

INTRODUCTION

This thesis conducts a literary investigation of the discursive-performative representation of masculinities in select works of contemporary South Asian fiction written in and translated into English. By concentrating on the portrayal of the male body and its embodiment, the study focuses on intersectional realities of social stratification and social institutions through a discursive understanding of private as well as public performances of masculinities. Finally, by juxtaposing the performance of masculinities with the hegemonic process of nation-building, this thesis tries to discover if one is a metaphor for the other.

The main objectives of the study are-

- a) To study the representation of masculinities in literature, especially contemporary South Asian fiction written in and translated into English
- b) To critically examine the male body and its embodiment in the selected works of fiction
- c) To investigate representations of individual and group gender performances within the spheres of family, caste, class, race and nation and the politics of intersection involved therein.
- d) And finally, to explore whether or not there is a unique understanding of masculinities in postcolonial literature from South Asia.

This research work draws upon a number of theories, concepts and ideas put forward by multiple theorists and scholars over time. The thesis will be built upon the foundational understandings of gender and masculinities as propounded by Judith Butler and R. W. Connell respectively. It will undertake a Foucauldian understanding of human sexuality where the human body and its gendered performance is the centre of discourse and discipline. It will be based on the understanding of the human body from the perspective of material feminism along the lines of Butler, Susan Bordo, Susan Hekman and Stacy Alaimo and the study of embodiment following the concepts explained by Elaine Scarry and Ellen Spolsky. In exploring gendered performances of everyday life, this thesis will engage with theorists like Erving Goffman, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre and Ben Highmore. It will interrogate the idea of gendered spaces following the works of Doreen Massey, Daphne Spain, Homi Bhabha, Edward Soja and Foucault

and the idea of gendered language following the work of Dale Spender respectively. While discussing gendered spaces, this research will engage briefly with Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque. Further, it will engage with the representation of stigma following works of scholars like Erving Goffman and Lerita M. Coleman-Brown and that of disability following works by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Lennard Davis, Christopher Bell, Alison Kafer, Fiona Campbell, Tobin Siebers, Robert McRuer, and others. This thesis will also be based on foundational sociological concepts of institutions like religion and stratification like caste and class as defined by various scholars. The concept of intersectionality, which was propounded by Kimberley Crenshaw and later on appropriated as well as enriched by various scholars from across the globe like Yvette Taylor, Sally Hines, Mark E. Casey, Anupama Rao, Nivedita Menon, Mary John and Uma Chakravarty, also forms the foundation of this thesis. Finally, for an understanding of the politics of masculinities from the perspective of nation-building, this study will engage with theorists like Mrinalini Sinha, Indira Chowdhury, Sikata Banerjee, Pablo Dominguez Anderson and Simon Wendt.

This thesis analyses a total of fifteen primary texts including two trilogies written by eleven critically acclaimed authors from South Asia. They are as follows- Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1991), Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994), Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (1995), Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis trilogy* (2008-2015) comprising of *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*, Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* (2010), Perumal Murugan's *Madhorubagan trilogy* (2014-2018) comprising of *One Part Woman*, *Trial by Silence* and *A Lonely Harvest*, Vasudhendra's *Mohanaswamy* (2016), Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) and S. Hareesh's *Moustache* (2020).

The term "South Asia", which will be consistently used in this thesis, broadly refers to two aspects- a) the geographical territory and b) the socio-cultural identity. A detailed understanding of the term is important for this study.

Geographically, South Asia comprises the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. However, Afghanistan is sometimes considered to be a part of Central Asia and is, therefore, a link between Central Asia and South Asia (Yefremov et al. 2023). According to scholars like Upreti

(2006) and Zaidi (2009), “South Asia” or “Southern Asia” (also known as the “Indian subcontinent”) is a term largely inherited from the administrative boundaries of the British Raj. It is used to represent the southern region of the Asian continent, which comprises the sub-Himalayan SAARC countries and the current territories of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, which were the core of the British Empire before 1947. Geomorphologically, South Asia is formed by the Indian tectonic plate. The Himalayas, Karakoram, and the Pamir Mountains on the north and the Indian Ocean on the south form important strategic points in the geopolitics of the region.

