CONCLUSION

In the signs of our times debate and discussions tend to gravitate towards identity. The question of identity is enriched by several scholars contributing through their location in diverse disciplines. In spite of such enrichment from diverse schools of thoughts with inputs from social sciences gender remains an interesting site to explore lingual, psychological, cultural, political, historical, pathological, mythical, literary memories. An inquest into the field of gender not only is interesting to reach an understanding about what is marked as Other (Beauvoir), but also about our own self of being. Gender studies has been and may continue to remain a field full of surprises as we encounter new and new scientific research not just on the species human but on other life forms as well. As a result gender studies remain an open ended discipline. Studying gender till recently was dominated by female academicians who let loose their theories documenting the plight of the fair sex at the hands of patriarchy across cultures. And then came a phase in gender studies where the villainous male sex with its stakes in perpetuating patriarchal system opened up to greet masculinity as a subject of discourse to be dealt with as clinically as scientists would go about their scientific preoccupations. Masculinity too was understood to have had a beating at the hands of patriarchal system and so it was accommodated in the discourse on gender. The story of triumph of masculinity now appeared shallow and structured to those who had consciously been trying to quantify masculinity.

The real masculinity now appeared to have evaporated in thin air as the very invitation to masculinity under gender studies paved the way for its demise. Questioning patriarchy also relieved the male among humans from the clutches of masculinity. Reinventing masculinity meant over-stretching it to accommodate the forms of masculinities that could be spotted in performance among males but were never considered desirable in male. On the other extreme the concepts of femininity also accommodated the undesirable among females. The whole terrain of gender studies became a place acknowledging diverse kinds of femininity and masculinity thereby bringing in the lens of objectivity to the whole discourse.
Studying masculinity descriptively is then a recent invention to look at masculinity afresh in the writings of postcolonial poets who are once Indian but bring their own unique cultural perceptions as they go about dealing incisively with the male among humans. The study of male poets for masculinity certainly delimits the scope of this research, but one cannot rule out a lifetime preoccupation with the subject. The researcher began with certain presumptions about masculinity, Indian masculinity, effeminate masculinity etc., but in the course of pursuing this research the researcher felt that masculinity is a construct, as much real as other man-made constructs, bearing the stamp of cultural milieu on what one happens to inhabit. The poets and their poetry chosen for this study do not write on or about masculinity alone, but whenever it stages its performance directly or indirectly; it becomes central to this research.

The researcher selected three postcolonial poets for his research in order to explore how the different strains of masculinities that permeate the Indian cultural realm intersect and thereby generate several permutations. The poets chosen for studying masculinity in the postcolonial period do not fall in the neat categories of masculinity discussed above, but seem to represent an odd mix of different traits of masculinity in their poetry. Masculinity and femininity are cultural constructs as old as human history. Traditionally characteristics peculiar to males – strength, boldness, courage, aggression, leadership etc. and the latter typifies attributes ascribed to and expected of the fair sex – grace, beauty, charm, patience, love, kindness and compassion. Conventionally, the gender roles too have been assigned on the basis of these attributes. However, absolute masculinity and femininity are only myths as both men and women inhere and share traits ascribed to males and females. Otherwise also, a deeper analysis shows that masculinity and femininity are neither contraries nor in conflict with each other. Both are complementary and supplementary and needed in real life to live it fully and fruitfully. In effect, masculinity and femininity, in their true sense, are positive manifestations of the spirit of humanism and altruism which is so vital for peace, progress and prosperity of human civilization. Hence, the need of the hour is to put these concepts in proper perspective for the betterment of humankind. Any discourse on masculinity or femininity at an intellectual level will invariably involve ideas and perceptions on culture, history, gender relations and roles, love, marriage etc. At the poetic level, the concept of
masculinity includes poet’s views on culture, attitude towards women, his conception of
poetry, its theme, content, form and style.

Ezekiel’s poetic career spans over four decades with the publication of *A Time of Change* in 1952 and five other anthologies of poems which include *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Hymns in Darkness and Poster Prayers* (1976) and *Collected Poems* (1988). The very title of his maiden collection, *A Time to Change* is very significant. It is indicative of his poetic intent as well as talent. If masculinity in poetic context is to be identified with the spirit of assertion, independence, leadership and intellectual strength, Ezekiel, a young poet, then, manifested these attributes in ample measure from the very beginning of his poetic odyssey. With his intellectual robustness and poetic acumen, Ezekiel charted out a new path for Indian poets and poetry, both in style and subject matter. Nissim Ezekiel in his poetry attempts to reconcile with the capricious demands of his masculine self through projecting irrationality on the females.

