigam anymore. Pachigam was destroyed. Imagine it for yourself.

> Second attempt: The village of Pachigam still existed on maps of Kashmir, but the day it ceased to exist anywhere else, except in memory.
>
> Third and final attempt: The beautiful village of Pachigam still exists. (Rushdie 308-309)

This is a very touching passage in Rushdie's novel which asserts that the glory of a once beautiful place that has been violated by political and terrorist forces cannot be recreated even in fiction. The place got transformed so much that no amount of going back would recreate the magic- the magic of *Kashmiriyat*- again. Consequently, the past could be rewritten only by recollecting the memories of the idyllic village of Pachigam.

In a mix of history and fiction, the novelist writes about the fate of Kashmir. Imagining Kashmir as a body, we find it struggling to resist multiple forces of oppression. First of all, Kashmir is resisting the inroads made by the Indian army by establishing their camp called "Elasticnagar" just a few kilometres from Pachigam.

> Elasticnagar was integral to the Indian effort and the Indian effort was to preserve the integrity of the nation… Kashmir was an integral part of India. An integer was a whole and India was an integer and fractions were illegal. Fractions caused fractures in the integer and were thus not integral. Not to accept this was to lack integrity and implicitly or explicitly to question the unquestionable integrity of those who did accept it.… The legally compulsory and enforceable popularity of Elasticnagar was thus a matter of integrity, pure and simple, even if the truth was that Elasticnagar was unpopular. When the truth and integrity conflicted it was integrity that had to be given precedence. Not even the truth could be permitted to dishonour the nation. Therefore, Elasticnagar was popular even though it was not popular. (Rushdie 96)

The quoted paragraph explains how the larger body of the Indian nation dominated the body of Kashmir by deploying troops headed by the indomitable Colonel Kacchwaha. The choice of words used by the novelist like "integrity", "integer", "fractions", and "subversive" reflect the nation's rhetoric in "taming" "truant bodies" like that of Kashmir. In naming the area of the army camp "Elasticnagar", the inhabitants of Pachigam highlighted its "well-established tendency to stretch". This is, indeed, a subtle way of talking about the aggressive geopolitics of the newly-formed nation-state India. In the *bhand pather* performances of the actors of Pachigam, such aggressive

geopolitics was portrayed through the performance of the Anarkali play. In the play conceptualised by Shalimar, "the American seizure of Anarkali-as-Vietnam would, he argued, immediately be understood by their audience as a metaphor for the Indian army's stifling presence in Kashmir, which they were forbidden to depict" (Rushdie 231).

The second force that Kashmir is resisting arises from within itself. Contrary to the domination efforts of the Indian army, Kashmir is shown fighting various forces agitating for the right to self-determination. Here, Rushdie makes a point:

> If Kashmir, why not also Assam for the Assamese, Nagaland for the Nagas? And why stop there? Why shouldn't towns or villages declare independence, or city streets, or even individual houses? Why not demand freedom for one's bedroom, or call one's toilet a republic? Why not stand still and draw a circle round your feet and name that Selfistan? (Rushdie 102)

It is interesting to note that, along with Kashmir, Rushdie includes the names of Assam and Nagaland which, at different points of time, have been involved/ involving in multiple socio-cultural and linguistic identity movements. On a superficial level, there seems to be an attempt at trivialising or exposing to ridicule the movements of self-determination by comparing it with a demand for freedom for a bedroom republic or a toilet republic. But, on a deeper thought, we understand that it is his strategy of exposing the problems of such isolation in the age of globalisation. He seems to suggest that the fictional Pachigam (or even Kashmir, Assam or Nagaland) cannot exist independently without interacting with the rest of the world. Hence, a "Selfistan" existence would be detrimental to its own interests. In other words, Rushdie's "Selfistan" can be read as a term that highlights the absurdity as well as dangers of an exclusive nationalism in the age of globalisation.