The geographical contiguity of the constituent countries of the region has often helped in the forging of a common identity, the best example of it being the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In the words of Rakhi Sehgal (2015):

The people of South Asia not only share a contiguous geographical space, but also a social and cultural history that shapes our lifestyles, belief systems, cultural particularities, material practices and social relationships. Our natural environments are related, interdependent, and form elements of a common ecosystem. There is a similarity in our life practices which have been influenced by one another. On the other hand, the unique diversity of our region in all aspects has enriched the common heritage, and we celebrate a sustained history of mutual respect for one another (210).

Sehgal celebrates the advantages of geographical contiguity which, according to her, gets essentially translated to socio-cultural bonding. However, not all critics agree with such a stance. The following observation from S. Akbar Zaidi (2009) problematises the association of a single, unified identity to the region of South Asia.

The term and notion of “South Asia” replaced the older and much used “Indian subcontinent”, soon after being coined by the US state department when it boxed the world into different regions so that its officials could get a quick and uncomplicated grasp of global geography. This regionalisation of many parts of the world forced the people who were being so classified, to belong to a particular region. Perhaps in some regions there was a natural affinity and shared cultural history to want to belong, perhaps even on the basis of equal or shared power. Where many similar-sized countries were clubbed into a region, one could imagine their desire to be represented, at a larger political level, so that the benefits and advantages- political and cultural- which do not accrue to one

country on its own, could accrue to all or many, collectively. In some cases, despite differences of numerous kinds, trade, commerce and economic activity helped to create easily recognizable regions, having assumed many shared traits of identity. Yet the idea of South Asia has been troubled from the start, and continues to cause problems of association and that of identity, for some of its constituents. (37)

Although Zaidi does not deny the aspects of “natural affinity and shared cultural history”, he simultaneously highlights the problems of clubbing small countries into a region. According to him, such an act runs the risk of homogenisation to the point that the smaller entities lose their individual identities in the process of merging with the bigger regional identity.

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is a lack of consensus on what South Asia means to people who inhabit or study this region or for the administrative exigencies of certain global superpowers. However, for this research, the operational definition of South Asia would be a combination of both the geographical and the socio-cultural identity aspects. Following Gopinath and Sundar (2020), we will use the term as “a general marker of regional identity and cultural practice” and “a useful reminder of the global geopolitical history that has demarcated the region and given it shape in the popular and scholarly imagination” (3). Therefore, South Asia would refer to the current territories of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan of the Indian subcontinent, which formed the core of the erstwhile British Empire and have historically shared multi-layered socio-political, economic and cultural connections. The contemporary South Asian authors selected for this research explore the ethos of a South Asian heritage in their writings. However, some of the authors are not currently living in the geographical region of South Asia. For example, born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Shyam Selvadurai currently holds Canadian citizenship. Similarly, Amitav Ghosh shifts bases between New York, the USA and India. However, these writers are as much South Asian as any other South Asian living in the territory of South Asia as they trace their origin to a oneness ensured by geographical contiguity with a shared socio-political-economic and historical background. Even if the selected authors have chosen varied time periods and settings in the plots of their novels, they have a distinctively South Asian flavour as the works can be linked thematically and spatially. They offer insightful critiques of fraught histories of colonisation, imperialism, jingoist nationalism, civil riots, ethnic cleansing and minority

abuse, thereby imagining a world order of communal harmony which transcends many artificial binaries, boundaries and borders.

Centering on the postcolonial time frame, this thesis would focus on the representation of men and masculinities in select contemporary, post-independence novels from South Asia. In a choice of fifteen primary texts authored by eleven writers of South Asian origin, the five chapters would deliberate upon a region and time-specific understanding of the portrayal of masculinities in literature. The next section of this introduction would furnish the biographical details of the eleven authors selected for this thesis.

Noted author Bapsi Sidhwa was born in a Parsee family on 11 August 1938 in Karachi and later moved to Lahore. She was two years old when she contracted polio and nine years old at the time of India's partition. Both these events left a lasting impression on her life and got reflected in the background and central character-Lenny- of her novel *Ice Candy Man* or *Cracking India*. She completed her BA from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore, Pakistan and lived in Bombay for five years. Then she shifted to Lahore to begin her career as an author. She later relocated to Houston, United States, where she taught at the University of Houston, Rice University, Columbia University, Mount Holyoke College, and Brandeis University. Her best-known novels are- *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1982), *Ice Candy Man* or *Cracking India* (1988), *An American Brat* (1993) and *Water: A Novel* (2006). Her *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* (2006) is a brilliant anthology of 47 short stories and poetry. *Their Language of Love* (2013) is another beautiful collection of short stories which chronicles life and love on both sides of the Indo-Pak border. Bapsi Sidhwa was awarded the Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe/Harvard in the year 1986. She was a visiting scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation Centre, Bellagio, Italy in the year 1991. The Pakistan government conferred upon her the *Sitara-i-Imtiaz* (Star of Excellence) Award, which is the highest national honour in the arts, in the year 1991. She also received the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writer's Award in 1994 and Mondello Prize (Premio Mondello for Foreign Authors) for *Water* in the year 2007. She was inducted into the Zoroastrian Hall of Fame in the year 2000.

