

CHAPTER 1

Understanding Masculinities

The recent recognition of the study of men and masculinities as a separate field of inquiry, due largely to the efforts of R.W. Connell, is a significant milestone in the sprawling continuum of gender studies. However, before reaching its current stage of evolution, the study of men and masculinities had to traverse a long and winding route of historical development, the origins of which can be traced to psychoanalytic studies. Freud and Lacanian psychoanalysis kindled an interest in the psychosexual aspect of human beings which later on developed into the Jungian framework of archetypes. It subsequently diversified into “sex-role research” initiated by theorists like Joseph Pleck. This was followed by the diversification and consequent appropriation of the study of men and masculinities by various branches of humanities and social sciences like social anthropology, ethnography, history, etc.

This chapter considers the publication of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* (1976) as the entry point to any organised inquiry regarding the nature of men and masculinity studies and then, builds upon theorists like Judith Butler, R. W. Connell, James Messerschmidt, Pablo Dominguez Anderson, Simon Wendt and Nigel Edley to trace the trajectory and situate masculinity studies in the broad spectrum of gender studies. Elaborating on the diverse threads emerging in masculinity studies, the chapter discusses the theorisation and application of the study of men and masculinities from a South Asian context. For that purpose, it engages with scholars like Mrinalini Sinha, Indira Chowdhury, Kamala Bhasin, Rohit K. Dasgupta and K. Moti Gokulsing, Mangesh Kulkarni, Sanjay Srivastava and Michiel Baas. Finally, it explores already available critical inquiries of literary and cultural representations of masculinities by Nalin Jayasena, Praseeda Gopinath, Ronit Ricci, Ira Raja, Kama Maureemootoo, Niladri R. Chatterjee, Vishnupriya Sengupta, Sayantan Dasgupta, Tanmayee Banerjee, Avishek Parui and Namrata Ganneri to pave the way for a systematic and comprehensive study.

The History of Sexuality (1976) is a four-volume study of sexuality in the Western world by the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault. In the first volume, *The Will to Knowledge* (originally published in French in 1976, translated to English in 1978), Foucault criticises the “repressive hypothesis” which suggested that Western society suppressed sexuality from the 17th to the mid-20th century due to the

rise of capitalism and bourgeois society. Foucault argues that discourse on sexuality actually proliferated during this period as experts began to examine sexuality scientifically and encouraged people to confess their sexual feelings and actions. According to Foucault, the 18th and 19th-century society took an increasing interest in the sexualities of children, the mentally ill, the criminal and the homosexual that did not fit within the institution of marriage and was considered part of the “world of perversion”. The exploration was conducted through confession and “scientific” enquiry. In the process, the strict sexual mores of 19th-century Western Europe considerably amplified the discourse of sexuality that they initially sought to control. Foucault’s interest in the discourse of sexuality led to a focus on its discursive performance. This was further developed by the theorisation of Judith Butler.

Butler, in their book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), argues that gender is a kind of improvised performance. They criticise one of the central assumptions of feminist theory: that there exists an identity and a subject that requires representation in politics and language. For Butler, any understanding of the terms “woman” and “women” is complicated by factors like class, ethnicity, and sexuality. According to them, the presumed universality of “women” as a category parallels the assumed universality of patriarchy and overlooks the particular nature of oppression in specific times and places (6). Hence, they highlight the need to recognise the particular and fluid nature of all gender performances, so that an equitable gender order might be established (34). Butler’s extensive work on gender performativity led the way for expansive developments in gender studies, including studies on men and masculinities by pioneering theorists like R. W. Connell.

R.W. Connell’s *Masculinities*, (1st ed. 1995, 2nd ed. 2005) is considered to be a foundational text in the field of masculinity studies. The book traces the history of the modern Western investigation of masculinity and presents a theory of masculinities, embedded in a social theory of gender. Here, she introduces her famous definition of masculinities. Connell (2005) writes- “‘Masculinity’, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (71). The book has extensive case studies, which describe the lives of four groups of men enmeshed in processes of change. Finally, by

integrating the history of Western masculinities and their political dynamics, it proposes strategies to achieve gender equality.