In tracing the monstrous transformation of Kashmir, the readers are also drawn towards the names of some of the female characters of the novel, most notably Boonyi/Bhoomi and India Ophuls/ Kashmira. Boonyi was named "Bhoomi" at birth by her parents Pyarelal Kaul and Pamposh Kaul. However, she later chooses the name "Boonyi" for herself. Bhoomi means "earth", while Boonyi refers to the "Kashmiri Chinar tree". According to the critic Nalini Iyer (2014), this preference of Boonyi over Bhoomi can be read as the earth or Kashmir struggling to grow out of the local to a global presence (130). However, her ambition of growing out is initially cut short by

communal conflict and the depleting ideals of *Kashmiriyat* and later on devastated by the masculine domination of Max Ophuls. Again, India Ophuls is the illegitimate daughter of Max Ophuls through Boonyi Kaul. After coming to terms with her real identity, India Ophuls opts for the name Kashmira. According to Patricia Fernandez Kelly (2009), India is a hybrid child conceived by Western power and a gorgeous, but wasted land (473). Kelly here equates the violated body of Boonyi Kaul with the wasteland of Kashmir. But, no matter how much "India Ophuls" tries, she can never become the "Kashmira" embodying *Kashmiriyat* as Kashmir has already become a wasteland devoid of even the slightest traces of *Kashmiriyat*.

Rushdie artfully portrays the transformation of Kashmir by documenting the rise of the Talibans while narrating the story of Shalimar the Clown. The Taliban was initially formed in 1994 as an Islamist fundamentalist group imparting religious education (*Taleem*) to its disciples (*Talib*) in Afghanistan. But, later on, it captured political power and seized control of the majority of Afghanistan, garnering support from other Islamic countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Before long, the Taliban entered Kashmir because of its geo-political importance in the matters of both India and Pakistan. Once the Taliban seized parts of Kashmir, it subjected the population to atrocities like rape and murder, in the name of religion. Similarly, in Shalimar's transformation from a tightrope performer to a dreaded assassin, we witness a massive ideological shift in him. This transformation, according to Molly E. Fergusson (2016), is essentially gendered as he is reacting to his own emasculation favoured by his passive letter-writing to Boonyi (717). The next section will critically analyse Shalimar the Clown's transformation in light of Fergusson's arguments.

From an expert entertainer of the *bhand pather*, who could mesmerise audiences with his tightrope-walking and acrobatic skills, Shalimar the Clown transforms into a hard-core assassin who tries to kill everyone related to his wife's cuckoldry. The study of his transformation is essentially a study of his masculinity. Fergusson (2016) uses the term "pillowman assassin" in her study on the works of Martin McDonagh and Salman Rushdie to characterise the monstrous transformation of Shalimar the clown. She writes:

> Pillowmen are emblems for emasculated men who become violent in the name of honour or shame. A pillow, meant to aid in peaceful sleep, is an illogical murder weapon; both authors use it to point out the inverted logic that justifies

> hypermasculinity, and how that logic drives violence…. The Pillowman, as I conceive it, is used… as a trope to mock the construct of hyper-masculinity and reveal its dangerous underlying ideology. The man who kills in response to a masculinity challenge is… insecure and internally fragile – a "soft" man needing to shore up his masculinity. (713-714)

Fergusson's emphasis is here on the insecure, "soft" man who needs to prove his masculinity by often, dangerous means. Shalimar becomes an interesting case here. When Boonyi started living in Delhi with Max Ophuls, people started talking badly about her in Pachigam. But, even then, Shalimar continued sending trusting letters to her "haunted by the phantom of their murdered love" (Rushdie 195). He wrote: "*I know you are following your dream but that dream will always bring you back to me. If the Amrikan is of assistance well and good. People always talk lies but I know your heart is true. I sit with folded hands and await your loving return*" (Rushdie 195). Boonyi felt that these letters humiliated both the sender and the receiver. She, therefore, started berating her husband, Shalimar the Clown in her thoughts.

> What kind of husband was he anyway, this clown? Was he storming the capital in his wrath like a Muslim conqueror of old, a Tuglaq or Khilji at least if not a Mughal, or, like Lord Ram, was he at least sending the monkey-God Hanuman to find her before he launched his lethal attack on her abductor, the American Ravan? No, he was mooning over her picture and weeping into the waters of the stupid Muskadoon like an impotent goof, accepting his fate like a true Kashmiri coward, content to be trampled over by anyone who felt like doing a bit of trampling, a wrong-headed duffer who quarrelled with his brother Anees who at least had the guts to take matters into his own hands and blow up a few useless things. He was behaving like the performing dog he was, a creature who imitated life to make people laugh but who had not the slightest understanding of how a man should live. (Rushdie 196)