Salman Rushdie (born 19 June 1947) is a British-American novelist and essayist of Indian descent. He writes prolifically, combining the elements of magic realism and

historical fiction in his novels and displays a deep understanding of socio-cultural and economic forces in his works of non-fiction. His novels include- *Grimus* (1975), *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010), *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012), *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), *The Golden House* (2017) and *Quichotte* (2019). His works of non-fiction include- *The Jaguar Smile* (1987), *Step Across This Line* (2002), etc. *Midnight's Children* was his first major success which brought him the 1981 Booker Prize. *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Quichotte* were also shortlisted for the Booker Prize. *Shalimar the Clown* received the prestigious Hutch Crossword Book Award and was a finalist for the Whitbread Book Award. It was also shortlisted for the 2007 International Dublin Literary Award. Rushdie was knighted for his exemplary services to literature in the Queen's Birthday Honours on 16 June 2007. He received the Golden PEN Award, Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award, the PEN Pinter Prize, Swiss Freethinkers Award among others.

Amitav Ghosh was born on 11 July 1956 in Calcutta, India. He is a globally recognised award-winning author well known for works of fiction like *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of Fire* (2015), *Gun Island* (2019) and *Jungle Nama* (2021) and works of non-fiction like- *In an Antique Land* (1992), *Dancing in Cambodia and at Large in Burma* (1998), *The Imam and the Indian* (2002), *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021), etc. *The Circle of Reason* won the Prix Médicis étranger award of France, *The Shadow Lines* won the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Ananda Puraskar of India and *The Calcutta Chromosome* won the Arthur C. Clarke Award. His *Sea of Poppies* was shortlisted for the 2008 Man Booker Prize and *River of Smoke* was shortlisted for the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize. The government of India awarded him the fourth-highest civilian award of Padma Shri in the year 2007. By receiving the 54th Jnanpith Award in December 2018, Amitav Ghosh became the first Indian writer in English to have been chosen for this honour.

Firdaus Kanga is an Indian writer and actor, who was born in a Parsi family in Mumbai, India in the year 1960. He suffers from osteogenesis imperfecta, a rare physical disability of brittle bones which confines him to a wheelchair. He is the author of two books- *Trying to Grow* (1990) and *Heaven on Wheels* (1990). *Trying to Grow* (1990) is a semi-autobiographical novel narrating the experiences of an adolescent boy named Brit who suffers from the same medical condition as that of Kanga. It was later turned into an award-winning BBC-BFI film, *Sixth Happiness*, for which Kanga wrote the screenplay, and in which he starred. On the other hand, *Heaven on Wheels* (1990) is a travel narrative recounting his experience in the United Kingdom. He has presented several documentaries on the theme of disability, such as *Double the Trouble, Twice the Fun* which explores sexual relationships between disabled gay men and lesbians. It was broadcast on 15 July 1992 as part of Channel Four's lesbian and gay series *Out* (1991-94).

Writer and political, human rights and environmental activist Suzana Arundhati Roy was born on 24 November 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya to a Malayali mother and a Bengali father. Trained as an architect from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, she started her career at the National Institute of Urban Affairs, Delhi. After meeting independent filmmaker Pradip Krishen, she acted in one of his movies and collaborated on a television series about India's independence movement and two films, *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* and *Electric Moon*. Roy won the 1989 National Film Award for Best Screenplay for *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*. The publication of her first novel *The God of Small Things* in 1996 brought Roy stellar reviews as well as controversies. Semi-autobiographical in nature, this novel narrates a tale of censored love, adolescent sexuality and incest. It received the 1997 Booker Prize for Fiction and was listed as one of The New York Times Notable Books of the Year. It attained the fourth position on The New York Times Bestsellers list for Independent Fiction. Roy's second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), which was published by Penguin India and Hamish Hamilton UK, was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. It was also nominated as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction in January 2018. Apart from the two novels, she has written several essays, articles, and opinion pieces that established her as a human rights and political activist. *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001) and *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* (2009) are two of her well-known collections of essays. In addition

to numerous literary recognitions, Arundhati Roy was awarded the Lannan Foundation's Cultural Freedom Award in 2002, Global Exchange Human Rights Awards in 2003, Sydney Peace Prize and Orwell Award in 2004, the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2006 and the Norman Mailer Prize for Distinguished Writing in 2011.