In Ezekiel’s poetry, concern with culture has been most pronounced owing to his intractable roots in Jewish ancestry. Ezekiel’s view of culture or Indianness as represented in his poetry oozes a unique masculine charm being a male poet in a patriarchal society. He strives to relate himself to contemporary India. His major themes are the Indian scene, modern urban life and spiritual values. But basically his poetry is something that grows out of his own life and experience. He is a poet of the city – Bombay, a poet of the body, and an explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, the devious delvings and twistings of the ego. The early poetry of Ezekiel is replete with the images of woman generally associated with animality and sexuality, corruption and defilement. Ezekiel’s portrayal of man-woman relationship is ambiguous and ambivalent. His attitude towards love for woman shows a sense of regret and sadness and at the same time he finds it a source of emotional regeneration. More often than not his approach to man-woman relationship is within the ambiguous perspectives of the “insider-outsider”. Even a cursory reading of his poems shows that from the very beginning he has been treating his sexual partner not on equal footing as one who has not only flesh and blood but also a mind craving for fulfillment and consummation through sexual act. More often his
attitude to women borders on male chauvinism and appears to be unhealthy and biased as reflected in many poems associated with sex and marriage. Masculinity as it obtains in the Western worldview leads to strife, struggle, conflict, competition, control and domination. Ezekiel’s masculinity is reflected in his spirit of humanism which is free from idealism or utopia. It is rooted in his sense of identification with the laity and urge to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, naked, and diseased and deprived. Western notion of masculinity is based on competition, individualism and self-aggrandizement. But Ezekiel’s poetry is a quest for identity, commitment and harmony in life. It overflows with milk of human compassion, kindness and sympathy. It is a synthesis or reconciliation of the opposites — an emotional involvement in life and a detachment from it, a passion for the present and a desire for beyond. Ezekiel believes that a poet is not merely a cultural imitator but a creator. So he stresses the need for a literature of cultural contact on a global scale so as to facilitate understanding of humanity and its future, i.e. the development of human sensibility. To achieve this aim, Ezekiel juxtaposes poetry, art and life and brings about a harmony between the internal and external universe of mind. This is the central principle of his poetic musings and meditations.

A K Ramanujan’s major writings representing people and their society authentically can be taken as resistance to the former colonizer. His poetry gives an authentic representation of indigenous tradition, and native culture in artistic terms. His five volumes of poetry — The Striders (1966), Relations (1971), Selected Poems (1976), Second Sight (1986) and the Collected Poems of Ramanujan bear testimony to his postcoloniality. However, Ramanujan is more than a postcolonial writer as he contains within himself both the Eastern and the Western sensibilities while functioning in an alien environment. This shows Ramanujan’s intellectual robustness, objective and penetrative vision, and emotional vigour — the hallmarks of a great scholar with a masculine mind. In Ramanujan, the symbols of modernity and masculinity are equated in the West with having no qualms with regard to re-marriage or disregarding the age-old tenets of morality. The poet’s strong cultural roots and intellect prevents him from easily falling a prey to the Western allurements. He overcomes such temptations and charms and asserts his individuality and identity in the face of tide of modernism and
Westernization which seem to sweep the entire globe nowadays. Finally, he decides to work out his salvation treading on the path of his own cultural traditions.

An in-depth reading of Ramanujan’s poetry reveals that he is deeply rooted in his cultural traditions. As such, he realizes that the only way to come to terms with the onslaught of modernity is to accept the philosophical concept of *Karma* in Hinduism—which is the epitome of masculinity. Ramanujan’s masculinity is also seen in his imbibing the best features of his native culture and the detached outlook resulting from his exposure to the Western milieu. His poetic self presents a unique amalgam of the traditional and the modern. If his sensibility is rooted in the Indian heritage, his vision is definitely that of a modernist. His intellectual and poetic strength lies in his remarkable ability to maintain an appreciable balance between tradition and modernity. He has adopted a dispassionate and balanced attitude in his writings. He does not allow emotions to overwhelm his intellect. Following the path of golden mean he paints an analytical picture of two cultures he has been intimately associated with. As a sagacious and wise writer, he refuses to be drawn to either extreme of the cultural spectrum. Straddling between cultures, the title image of the striders in his very first volume of poetry pictures his own precarious poise. Yet his strength or masculinity lies in making the best use of the neither-here-nor-there strider-like situation and producing a poetry which despite his rootedness in Indian cultural traditions can be read on its own. Thus, he achieves a rare blending of the ancient and the modern with the Indian and the American idioms. In spite of his being subjected to the onslaughts of various influences both Western and Indian, Ramanujan has kept his originality intact. Therein lies his masculinity.