Boonyi's thoughts emasculate Shalimar for his passivity and degrade him of his heroic Muslim identity. She questions his passivity in rescuing her unlike his Muslim ancestors Tughlaq and Khilji or the Hindu god Rama. According to her, he is a coward who does not dare to traverse perilous waters, confront dangers and rescue her from the clutches of the American demon Max Ophuls. She uses harsh words like "impotent goof", "Kashmiri coward", "wrong-headed duffer", etc. Internalising the constructs of

hyper-masculinity, she criticises him for not taking matters "into his own hands" and blowing "up a few useless things". In the process, she associates activities like mooning and weeping with femininity, thereby reaffirming the patriarchal hegemony. By comparing Shalimar with a performing dog, Boonyi puts the final nail in the coffin.

It is in such a situation that Shalimar becomes a terrorist and plans on taking revenge on her cuckoldry. He takes an oath to find her and her lover, Max Ophuls and kill both of them. Although he doesn't imbibe the ideology of the Taliban, he joins the terrorist organisation to prepare for the fulfilment of his oath. That is, "he was killing everyone he could find to kill so that he could tolerate the time that had to pass until he could kill her" (Rushdie 297). In other words, Shalimar the Clown is a perfect example of a "pillowman assassin" who becomes violent in the name of honour as well as shame. His vengeance is actually his fight against insecurity and internal fragility which is subtly reflected in his pining and trusting letters to Boonyi. His success at taking revenge can be read as the fulfilment of his personal ideology.

A mix of puritan ideology and strict Hindu fundamentalism, Colonel Kacchwaha is another "pillowman" that we encounter in the novel. He was the in-charge of the camp at Elasticnagar and is described in the novel as:

> He was not ugly. His voice barked like a British bulldog but his heart was Hindustani. He was unmarried at 31 but nothing should be deduced from that. Many men were not prepared to wait but he was resolved to do so. The men under his command cracked and went to brothels. They were of lower calibre than he. He contained his seed, which was sacred. This required self-disciplining, thus remaining within the bounds of the self and never spilling across one's frontiers. (Rushdie 99)

Although he was sent by the Indian government to protect the inhabitants of Pachigam (and Kashmir), he transforms into a pillowman when Boonyi insults him for his inability to control his sexual desire when he saw her dancing with her friends. "He began to lay plans to descend on Pachigam in force. Pachigam would suffer for Boonyi Kaul's insulting behaviour, for metaphorically slapping her better's face" (Rushdie 101). Therefore, his violence in treating the people of Pachigam stems from his shame in front of Boonyi. Moreover, his inability to "control his sacred seed" at an opportune moment caused a sense of shame in his mind. His hard-handed control of the terrorist forces of

Kashmir can be read as his attempt at securing a sense of pride which he had already lost before. Thus, Colonel Kacchwaha's violence was an attempt at restoring a sense of pride, while Shalimar took revenge to regain a sense of honour in psychological terms.

The preceding discussion on Elasticnagar and Colonel Kacchwaha's masculinity raises an important notion of the imagination of the nation in Rushdie's work. If we juxtapose the image of Elasticnagar with that of Colonel Kacchwaha, we find that the ideal nation which strikingly doesn't have a rigid frontier is built upon the foundation of a celibate manhood in Rushdie's novel. While Elasticnagar had the tendency to extend endlessly on all sides, the ideal man had to "contain his seed" so that it remained "within the bounds of the self and never spill(ed) across one's frontiers" (Rushdie 99). This is against the national imagination (in the lines of Swami Vivekananda's thought) of a "provider"- a "family man" in the private realm and a worthy citizen in the public sphere who undertook the sacred duty of procreation to carry forward the legacy of the nation. Therefore, Rushdie's imagination of the ever-expanding Elasticnagar in contrast to the celibate masculinity of Colonel Kacchwaha forges an alternative model of national imagination and problematises the idea of borders and boundaries that modern-day nation-states as geo-bodies are so pre-occupied with.

