PART-1
THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Let us begin with a simple yet important question: What does it mean to be a man? It is obvious that there is a biological classification of sexes. Biologically we are male or female and possibly this biological difference also has a kind of impact on our male and female features. Man cannot, for example, give birth to a child and experience what it means to carry a baby within one's own. Likewise, a woman may not have as much physical strength as a man has. But then, with the development of sociological sensitivity, we know that biology cannot be the entire destiny. And that is why sociologists make a distinction between sex and gender. Whereas sex has its roots in biology, gender is culturally constituted. This means that it is through the ongoing process of socialisation, family kinship practices, cultural beliefs, educational and religious rites and rituals that a biological male or female requires the characteristics of what a given society regards as masculinity or femininity. It is possible that a society associates masculinity with certain desirable qualities like physical strength, courage, activity in the public domain, competitiveness and ruthlessness. Whereas femininity may be associated with 'virtues' like softness, tenderness, passivity, self-sacrifice and confinement to the private/domestic domain. Not solely that. These differences also get hierarchised and masculinity is often regarded as a superior quality and equated with reason, objectivity, science, strength and conquering spirit. And femininity is seen as the 'other' of these celebrated qualities. It is weakness, sentimentality, irrationality and instinctive affinity with nature. In fact, this dichotomy between culture and nature, reason and emotion and masculine and feminine is a central feature of patriarchy. But the rise of feminism in our times has posed a severe challenge to this patriarchal stereotype. As a matter of fact, feminism has sensitised us and made us aware that masculinity and femininity are not given eternally for us. These are culturally mediated practices and it is possible to interrogate this politics of patriarchy. No wonder, in our times, we see an intense debate on gender construction and masculinity studies which is a product of this critical reflection. The questions it raises are the following: Is masculinity a given thing or is it just a construction? Is Biology altogether unimportant in shaping
one's own identity? Is it possible to redefine one's masculinity and unsettle the
distinction between masculine and feminine? Is it possible to have different variants
of masculinity?

[1]

Sex And Gender: Masculinity As Cultural Construct And The Performative
Dimension

In the very first section of this chapter let me bring forth the concepts of sex
and gender in purview of the study of masculinity. According to Collins' Dictionary
of Sociology, sociologists and social psychologists argue that while sex refers to the
biological characteristics by which human beings are categorised as 'male', 'female',
or in rare instances 'hermaphrodite', gender refers to the social and socio-
psychological attributes by which human beings are categorised as 'masculine',
'feminine' or 'androgynous' (Jary and Jary, 1991, 260). Recently, both the logic and
the utility of making an absolute distinction between sex and gender has been brought
into question within feminist theory itself. If minds are never disembodied, the
possibility arises that the body, as part of the subjective experience of the thinker, has
real effects on the process of understanding. In that case, both sex and gender are
relevant (Crowley and Himmelweit, 1992, 6-7). It is important to move beyond the
simple dichotomies of body/mind and sex/gender that are so pervasive (Brike, 1992,
76-77).

At the heart of a large body of feminist writing has been the distinction
between biological sex and socially constructed gender. Sex, of course, being
biological, does not rank highly in feminist accounts, which have concentrated on the
determinants of gender (particularly in American and British writing). That emphasis,
however, has left the 'biological' (i.e. sex) unchallenged as, first, something that is
relatively fixed and, secondly, something that comes first – the biological base onto
which experience and the effects of the environment are added during our
development as individuals. To see biology as coming first may be to acknowledge
learning and the effects of the environment, but with biology imposing considerable
constraints on what can be learned. Recognising that development is rather more
complicated than that, biologists now emphasise the importance of ‘interaction’ between experience and internal physiology. In other words, social experience is not simply added onto the biological base; it rather interacts with the biological base. It is, of course, important that biologists are becoming more aware of a wider context for behavioural development, and are now less willing to attribute everything to physiology or genes.

What another line of thought emphasises is that what one is now – one’s biological body, his/her experiences – all this is a product of the complex transformations between biology and experiences in one’s past. And those transformations happening now will affect any such transformations in the future. Biology, in this view, does have a role: but it is neither a base to build on, nor a determining factor.