Shyam Selvadurai (born 12 February 1965) is a critically-acclaimed Sri Lankan Canadian writer best known for his novels, short stories and screenplays. Born in Colombo, Sri Lanka to a Sinhalese mother and a Tamil father, his family was forced to emigrate to Canada following the 1983 ethnic riots when Selvadurai was nineteen. Consequently, this becomes a strong influence in most of his writings. His novels include- *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (2005), *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013) and *Mansions of the Moon* (2022). *Funny Boy* won the Books in Canada First Novel Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Fiction. *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* won the 2006 Lambda Literary Award in the Children's and Youth Literature category. He also edited a 2004 collection of short stories titled *Story-Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers*, which includes works by writers like Salman Rushdie, Monica Ali, Hanif Kureishi, etc. He compiled and translated an anthology of Sri Lankan literature titled *Many Roads through Paradise: An Anthology of Sri Lankan Literature*, which was published by Penguin in the year 2014. He was presented the Bonham Centre Award from The Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto, for his contributions to the advancement and education of issues concerning sexual identification in 2014. In a very interesting honour bestowed upon him, a small goblin spider was named after him in the year 2016. It was called *Brignolia shyami* after his first name. He co-wrote the screenplay with Deepa Mehta for his first novel *Funny Boy*. It won the award for Best Adapted Screenplay at the 9th Canadian Screen Awards in 2021.

Perumal Murugan (born 1966) is a critically acclaimed Indian author, poet and scholar who writes in Tamil. He was born in Namakkal, Tamil Nadu. Some of his novels, namely, *Seasons of the Palm* (2000), *Current Show* (2004), *One Part Woman* (2010), *Pyre* (2013) *Poonachi* or *The Story of a Goat* (2016), *A Lonely Harvest* (2018) and *Trial by Silence* (2018), and *Estuary* (2020) have been translated into English. *Seasons of the Palm* was shortlisted for the Kiriyaama Prize in 2005. The English translation of Murugan's novel *Madhorubagan- One Part Woman-* by Aniruddhan Vasudevan, won the Sahitya Akademi's Translation Prize in the year 2017. This novel

attracted controversy for Murugan as it depicted a certain debatable tradition practised during the annual chariot festival celebrated at the Ardhanareeswar Temple in Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu. Following his literary hiatus, he wrote *A Lonely Harvest* and *Trial by Silence* as sequels with alternative endings to *One Part Woman*. The three novels are together termed the *Madhorubagan trilogy*. Aniruddhan Vasudevan's translation, *Pyre*, was longlisted for the 2023 International Booker Prize.

Nadeem Aslam FRSL was born on 11 July 1966 in Gujranwala, Pakistan. He is a prize-winning Pakistani-British novelist and is the author of works like- *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013), *The Golden Legend* (2017), etc. His debut novel, *Season of the Rainbirds*, won the Betty Trask and the Author's Club First Novel Award. His critically acclaimed second novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* won the Encore Award and Kiriyaama Prize. It was shortlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award and longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. He was also awarded the Windham Campbell Literature Prize in fiction for the year 2014.

Manu Joseph was born on 22nd July 1974 in Kottayam, Kerala. He was an editor of the OPEN magazine and contributed columns to *The International New York Times* and *The Hindustan Times*. He was selected as a Chevening Scholar in the year 2007. He is the author of books like *Serious Men* (2010), *The Illicit Happiness of Other People* (2012) and *Miss Laila, Armed and Dangerous* (2017). *Serious Men* (2010) won the inaugural The Hindu Literary Prize and the 2011 PEN Open Book Award. It was also shortlisted for Man Asian Literary Prize and Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize. *Serious Men* was adapted into a 2020 Netflix movie which was directed by Sudhir Mishra where Bollywood actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui starred in the lead role. Well known for his unabashed humour, Manu Joseph also wrote the Netflix comedy series *Decoupled* which was released on 17th December 2021.