Connell (2005) suggests a three-fold model of the structure of gender, distinguishing relations of power, production and cathexis or emotional attachment. Then she distinguishes four main types of masculinities- hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalization. Hegemonic masculinity is “the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations” (76). It can also be defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). It is the successful claim to authority- more than direct violence- that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins or supports authority). Subordination refers to the dominance of certain groups (say heterosexual men dominating gay men) within the framework of hegemonic masculinity. Here, gayness is seen as a source of weakness and femininity. Masculinities constructed in ways that realise the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are considered complicit by Connell. While hegemony, subordination and complicity are relations internal to the gender order, marginalization occurs when gender interacts with other external structures like class and race.

Connell, further built on her theory of masculinities in an essay titled “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” (2005), written in collaboration with James W. Messerschmidt. Here, the authors trace the origin of the concept to an amalgamation of ideas in the early 1980s and explore the ways it was applied when studies on men and masculinities expanded. Examining the main criticisms following the publication of *Masculinities*, the authors defend the underlying notion of masculinity, which, according to their theorisation, is neither reified nor essentialist. They criticise trait models (which focus on a singular trait or a collection of traits as the defining feature of masculinity) and rigid typologies of gender. According to them, research on hegemonic masculinity can be improved with the aid of recent psychological models, although they acknowledge the limits to discursive flexibility. They argue that hegemonic masculinity is not the only model of social reproduction as very often subordinated masculinities also influence dominant forms thereby rendering a multi-lateral nature to all social struggles. Finally, the authors confirm three early formulations

of the idea of multiple masculinities, the concept of hegemony and the emphasis on change and discard one-dimensional treatment of gender hierarchy and trait conceptions of gender. The authors propose four ways in which the concept needs to be reformulated- “a more complex model of gender hierarchy” which emphasises the agency of women, an “explicit recognition of the geography of masculinities” which includes “the interplay among local, regional, and global levels, a more specific treatment of embodiment in contexts of privilege and power and a stronger emphasis on the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity” which recognises “internal contradictions and the possibilities of movement toward gender democracy” (Connell and Messerschmidt 829).

Following Connell’s formulation and reformulation, masculinity studies have been appropriated by many other fields like education and pedagogy, political science, geography, cultural studies, literature, etc. These diverse threads emerging in masculinity studies have, in fact, made the field richer and more evolved. The book titled *Masculinities and The Nation in The Modern World: Between Hegemony and Marginalization* (2015) is part of a series titled *Global Masculinities* edited by Pablo Dominguez Anderson and Simon Wendt. It provides fresh perspectives on the connections between gender and the nation by focusing on the role of masculinities in various processes of nation-building in the modern world between the early nineteenth century and the 1960s. In particular, it sheds new light on the interrelationships between hegemonic masculinities, marginalized masculinities and nationalism.

Nigel Edley’s succinct work *Men and Masculinity: The Basics* (2017) connects academia to everyday life. It contains a wealth of case studies, research reports and anecdotes which enables readers to understand the growth and development of masculinity studies over the years and highlights the key ideas and most pressing issues concerning the field today. Addressing theories which understand masculinity as being in a permanent state of flux and crisis, his work explores areas like- the male body, men and work, men and fatherhood, male sexuality and male violence. Leaving the readers with a deeper sense of understanding and even some optimism for socio-cultural change, Edley concludes:

Masculinity is not an essence; it doesn’t make men rape and kill.... Along with Judith Butler (1990), and an increasing number of other gender theorists, I would argue that masculinity is what men do. But they don’t rape and kill- as well as

work and love- because they are men; the logic runs in the opposite direction. They do these things in order to count as men, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others (154).

The preceding discussion traced the origin and development of the study of men and masculinities, largely through the perspective of Western theorists and thinkers. An investigation of the discursive representation of masculinities in contemporary South Asian literature requires a discussion of the theorisation from a South Asian context. The critique of masculinities by scholars like Mrinalini Sinha and Indira Chowdhury can provide the entry point to a region-specific understanding required by this research. Contextualising their works on colonial Bengal, they elaborate on the politics of performance and discursive formation in and around the image of the Bengali male.