To return to more explicitly feminist accounts, what feminism now needs is to move beyond the simple dichotomies of body/mind and sex/gender that are so pervasive. To do so means that we must seek ways of moving beyond the critiques of biological determinism. Denying biological determinism, however, does not mean simply stressing social construction and thereby denying the body altogether: we have to find ways of bringing biological bodies back into our theorising.

By mid-century, functionalist sex-role theory dominated the Western sociological discourse on women. The key figure in this development was Talcott Parsons, who in the early 1950s wrote the classic formulation of American sex-role theory, giving it an intellectual breadth and rigor it never had. The notion of role as a basic structural concept of the social sciences had crystallised in the 1930s, and it was immediately applied to questions of gender. Two of Parson’s own papers of the early 1940s talked freely of sex roles. In the course of his argument, he offered an interesting account of several options that had recently emerged within the female role. There was, however, little sense of a power relation between men and women; and the argument embedded the issue of sex and gender firmly in the context of the family (Parsons, 1964, 89-103, 177-196).
But the Role Theory had been subjected to several criticisms. These criticisms underlined a more general problem: the discourse lacked a stable theoretical object. "Sex-role" research could, and did, wobble from psychological argument with biological assumptions, through accounts of interpersonal transactions, to explanations of a macrosociological character, without ever having to resolve its boundaries. The elusive character of a discourse where issues as important as that of oppression could appear, disappear, and reappear in different pieces of writing without anything logically compelling authors to stick with and solve them no doubt lies behind much of the frustration expressed in these criticisms. The underlying incoherence was to have a devastating influence on the sociological literature about men (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 2002).

I now return to the connection between biology, on the one hand, and gender, on the other, which has already been touched upon. Although the physiological (the male body) and the cultural (the social relations of masculinity) are obviously linked, the nature of that link needs to be explored carefully because it is not as straightforward as it may, at first, appear. Accordingly, I examine briefly what a small number of leading writers have to say on these and related matters. The authors are, in order of appearance, Morgan (1992), Sedgwick (1985), MacInnes (1998), Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994). All agree that masculinity is socially and historically, not biologically, constructed. A good point with which to start is Morgan's (1992) assertion that what is masculinity (and femininity) is best approached from the standpoint of what men and women do (that is, how they behave) rather than what they are. If gender is cultural, then it follows that women as well as men can step into and inhabit (whether permanently or temporarily) masculinity as a 'cultural space', one with its own sets of behaviours. In this view 'the masculine' and 'the feminine' signify a range of culturally defined characteristics assignable to both men and women. By also introducing sexuality Morgan raises the contentious issue of how far expressions of sexuality are also socially and culturally constructed (see also Simon 1996), thereby producing the 'gender map' shown in Figure 1.1.
Men

The masculine

Hetero Homo

The feminine

Hetero Homo

Figure 1.1 Morgan's 'gender map'

Factor in additional elements such as class, ethnicity, age, religion and geographical location, and the picture becomes even more complicated. A few obvious examples will serve to illustrate the point that the biological male and female can step into either male or female gender roles:

- **The tomboy:** this is a masculine identity temporarily adopted by young girls but which, if maintained for too long into young womanhood, raises doubts about their heterosexuality.

- **The transsexual:** 'he' or 'she' can be a 'man' or 'woman' as the situation demands or as they wish.

- **The high-flying female executive:** she heads a large company and has to demonstrate daily leadership, initiative, grit and aggression (traditional masculine attributes), but she is also a devoted wife or partner and a caring and gentle mother in her private life.

- **The male nurse:** he has to be gentle, nurturing and caring, attributes usually associated with the feminine.