S. Hareesh was born on 15th May 1975 in Kottayam district of Kerala, India. He is a critically acclaimed writer, translator and screenwriter of Malayalam literature and cinema. Best known for his short story collections like *Rasavidyayude Charithram* ("The History of Alchemy") (2005), a Malayalam translation of *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch (2012), *Aadam* (2016), *Appan* (2018), Hareesh attracted controversy for religious and political reasons when his debut novel *Meesha* was serialized in *Mathrubhumi*

Weekly in the year 2018. After the consequent withdrawal from the weekly, the novel was published as a book in the same year. The Malayalam *Meesha* was translated into English by Crossword Award winner, Jayasree Kalathil and published under the title, *Moustache* by Harper Perennial India in 2020. It won the JCB Prize for Literature that year. It also won the 2019 Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for Novel. The Malayalam film *Aedan: Garden of Desire* was based on one of the three stories in Hareesh's short story collection *Adam*. His story "Maoist" was adapted by Lijo Jose Pellissery for his film *Jallikattu* which was India's official entry at the 2020 Academy Awards.

The biographical information provided above is crucial to our understanding of the sheer diversity of issues highlighted, interests foregrounded and scope reached by the selected authors. Their diverse socio-political and cultural background gets reflected in the dynamic plots, intricately woven settings and vibrant characters of their works. Hence, any critical examination of their works requires a strategic division of chapters which can do justice to the proposed study. In addition to the introduction and conclusion, there will be five core chapters in this thesis. The first chapter will lay the theoretical foundation of the study and the remaining four chapters will consist of textual analysis of fifteen primary texts thematically distributed.

The first chapter titled "Understanding Masculinities" delineates the broad theoretical framework of the thesis by referring to key theorists and their concepts. It situates masculinity studies within the broad spectrum of gender studies and traces its development over the years by reviewing the works of Foucault, Butler, Connell and Messerschmidt, Anderson and Wendt, and Edley. It also charts the trajectory of the study of men and masculinities from the perspective of South Asia by critically examining region-specific investigations by Sinha, Chowdhury, Bhasin, Dasgupta and Gokulsing, Kulkarni, Srivastava and Baas. By exploring already available critical inquiries of literary and cultural representations of masculinities by Jayasena, Gopinath, Ricci, Raja, Maureemootoo, Chatterjee, Sengupta, Bannerjee, Parui and Ganneri, the first chapter paves the way for a systematic and comprehensive study. The four chapters following the first chapter primarily consist of textual analysis of fifteen primary texts thematically distributed among them. Further, each chapter will be subdivided into smaller sections for clarity of thought, logical expression and fluidity of progression.

The second chapter titled “Performing Masculinities in Everyday Life” analyses Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1994), Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy* (2008-2015) and Perumal Murugan’s *Madhorubagan Trilogy* (2014-2018) to explore individual characters enacting their gendered selves in everyday life. It builds upon critical understandings of gender performativity (Butler, Bristow), everyday life (Goffman, de Certeau, Lefebvre and Highmore), space (Massey, Soja, Bhabha and Foucault) and language (Dale Spender) to reveal the layered significance of masculinities (Connell, Messerschmidt and Bristow) as portrayed in the chosen texts. It engages with the major characters’ attempts to resist hegemony and liberate themselves amidst societal power dynamics. This chapter shows how the demarcation of spaces becomes suffocating for non-conformists and how they navigate them to find subversive possibilities of sexual liberation and identity formation. In the process, they often have to confront the forces of racial history and politics. But, there are possibilities of liberation in the form of imagination, dreams, theatre performance and carnivalesque space. This chapter also engages with the creative as well as subversive potential of language in the performance of gender identities.

The third chapter is titled “Violence and the Male Body”. The primary texts that form the corpus of this chapter are- Firdaus Kanga’s *Trying to Grow* (1990), Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* (2008), Vasudhendra’s *Mohanaswamy* (2016) and Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). The chapter extends the understanding of masculinity as a performance that was begun in the second chapter and continues the engagement with materiality and social significance associated with the male body. It uses theories of body (Beauvoir, Foucault, Butler, Bordo, Hekman and Alaimo) and embodiment (Scarry and Spolsky, Johnson and Smith), disability (Davis, Bell, Garland-Thomson and Kafer, McRuer), ideal and deviance (Weber and Durkheim), transgression and stigma (Goffman and Brown) to analyse the representation of the male body in the selected texts. It explores how bodies are associated with identities and stand as embodiments of beliefs, value systems and social constructs. An exploration of embodiment reveals how notions of ideal and deviance are framed, enforced and lived. The complex relationship between bodily forms with external material extensions and the fluid notions of ideal/deviance points to forms of violence being inflicted vis-à-vis the societal power structure. This includes sexual disciplining by the use of physical violence, society-inflicted psychological violence and violence on the disabled body.