Mrinalini Sinha's book *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and The Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century* (1995) discusses the processes and practices through which two differently positioned elites, among the colonisers and the colonised, were constituted respectively as the "manly Englishman" and the "effeminate Bengali" in 19th century India (1). The argument of the book follows from two basic assumptions- Firstly, since the coloniser and colonised were themselves historically constructed categories, the relations between the two were neither fixed nor given for all time. As a result, the figures of the "manly Englishman" and the "effeminate Bengali" must be examined in relation to "specific practices of ruling", rather than as products of a universalized or generalized colonial condition (1-2). Secondly, the contours of masculinity were shaped in the context of an imperial social formation that included both Britain and India. The figures of the "manly Englishman" and the "effeminate Bengali" were thus constituted in relation to colonial Indian society as well as to some features of late nineteenth-century British society, like, the emergence of the "New Woman", the "remaking of the working class", the legacy of "internal colonialism" and the anti-feminist backlash of the 1880s and 1890s (2). This focus on the imperial social formation points not only to the intersection of the imperial with the categories of nation, race, class, gender and sexuality, but also to the essentially uneven and contradictory nature of the intersection.

Indira Chowdhury begins the book *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (1998) with a provocative poem having

contrasting images of a grovelling Bengali male worshipping the heroic goddess, Durga. The unnamed poet notes with deep irony the glaring dissimilarities between the martial female goddess and her “cowardly male worshipper” and establishes through repetition and rhetorical questions, the Bengali’s identity as a timid slave (7). The poem, according to the author, insinuates the need to scrutinize the seemingly “tolerable” and even “natural” self-image in the face of stark colonial stereotypes. She focuses on the multiple icons of identity that evolved around this stereotype, their continual reorganisation or self-fashioning through negotiations and analyses their role in the celebration of nationalism. Moreover, in the discursive performance of such an identity, she also investigates the intersectional concerns of class as well as caste.

In a mix of social activism and academic rigour, Kamala Bhasin published her pamphlet *Exploring Masculinity* in the year 2004. In an attempt to combine theory with activism and thereby, popularise it, she quoted extensively from Western theorists as well as relied on region-specific empirical studies carried out by national and international organisations. In a self-explanatory and lucid manner, she writes, “Nature makes us male or female, it gives us our biological definition, but it is society which makes us masculine or feminine” (6). Highlighting the dynamic nature of masculinities, she writes,

Masculinity, like gender, is not static- it is constantly reconstructed, it may keep changing in response to changes in economic patterns, natural or man-made disasters, war or migration. This is also why different kinds of masculinity are manifest; working-class, bourgeois or intellectual masculinity may be quite different to cowboy-masculinity; Japanese masculinity may be different to European or Indian masculinity; hegemonic masculinity to marginalized masculinity. This is why it is better to speak of masculinities rather than one kind of masculinity (6).

Although Bhasin does not explicitly mention the names of theorists as well as their works in the above-mentioned passage, her words traverse the journey that began with Beauvoir and reached Connell to get further diversified in the near future. Her pamphlet engaged with issues like patriarchy, masculine dominance, violence and rape perpetrated by South Asian men and their impact on women by taking a cue from international demographical statistics. Bhasin explains the terms “masculinism” and “hegemonic masculinity” as follows-

In a patriarchal ideology ‘masculinism’ is the notion that men and masculinity are superior to women and femininity. Masculinity believes in and justifies male superiority and male domination; it naturalizes masculinity, thus making it inevitable and non-negotiable.

Hegemonic means all-encompassing leadership or dominance. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore overpowering masculinity. This form of masculinity is clearly about power and asserting power over others. Masculinity is thus clearly different from femininity because it is in command, it controls. Hegemonic masculinity demands submission. (13)

Bhasin’s detailed explanation led the way for many informed studies of men and masculinities in the succeeding years in South Asia.

Nalin Jayasena’s *Contested Masculinities: Crises in Colonial Male Identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray* (2013) is an interesting read chronicling the crises in British masculinity from the rise of the New Women to the contestation and consequent, independence of the erstwhile British colonies. In his words- “the colonial stereotype of effeminacy imposed on the colonized invoked a rhetoric that paralleled the crisis in English masculinity in the British metropolis during the second half of the nineteenth century” (16). However, Jayasena is not interested in the place of origin of the colonial stereotype. Rather, he observes, “the concept of effeminism was foreign to neither nineteenth century Indians nor the metropolitan British, and its contiguous relationship with masculinity was undermined when the two identities were deemed antithetical to one another” (17). This change in attitudes towards masculinity and femininity, according to him, is manifested in the literature, arts and sports of this period. By critically examining “texts” like Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, the Anglo-Australian “bodyline” cricket series from 1932, George Orwell’s *Burmese Days*, Tagore’s works and Satyajit Ray’s *The Home and the World*, Jayasena gives us a glimpse as well as prepares a roadmap which facilitates our understanding of the crisis in masculinity at the crucial juncture of a sharp decline in colonial and imperial power vis-à-vis the rise of young, independent nations.