Masculinity and femininity are habitually defined in terms of the difference between them, but Sedgwick (1985, 12) repudiates any automatic equating of masculinity with men, arguing that 'when something is about “masculinity”, it isn’t always “about men”.' She opposes the positioning of masculinity and femininity as a dichotomy, arguing that instead of being at opposite poles of the same axis, they are actually in different perpendicular dimensions and, therefore, this is what she terms 'independently variable'. Some people score high on both dimensions, others low in
terms of stereotypical male and female traits, leading her to conclude that such research indicates only that 'some people are just plain more “gender-y” than others' (Sedgwick, 1985, 15-16). One of the most comprehensive explorations of this (and related) issues to date is by MacInnes (1998) in an argument I have earlier touched upon. In his analysis, if ‘being male’ is largely anatomical, masculinity is most certainly social, cultural and historical, "something for the girls as much as the boys and, over time, it must surely come to have no special connection to wither biological sex’ (MacInnes, 1998, 45). Masculinity and femininity, as characteristic of men and women, exist only as sociocultural constructions and not as the property of persons. Indeed, they are no more than a set of assumptions which people hold about each other and themselves in certain contexts: Gender, together with the terms of masculinity and femininity, is an ideology people use in modern societies to imagine the existence of differences between men and women on the basis of their sex where, in fact, there is none...[It is something] we imagine to exist and which is represented to us in material form through the existences of the two sexes, male and female (MacInnes, 1998, 1, 10). He maintains that there can be no single correspondence between sexed bodies and masculinity and femininity because ‘genitals and biological capacities aside, men and women are not different.....Being a biological male does not confer masculinity’ (MacInnes, 1998, 77). He forecasts that there will come a time when there will be no difference between men and women apart from the anatomical and, therefore, ‘both in the real world and our analysis of it, it is time for the end of masculinity’ (MacInnes, 1998, 47). By the end of masculinity he means the demise of the belief in masculinity as a gendered identity specific to men. Indeed, this ‘end of masculinity’ would, in his view, be a major step in the direction of global equal rights.

Perhaps even more challenging is Cornwall and Lindisfarne’s (1994, 10) stance than the sexed body and the gendered individual should not be chained together since both are culturally constructed. They argue that ‘biology is no more primary or “real” than any other aspect of lived experience’. They hold that (as shown in Figure 1.2) ‘there are male and female versions of masculinity and, equally, female and male versions of femininity’ (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1998, 15). As a consequence, ‘male’ and ‘female’ have no intrinsic biological reality and are better
understood as metaphors through which identity is constructed, given that 'an essentialist “male-female” dichotomy cannot account for the ways people are gendered in different places at different times...the idea of “being a man” can no longer be treated as universal' (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1998, 3).

Further they argue that the three most familiar descriptors (namely ‘men’, ‘male’ and ‘masculinity’) are not necessarily compatible (as, indeed, is the case with ‘women’, ‘female’ and ‘femininity’). Each has multiple meanings and can even describe contradictory aspects. As a consequence, there is no “natural" not necessary, connection between men and masculinity' (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1998, 37).

![Figure 1.2 Cornwall and Lindisfarne's Version of masculinity and femininity](image)

**Figure 1.2** Cornwall and Lindisfarne’s Version of masculinity and femininity

What are the social factors that impact upon and pattern masculinity? How is masculinity culturally constructed? In figure 1.3 the principal factors that shape the form, experience and enactment of masculinity-as-a-text are itemised. These clearly overlap and, depending on the individual, some will be more influential and enduring than others. Masculinity is never to be set in concrete form/shape; rather, it always has the capacity for rapid modification. For instance, we have seen in the example of Terry that as a man ages, his sense and expression of the masculine too inevitably change, just as the world evolves around him. Another obvious example of ‘masculinity-on-the-move’ would be a man who changes his class, status, culture and geographical location and becomes upwardly (or downwardly) mobile and, in the
process, modifies his sense, experience and enactment of the masculine (or even the 'masculines').