The fourth chapter is titled “Masculinities and the Intersection of Caste, Class and Religion”. The primary texts that form the corpus of this chapter are- Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Manu Joseph’s *Serious Men* (2010), Amitav Ghosh’s *Flood of Fire* (2015) and S. Hareesh’s *Moustache* (2020). Crenshaw’s idea of intersectionality, which is further developed by later-day critics like Taylor et al., Erel et al., McDermott, Menon, John, Chakravarti and foundational understandings of caste, class and religion in the lines of Risely, Blunt, Gisbert, Ogburn and Nimkoff and Durkheim, among others, form the basis for this chapter. It engages with the discursive performance of masculinities contingent upon markers of social stratification like caste and class and social institutions like religion. Following the works of critics like Rao, Velaskar, Avishai et al, Gopinath and Sundar, it highlights the inter-connectedness of gender with caste, class and religion and offers a comprehensive understanding of the world around us by leading to a better understanding of the chosen texts.

The fifth chapter titled “Masculinities and the Construction of the Nation” critically analyses Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1991), Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1994), Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* (1995) and Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). 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. While the previous chapters engaged with the study of masculinities in intersection with family, caste, class, race and religion, this chapter advances our understanding of masculinities from the vantage point of nation and nation building. By drawing upon critics like Sinha, Chowdhury, Anderson and Wendt, it engages with the performance of masculinities in juxtaposition with the hegemonic process of nation-building and tries to discover if one is a metaphor for the other.

The combination of both established as well as new writers with their works spanning a period of thirty years renders a unique nature to this study. The selection and analysis of texts both written in and translated into English pose a distinct character of this thesis. Again, the socio-political and geographical dimension of bringing together nations and cultures as diverse as India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan is another defining characteristic of this work. Moreover, the sheer richness of available research work in terms of quantity as well as quality in the chosen area is another intimidating element that influences any researcher. Despite all the challenges, this thesis promises an addition

to the available research on established writers and also hopes to initiate a meaningful academic inquiry for new writers. It aims to shed new light on the selected authors by critiquing their representation of masculinities in their works, keeping in mind their literary background and theoretical stance. By doing so, it seeks to collate a comprehensive understanding of the representation and discursive performance of masculinities from the perspective of South Asia. Finally, this thesis aims to explore whether or not the understanding of masculinities in postcolonial literature from South Asia is markedly different from the theorisation of Western scholars. In other words, by adopting sociologist Roland Robertson's (1980) "glocal" approach, this work adds to the understanding of the whole spectrum of masculinity studies and reveals palimpsests of texts as well as contexts.

As with most other research, there are limitations in this research. They are temporal as well as spatial in nature. The first challenge is that of bringing together writers so globally dispersed and divergent in their choice of characters, settings and topics. For example, Salman Rushdie was born in India and currently has citizenship of Britain as well as America. But, the setting and characters of his works span the entire globe. This is also true of Amitav Ghosh who was born in India, grew up in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and now lives in New York. It is a daunting task to juxtapose them with someone like Shyam Selvadurai who was born in Sri Lanka, but later on migrated to Canada. The second challenge lies in the fact that collectively, their works span three decades of time. For example, Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* was first published in 1990, while S. Hareesh's *Moustache* was first published in 2020, after a gap of thirty years. Again, the timeline of events described in the novels also differs widely. While Perumal Murugan writes about an esoteric practice observed during the chariot festival in the temple of Madhorubagan in the not-so-recent past, Manu Joseph's novel is set in a very contemporary, urban setting of Mumbai. The first limitation can be addressed by stating the fact that all the writers, though spread across the globe, originated from South Asia. Similarly, the second limitation can be addressed by identifying the fact that all the texts were written after the partition of the subcontinent, in a postcolonial setup. Finally, acknowledging the scope of future developments in research on men and masculinities, this thesis embarks on a journey of critiquing theoretical as well as literary representations of masculinities in five thematically organised chapters.