Rushdie's novel, thus, portrays an Eden caught between the forces of globalisation on one hand, and practices of hegemonic nation-building on the other. Initially, we find religious syncretism blurring the differences between the Hindus and Muslims of Pachigam. But, as Kashmir gets caught in the tug of war between India and Pakistan, equations between the religious communities change giving rise to hatred and animosity. On imagining Kashmir as a great body, we find it struggling to resist multiple forces of oppression. Firstly, it is resisting the inroads made by the Indian army by establishing its camp called "Elasticnagar" just a few kilometres from Pachigam. Secondly, it is resisting strong, internal forces of the right to self-determination. In such a scenario, the term "Selfistan" highlights the absurdity as well as dangers of exclusive nationalism in the age of globalisation. Rushdie juxtaposes the transformation of Kashmir with the transformation of the novel's protagonist, Shalimar the Clown. In Shalimar's transformation from a tightrope performer to a dreaded assassin, we witness a massive ideological shift. This transformation is essentially gendered as he is reacting to his own emasculation ensured by his passive letter-writing to Boonyi. Moreover, following Fergusson (2016), we can state that Shalimar the clown becomes a perfect

example of a pillowman assassin who becomes violent in the name of honour as well as shame. His vengeance is actually his fight against insecurity and internal fragility which is subtly reflected in his pining and trusting letters to Boonyi. His success at taking revenge can be read as the fulfilment of his personal ideology. Colonel Kacchwaha is another pillowman that we encounter in the novel. While Colonel Kacchwaha's violence was his attempt at restoring a sense of pride, Shalimar took revenge to regain a sense of honour in psychological terms. While Shalimar reacted to his own emasculation, Colonel Kacchwaha set out to build the ever-expanding Elasticnagar, keeping his seed intact. Rushdie's imagination of the ever-expanding Elasticnagar in contrast to the celibate masculinity of Colonel Kacchwaha forges an alternative model of national imagination and problematises the idea of borders and boundaries for modern-day nation-states. Thus, by depicting diverse strands of masculinities in the imagination of the nation, Rushdie's novel transcends the dangers of ossification and makes way for multiplicities.

5.5 Who is the Hero of this Story?

The preceding three novels give almost linear accounts of the transformation of places (be it fictional or real) as well as characters in the struggle for nation-building. Be it Lahore, Colombo or Pachigam, we witnessed stories of fissures intertwined with intimate narratives of personal ambition, heroism as well as failures. However, in this section, we will look at a different aspect of masculinity and nation-building. We will explore how Arundhati Roy in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) writes an alternative history through the fictitious notebook of Tilo titled *The Reader's Digest Book of English Grammar and Comprehension for Very Young Children*. In addition to it, we will analyse how the changing dynamics of modern-day nation-states like India, Canada and the United States of America force Amrik Singh to constantly alter his performance of masculinity thereby destabilising notions of oppressor/oppressed, perpetrator/victim, etc.

The Reader's Digest Book of English Grammar and Comprehension for Very Young Children was the notebook that Musa sent back to Tilo with his "recoveries". "She must have left it behind on one of her trips to Kashmir. The first few pages were filled with her writing, the rest were blank…It contained stories, press-clippings and some diary entries" (Roy 270-271). Written in the manner of a children's English textbook, it contains many snapshots of violence, bloodshed and religious fanaticism,

most of them ending with a few comprehension questions and more importantly, the question- “Who is the hero of this story?”. “How do you establish a man’s virginity?”, “What is the moral of this story?” and “What is the acceptable amount of blood for good literature?” (Roy 271-283) are some other comprehension questions in Tilo’s notebook that are pertinent to this study.

In all these stories, we find that there is an attempt to question the established notions of nationalism, heroism and masculinity that a nation propagates through children’s textbooks. This is done through the apparently simplistic, yet thought-provoking questions at the end of the small snapshots/stories. This is Roy’s attempt at questioning the kind of history fed to the young minds and her preference for an alternative storytelling through Tilo’s notebook. Tilo’s book confounded the distinctions between heroism and cowardice, patriotism and treachery, virility and emasculation, etc. Unlike the re-organised, innocent and often humorous storytelling (of a violent past) that Anjum did in front of Zainab, Tilo feels no compulsion to organise the national narrative into a decently straightforward story.

According to Nalini Iyer (2018),

> Tilo had grappled with how to tell the story of Kashmir and in the satire of the textbook genre, Roy critiques the educational system for covering up history because educational systems are geared to produce adults who subscribe to the nation’s ideology. Unlike Anjum who had edited her story to make it tolerable to a young listener and to manage her own memories of the trauma, the state produces history books to present only its version of the events (170).