A seminal work on the crisis in British masculinity is Praseeda Gopinath’s *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities After Empire* (2013) which investigates

the changes in the idea of the English gentleman after the first world war through analytic frames of reference like the Welfare State, the second world war and rising feminism (4). Her book reveals that “alterations in the ideal of the gentleman, forged in the interstices of metropole and colony, are fundamental to the formation of metropolitan Englishness post-1945” (4). Through an analysis of texts by George Orwell, Philip Larkin, John Wain, Ian Fleming, A.S. Byatt and Barbara Pym, Gopinath discusses the shifts in the stylisation of English masculinity which rests at the figure of the “postcolonial gentleman” embracing a “new masculine identity” in the second half of the 20th century (204).

Ronit Ricci expands the temporal as well as spatial scope of masculinity studies to investigate the literary depiction of gender roles in a Sri Lankan Malay text titled *Hikayat Siti Fatima*. Her article “Perfect Wedding, Penniless Life: Ali and Fatima in a Sri Lankan Malay Text” (2013) provides a comparative analysis of gender images and roles in Islamic holy texts from south and south-east Asia by studying the portrayal of the heavenly marriage and earthly hardships of Ali and Fatima. By juxtaposing the text’s definition of an ideal married life with similar depictions across time and space, she suggests the porousness of ideas and images as well as the category of South Asia itself.

Ira Raja’s “Can the Subaltern Eat?: Modernity, Masculinity and Consumption in the Indian Family” (2013) is a contemporary critical rethinking of the position of the subaltern male. Echoing Spivak’s article, Raja’s work is an interesting read as it reverses the identity of the subaltern and instead, critiques the masculine guilt of eating. She reads three post-independence Indian short stories and engages with thwarted consumption and self-denial as reflective of the lower middle-class men’s experience of postcolonial modernity in a specific socio-cultural and political milieu.

Carrying the discussion forward, Rohit K. Dasgupta and K. Moti Gokulsing in the introduction to *Masculinity and its Challenges in India: Essays on Changing Perceptions* (2014) explain in detail the change in the understanding of masculinities in India. By quoting their predecessors like Gayatri Spivak and Mrinalini Sinha, they write-

Questions around representations are central to an understanding of postcolonial masculinities. Masculinities in the colonies were created and perpetuated as a contrast to the colonizers’ own masculinity...This imaginary essentializing of colonial masculinities serves to both obscure and appropriate an unsettling

difference... This desexualization, de-eroticization of the Indian male sexuality is important in postcolonial India as it can be seen as a reaction to the imaginary essentializing of the hypersexual native male in the colonial era. (8-9)

According to Dasgupta and Gokulsing, such a desexualisation of the hypersexual native male led to the creation of a “New Man”—“a softer caring creature, sometimes labelled feminized man” which replaced the idea of Connell’s hegemonic masculinity. This gave rise to a moral panic about what it meant to be a man at the beginning of the 21st century in India.

Mangesh Kulkarni’s article, “Critical Masculinity Studies in India”, which was published in the same anthology edited by Dasgupta and Gokulsing offers a chronology of the study of masculinities in India from the colonial to postcolonial times. He enlists works from both individual writers (colonisers as well colonised) as well as groups (socio-political organisations, NGOs, etc) to bring together an ever-growing corpus for the understanding of the dynamics of masculinities. His critical survey paves the way for future debates in this area. Taking a cue from the mysterious death of Dr Srinivas Ramachandra Siras, Reader and Chair of Modern Languages at Aligarh Muslim University following his suspension from duties after being accused of having sex with a male partner, Kama Maureemootoo, in his article, “The Nation as Mimicry: The (mis)reading of Colonial Masculinities in India”, investigates the debates surrounding notions of tradition and modernity when it comes to Indian masculinity and observes that the concerns raised by the Siras case are “postcolonial residues” that haunt political and cultural landscapes even today. Therefore, Maureemootoo’s article can be read as a logical continuation of the discussion by Dasgupta and Gokulsing on the one hand and Kulkarni on the other. Niladri R. Chatterjee’s “Corporal Punishment: English and Homosocial Tactility in Postcolonial Bengal” argues how the “Englishing” of the male body during the colonial period gave rise to anxieties around homosocial tactility which was not present earlier. The final article of the Dasgupta and Gokulsing edited anthology that attracts our attention is Vishnupriya Sengupta’s “Of Girmitiyas and Mimic Men: Alternative Masculinity in V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr Biswas*”. Here, Sengupta analyses the male characters in Naipaul’s novel and traces the intersections between gender performance, nationalism, race and class during a period of growing instability both at the personal as well as the socio-cultural level.