Jayant Mahapatra’s poetry treats of loneliness, challenges of expressing the intended, impossibility of understanding humans, moments of sexual desire, the overwhelming silence that engulfs a sensitive soul, mind’s imaginings, the public and the private, Indian myths and rituals, and dreams and identity. The masculinity that registers its presence in Mahapatra’s poetry is conscious, crafted by a huge investment of abstract ideas to render love and sexual desire obscure. This distancing of the poetic persona in Mahapatra in his treatment of sexual attraction towards the opposite sex is a deliberate strategy to project the distance he feels between himself and his surroundings.
masculine assertion is replaced by conscious but painful resignation. In his poetry, the recurrence of uncertainty, self-doubt, guilt and brooding predates any resolve that could be read for his distinct masculinity that dislocates and disallows the persona from desiring unless he consecrates at the altar of his origin, The masculinity Mahapatra signifies carries the burden of the guilt of alienation and the feeling of gaping distance between the conscious self and the other that no amount of imagining and confronting the other in the mind brings any respite.

It is evident that Jayanta Mahapatra emerges truly a postcolonial poet as he focuses on the non-West or its cultural other with an interdisciplinary approach without being contained within the binaries of 'us' and 'them.' He also questions the stereotypes like the oppressor / oppressed and uses poetry as a literary exercise to erase the inferiority instilled into the native minds by the psychological damage done by colonialism to the colonized people.

As a postcolonial poet, Mahapatra is a keen observer of contemporary life and situation. He minces no words in describing the start socio-political realities and tries to come to terms with reality, a la Nissim Ezekiel. He candidly portrays the country and the world around him in realistic terms as he sees life steadily and in totality. Hunger, poverty, violence and lawlessness in contemporary society seem to disturb the poet deeply. As a true postcolonial poet, he reflects on the same kind of injustice and violence in other countries of the world like Somalia and Nicaragua. Postcoloniality is, as Leela Gandhi says elsewhere, another name for globalization. If the hunger in Somalia disturbs the poet, the half starved children of Kalahandi (a district in his home state of Orissa) make him sad and depressed. The agony abides and he describes the gloomy conditions in a matter of fact tone in his poems. The poet is concerned with the fate of humanity at large.

The colonial past haunts the poet to no end. In postcolonial theory, the hostile history refers to the colonial past, which haunts the post-colonial present. The colonial system and laws are still in operation as we have inherited the British Administrative and Judicial system.
The process of deification is also a part of decolonising the native mind. In India to deify Gandhi means decolonising the Indian mind. Hence, Gandhi becomes an integral part of post-colonial literature. Gandhi has become a living example of non-violence, truth and righteousness. Mahapatra tries to create a contemporary myth out of Gandhi in his recent poetry. In mythicizing Gandhi, Mahapatra realizes that one can be authentic as a writer or poet by going back to his or her roots. In his own case, Mahapatra wants to decolonize himself and his culture so that he can be original and authentic as a poet. Thus, if creating new national myths is a part of post-colonial writing, Jayant Mahapatra can truly be called a post-colonial poet. He joins the long line of his illustrations predecessors— M. R. Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Chaman Nahal & Nissim Ezekiel who have written eloquently about Gandhi. In fact, Gandhiji himself can be treated as a post-colonial writer because of his oppositional nationalism.

Mahapatra’s poetry is worldly and full of events. As a humanistic poet, he writes about what happens around the world— poverty, starvation and human suffering. The concern for humankind and especially for the poor and suffering people is unmistakable in his poetry. He writes poetry to make people aware of the contemporary situation. As a poet with deep poetic sensibility he sees into the heart of things and makes his readers feel for the suffering masses. Therein lies his strength and greatness as a poet and we know greatness and strength in a poet are the mark of his masculinity.

The three poets stand as the pillars of Indian English Poetic tradition. And their poetic strength lies in the fact that they have liberated themselves from the regressive, oppressive, and exploitative dimensions of western masculinity. They have redefined the ethics of masculinity in Indian context and Indian cultural tradition. Consequently, their masculinity entails the ethos of love, sympathy, cooperation, and conciliation. Indian concept of Ardhmarishwara which propounds that a human being is an embodiment of both the gender traits— feminine as well as masculine— is key to resolving the problems of masculinity and can pave the way for the establishment of peace, harmony and prosperity in the age of globalization.