Iyer’s words highlight the importance of Tilo’s “scraps of stories and inexplicable memorabilia that appeared to have no purpose” (Roy 270). In a completely unapologetic manner, Tilo reveals the fissures and fault lines of our nation-state in maintaining itself. Her recordings also reveal the hegemony of the nation-state in dealing with its citizens as well as insurgents and also propagating its ideology without any challenge or obstacles.

Roy’s work also engages with the tragic fate of Major Amrik Singh who was a commissioned officer in the Indian Army posted in various counter-insurgency and peace-keeping operations. Notorious for his violent tactics in dealing with insurgents, he is the person who pursues Musa and humiliates Tilo in the cinema hall turned torture chamber. In his domestic sphere, we learn that he abuses his wife, Loveleen Singh and

children both physically as well as verbally. But, towards the end of the novel, we find him fleeing from one country to another and seeking asylum in the United States after being hunted by Musa and his allies. Even after getting asylum in the USA and starting a new life as a truck driver in California, he ends up killing first, his wife and children and then, himself in a fit of psychological derangement.

What is interesting for this section is the way Amrik Singh's wife narrates the harrowing experiences of living in India and Canada in front of the officer who would grant them asylum in the United States. According to her, while they were living in Srinagar, Major Amrik Singh was framed in the murder of the Kashmiri human rights lawyer, Jalib Qadri. She and her children were subjected to atrocities by the JK Police and were forced to make false statements about her husband. Then they had to leave Kashmir for Jammu and in 2003, they left for Canada. As Canada denied asylum to them, they sought asylum in the United States. Here is an excerpt from Loveleen Kaur's testimony in front of the asylum officer:

> All the time we feel we are watched by the terrorists. With every noise I think I am going to die… Last year, in 2011, when my husband was just verbally disciplining our children, I got so scared I thought they were here to kill us. I ran to the phone to call 911. I hurt myself badly on my head, chest and legs while I was running. I thought I was going to die even though he was only verbally disciplining the children…. Even though my husband was only verbally disciplining our children I called the police and I don't know what I told them. (Roy 201)

Loveleen Kaur's testimony cannot be oversimplified as the testimony of a refugee seeking political asylum. Her words prove that Major Amrik Singh was not only a notorious army officer, but also a violent, abusive husband and father. The fact that the line "when my husband was just verbally disciplining our children" is repeated thrice in this passage, proves otherwise. It implies that he must have physically abused their children and Loveleen Kaur, out of fear, has tried to conceal this fact in front of the asylum officer. Again, it is not possible to get severe injury in all three areas of the head, chest and legs, while running towards the phone. This seems to be a concealment of the actual circumstances under which Amrik Singh's wife got severely injured. Her injury might be the result of Amrik Singh's violence upon her.

The novel depicts Amrik Singh and his wife destabilising notions of oppressor/oppressed, perpetrator/victim, etc in their search for asylum. In contrast to the terror-inciting military identity of Amrik Singh, the readers find him posing as a victim of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 to seek political asylum in Canada and the United States of America. Again, Loveleen Kaur re-enacts her victimhood of domestic violence while narrating her experiences in front of the asylum officer. This implies that notions of heroism and victimhood are subject to constant change. Heroism, power and authority can give way to victimhood and subalternity owing to temporal as well as spatial changes. Amrik Singh's murder of his family and suicide destabilises all such notions of heroism and victimhood. It is because, although he succeeds in securing political asylum by enacting his victimhood, he finally falls prey to his own psyche.

The changing dynamics of modern-day nation-states like India, Canada and the USA as portrayed in the novel force Amrik Singh to constantly alter his performance of masculinity. Throughout the course of the novel, we witness a massive transformation in him. In India, he was the dreaded counter-insurgency army officer well-versed in the terror tactics of the army. He referred to himself as the "Jannat Express" who could facilitate the journey of the *jihadis* to *Jannat*. "One of his legendary lines was: *Dekho mian, mein Bharat Sarkar ka lund hoon, aur mera kaam hain chodna*. Look, brother, I am the Government of India's dick and it's my job to fuck people" (Roy 336). In India, his masculinity was defined by his virility which was supported by his position in the Indian Army and the state's policies towards Kashmir. Here, violence became a necessary and inseparable component of his masculinity which manifested in his professional as well as personal life. In Canada, Amrik Singh and his family were left at the mercy of the government. They were denied asylum despite repeated fervent requests. But, in their plea for asylum in the USA, he posed as a victim of communal violence in India. In his narration of life in India, he became the subaltern who was at the receiving end of violence. He was made a scapegoat by the Indian army and Kashmir police and forced to flee from India along with his family. Thus, in a curious position-swapping of perpetrator and victim, Amrik Singh was left to his fate of mental derangement and suicide later in the USA.