On similar lines with Nalin Jayasena's 2013 work, Sayantan Dasgupta's article "Masculinizing the (Post)colonial Subject: The *Amar Chitra Katha Comic Book*" (2014) and Tanmayee Banerjee's "Negotiation of Masculinity in Ritwik Ghatak's Partition Trilogy" (2014) read the contours of masculinity through important works of popular culture. Banerjee's article revolves around the projection of immigrant men facing a crisis in masculinity having to negotiate their financial, emotional and practical dependence upon women in a newly partitioned West Bengal. Dasgupta's article, on the other hand, critiques *Amar Chitra Katha's* failure in portraying a revivalist mode of nationalist history because of its excessive dependence on the Western European model of historiography. Dasgupta writes, "the *Amar Chitra Katha* falls prey to the light-darkness-light paradigm of history-writing that was part and parcel of the orthodox Western European model of historiography—one that explained away the Middle Ages as "dark," for instance" (219). As a corollary to this fallacy, *Amar Chitra Katha*, according to Dasgupta, attempted a "masculinization" of the Indian nationalist psyche by creating as well as highlighting a network of icons like Rama, Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap, etc who symbolised patriarchal domination and machismo in the name of patriotism.

Sanjay Srivastava in articles like "Masculinity and its Role in Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces" and "Masculinity Studies and Feminism: Othering the Self" (2015) underlines the need for a proper comprehension of the inter-relationships between masculinities and femininities keeping in mind their various social, cultural, economic and political contexts to comprehend the nature of gender inequalities and violence. In the manner of social activist Kamala Bhasin, he emphasises the need to investigate the dynamics of public versus private spaces, institutionalised versus individual discourses, leisure spaces versus civic societies, and theory versus practice to arrive at a holistic understanding of gender dynamics.

In continuation with the growing interest in the study of men and masculinities, Indian scholar Avishek Parui has been exploring texts from both South Asia as well as canonical Western classics. His article "Memory, Nation and the Crisis of Location in Saadat Hasan Manto's 'Toba Tek Singh'" (2015) focuses on the figure of the delirious prisoner from the perspective of trauma, memory and identity crisis. His next article titled, "For the life of him he could not remember: Post-war Memory, Mourning and Masculinity Crisis in Katherine Mansfield's 'The Fly'" (2016) extends masculinity

studies' involvement with crisis arising out of the trauma of war and its associated memories. Parui writes, "A condensed narrative about death, decadence and denial, 'The Fly' is a depiction of post-war mourning and the masculinity crisis at the heart of the modern metropolis, and at the same time an exploration of the ritual of memory preservation inside the closeted space of the modern office" (114). A preoccupation with the monstrous masculine body is seen in the essay, "Masculinity, Monstrosity and Sustainability in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (2016). Here, the construction of Victor Frankenstein's monster is read to be "synchronous with the invasion of the female body and the body of nature in a (masculine) culture of imperialist expansion and classification" (187). Further, Parui juxtaposes the figure of the shell-shocked male soldier against the repressed domestic female in his essay "Human Nature is Remorseless: Masculinity, Medical Science and Nervous Conditions in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*" (2018), thereby problematising "the violence enacted on the male body by a coercive biomedical gaze" (126).

Namrata Ganneri's photo-essay "Pahalwan Portraits: Manly Consumers of Physical Culture in Western India" (2019) and Michiel Baas's book *Muscular India: Masculinity, Mobility and the New Middle Class* (2020) are two important works that discuss a very important aspect of masculinity in India. Ganneri, by critiquing several photos from magazines covers, illustrated books and wall-posters highlighting the tradition of Indian wrestling and popular wrestlers, explains the change that has swept the concept of an ideal male body and the sport of wrestling and body-building from the late colonial period to early postcolonial period. On the other hand, Michiel Baas's book is a critical ethnographic interrogation of the rising "gym culture" in urban India where he incorporates the stories of real-life gym trainers and clients caught in the "new" trend of selling, consuming and popularising the "fit body". It is through these stories that the readers are explained the changing socio-cultural and political demographics of Indian society. However, Ganneri disagrees with Baas when he observes that the obsession with the gym-trained fit body is a new phenomenon in Indian society. With the help of examples, she explains the tradition and shifts in the sport of wrestling and its patrons and practitioners as follows:

In the Indian context... male bodies were being consumed through photographs in sports literature. Fitness enthusiasts maintained personal albums and the proliferation of stylized images of the body gestures towards the significance of

maintenance and appearance of the ‘outer’ body. Newer norms both of ‘masculine display’ and ‘beauty’ were clearly being deliberated upon even as the traditionally trained wrestlers were entering new performance spaces like films. Men were partaking in the ongoing transnational physical culture as consumers of fitness courses, products, and magazines, but physical culture never became a part of the mass culture here as it did in the North Atlantic world. After all, a paid circulation of 400,000 of his magazine *Physical Culture* sustained Macfadden’s 30-million-dollar publishing empire, while a magazine like *Vyayam* achieved an all-time high subscription figure of 1,500 in the 1930s. Nevertheless, what is certain is that the Indian male’s dalliance with muscles is not as recent as Michiel Baas would like us to believe. Finally, the images being consumed through *Vyayam* and other popular journals also indicated that Indian masculinity was not entirely subsumed by the ascetic-androgenous ideal exemplified by say, Mahatma Gandhi’s body. (Ganneri)

From the words of Ganneri, we understand the corporal as well as perceptual shift in the ideal male body. The gyms and the culture around them that Michiel Baas studies are actually an evolution of the age-old *akharas* and *talimkhanas* which trained numerous aspiring young wrestlers throughout the years. In other words, this obsession with the gym-trained fit body is not something new, but a continuation of the popularity of *akharas* and *talimkhanas* as exemplified in the consumption of posters and magazines like *Vyayam*.

Thus, the above discussion highlighted the diversification in the study of masculinities throughout the years. Like in the West, the theorisation of masculinities from the context of South Asia has undergone diversification and consequent appropriation into diverse fields. Educational pedagogy, socio-political and cultural intervention, gender and sexuality studies, literary and cultural studies, etc. have benefitted from the development of masculinity studies. For example, while researchers like Kamala Bhasin used their knowledge of masculinity studies to further their activist programmes, Sanjay Srivastava and Mangesh Kulkarni emphasise the need for a comprehensive understanding of the spectrum of gender relations by incorporating the study of masculinities along with feminist and queer studies. Scholars like Nalin Jayasena, Praseeda Gopinath, Ronit Ricci, Ira Raja, Vishnupriya Sengupta, Sayantan Dasgupta, Tanmayee Banerjee and Avishek Parui have undertaken studies of masculinities as represented in literature and popular culture. Their studies have enriched

the available research on men and masculinities. Similarly, scholars like Kama Maureemootoo and Niladri R. Chatterjee have undertaken discursive studies of colonial masculinity and pointed out how certain appearances, and behaviour patterns of the colonial man were considered ideal for the nation and the nationalistic sentiment. And, Namrata Ganneri and Michiel Baas's studies have focused on the ever-changing dynamics of the body of the "fit" male, ready to be consumed through photographs, publicity and media coverage. Again, the above discussion revealed two distinct temporal trends in the literary investigation of masculinities. One is the study of colonial masculinities as exemplified by critics like Mrinalini Sinha and Indira Choudhury; the other is the study from the postcolonial perspective as exemplified by scholars like Dasgupta and Chatterjee. When it comes to the Indian context, the partition of the sub-continent and the growth of the nationalistic sentiment is, perhaps, the most important marker dividing the study of men and masculinities. For example, while Parui's analysis of "Toba Tek Singh" traced the figure of the insane man caught at the threshold of partition, Dasgupta's research critically engaged with *Amar Chitra Katha's* nationalist, masculinist project of re-awakening postcolonial young India whose ideals were caught in the stupor of forced amnesia. This thesis will take inspiration from scholars like Nalin Jayasena, Praseeda Gopinath, Ira Raja, Vishnupriya Sengupta, Sayantan Dasgupta, Avishek Parui, and others to embark on a literary investigation of masculinities as represented in contemporary South Asian literature from the postcolonial perspective. Thus, through a close reading of fifteen novels authored by eleven contemporary South Asian authors thematically distributed in four succeeding chapters, this study will enrich the existing body of research in the literary investigation of men and masculinities.