Thus, the above discussion critically analyses gender performances in Roy's *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* from the perspective of the national imaginary. Through Tilo's notebook, Roy's novel presents an alternative history which is free from the

control and manipulation of the government machinery. It shows how the state performs its hegemony through ideological state apparatuses like educational institutions and repressive state apparatus like the army. Amrik Singh becomes a potent medium through which the state carries out its hegemonic violence. But, later on, we find Amrik Singh and his wife performing identities of victimhood and straddling positions of authority and subalternity according to the changing dynamics of modern-day nation-states. We realise that the transformation in Amrik Singh happens in a similar but reverse order to Shalimar the Clown. While the jilted lover- Shalimar- transforms from a psychological victim to a perpetrator of violence, Amrik Singh transforms from a perpetrator of violence to a mentally deranged psychiatric patient. Their curious position-swapping destabilises the notion of a fixed, homogeneous historical narrative and highlights the fluidity of perpetrator and victim positions.

5.6 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter advanced our understanding of masculinities by engaging with performances of masculinities in juxtaposition with the hegemonic process of nation-building. Be it Bapsi Sidhwa's Lahore, Selvadurai's Colombo, Rushdie's Pachigam or Roy's Kashmir, we analysed stories of socio-political fissure, civil unrest and national hegemony, intertwined with intimate narratives of personal ambition, heroism as well as failures. Sidhwa's novel highlighted how the body of Ayah became a site of revenge and power play for Ice-Candy Man. In contrast to the beast-like portrayal of Ice Candy Man and Masseur, the novel incorporated the images of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah as metaphors for the two newly-formed nations, India and Pakistan. The reconstruction of Ice Candy Man's masculinity—from the heterosexual, zoomorphic figure to a heavily made-up Mughal courtesan quoting Urdu poets— represented the transformation of the Indian subcontinent both politically as well as socio-culturally.

Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994) provided instances when the nation-state and its institutions disciplined deviant masculine bodies. While Anil Jayasinghe's actual Sinhalese identity proved detrimental to his relationship with Radha Aunty, the growing affinity between Arjie and Soyza ended abruptly when Arjie and his family became victims of the Sinhala atrocities. Similarly, Daryl Uncle was murdered and Jegan was fired from the job as they became threats to Sinhala nationalism and its institutions.

However, in Mr Rasiah's timely action to save Radha Aunty and Soyza's defence of Arjie, the readers found avenues where language facilitates a temporary crossing over of racial identity.

Rushdie juxtaposed the transformation of Kashmir with the transformation of the novel's protagonist, Shalimar the Clown. As the geo-body of Kashmir resisted internal and external forces of fissure, annexation and self-determination, Shalimar reacted to his own emasculation caused by his passive letter-writing to Boonyi. In the process, he became a perfect example of a "pillowman assassin" who resorted to violence in the name of honour as well as shame. While Colonel Kacchwaha's violence was his attempt at restoring a sense of pride, Shalimar took revenge to regain a sense of honour in psychological terms. Rushdie's imagination of the ever-expanding Elasticnagar in contrast to the celibate masculinity of Colonel Kacchwaha forged an alternative model of national imagination and problematised the idea of borders and boundaries for modern-day nation-states as geo-bodies.

Finally, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) proved the possibility of an alternative history through the fictitious notebook of Tilo. It showed how the state performed its hegemony through ideological state apparatuses like educational institutions and repressive state apparatus like the army. It also demonstrated how the changing dynamics of modern-day nation-states altered the performance of masculinities by destabilising notions of oppressor/oppressed, perpetrator/victim, etc. In Amrik Singh's curious position-swapping from a perpetrator of violence to a mentally deranged psychiatric patient, Roy's novel destabilised the notion of a fixed, homogeneous historical narrative and highlighted the fluidity of perpetrator and victim positions. Thus, this chapter revealed how forces of hegemonic nationalism privileged/punished certain ideals of masculinities in the selected texts.