Figure 1.3 Key factors that shape masculinities

How is masculinity displayed? While some approach masculinity as the internalised product of structural features like class and ethnicity, writers like David Morgan (1992) and Judith Butler (1990) present it more as a Goffmanesque presentation, a 'dramaturgical accomplishment' (Coleman, 1990). Rather than being made up of 'essences' or 'fundamentals', masculinity and femininity are sets of signs that are performed in what Kersten (1995) refers to as a 'situational accomplishment' and Butler (1990) as a 'performative act'. The 1980s are a good example of this as a whole new range of commercially driven masculinities performed through fashion came into being. The emergence of this narcissistic masculinity mirrored the bigger, structural picture. In thinking of 'masculinity-as-enactment', it must be remembered that those who do not perform their masculinity in a culturally approved manner are liable to be ostracised, even punished.
It can now be asserted that masculinity and femininity are becoming more fluid and that men and women are increasingly occupying a shared middle place. The evidence for this assertion that men are becoming more like women and women more like men is somewhat tenuous and is usually based on isolated instances. For example, 'Housefathers' taking responsibility for home and hearth while the female partner goes out to work; Women breaking through the 'glass ceiling' and attaining high positions in the professions, running organisations and institutions and adopting a 'masculine' demeanour; Groups of young women drinking heavily and behaving in a 'laddish' manner in city 'nite spots'; Strong men breaking down and crying (especially in sport, as witness the English footballer Paul Gascoigne (Gazzal) and the German world motor racing champion Michael Schumacher). As far as fashion is concerned, men have certainly become more style and appearance-conscious and have stepped into a domain once almost exclusively associated with the feminine.

[II]

Situating The Masculinity Discourse In The Realm Of Gender Studies And Sociology Of Knowledge

It can be noted that masculinity studies is a product of the major reconfiguration of academic disciplines that has taken place since the 1960s. Taking its lead from feminism, masculinity studies is thus dedicated to analysing that has often seemed to be an implicit fact, that the vast majority of societies are patriarchal and that men have historically enjoyed more than their share of power, sources, and cultural authority. Focusing critical interrogation on men, patriarchy, and formations of masculinity, scholars in many disciplines have sought to naturalise Simon de Beauvoir's\(^3\) observation that "it goes without saying that he is a man" by demonstrating that masculinities are historically constructed, mutable, and contingent, and analysing many of their widespread effects (Adams and Savran, 2002, 1-7).

Any historical account of the field's development must commence with the ascendancy of second wave feminism during the 1960s and the consolidation of women's studies in the academy during the next decade. However, among the many conditions involved in the second wave feminism there was no consensus about the
status of men. As it entered universities in specialised programmes and as a supplement to established disciplines such as literature and sociology, women's studies laid the groundwork for many of the approaches to masculinity. Subsequent feminist scholarship began the project of historical recovery by bringing attention to unrecognised female authors, artists, and powerful political agents, as well as the previously invisible histories of the ordinary women who spent their lives as mothers, wives, servants and workers. In terms of its impact on the study of masculinity, perhaps the most important development of feminist criticism was the shift from “woman” to “gender” as a primary object of study. A term that applies to men and women alike, gender would enable scholars to approach masculinity as a social role that, like femininity, needed to be understood and interrogated.

The introduction of European continental philosophy into the humanities opened up the possibilities of even more dramatic reconsiderations of gender. Among the most influential of those philosophical perspectives was deconstruction, which proposed that the western intellectual tradition was founded on a structure of binary oppositions that, when subjected to close analysis, would inevitably break down as a result of their own internal contradictions. The term man assumed significance through its pairing with its more degraded counterpart, woman. Deconstruction and related variants of the poststructuralist theory questioned the stability and universality of all identity categories, positing the self as a mutable and fragmented effect of subjectivity. Influenced by postructuralist theory, feminists came to see gender as a historically contingent construction, invariably constituted in and by its performance (Butler, 1990). Disengaged from the body, masculinity and femininity need not correspond to the sexed categories, man and woman.

But these theoretical insights about gender have provided little pragmatic guidance for actual men. In the 1970s, the revolutionary import of the feminist insurgency in the streets, the voting booths, various professional arenas, and the academy was not lost on a generation of men who had been either actively involved with or sympathetic to the New Left. While some made it clear that they had no time for feminism, many began to hearken to the warnings and demands of their feminist comrades in arms. During the early 1970s, some men began to argue that sexism produces negative effects on men as well as women (Fasteau, 1975). And a
significant number of men, in fact, did become involved in what could be described as the first wave of the men’s movement, starting their own consciousness raising groups, analysing and trying to change their roles in patriarchal institutions, and endeavouring to forge non-sexist masculinities. Although this early men’s movement was primarily a response to feminism, its political urgency was undoubtedly heightened by the emergence of the gay liberation movement at the end of the 1960s. In contrast, the second wave, the so-called mythopoetic men’s movement that arose during the 1980s, represents, as many of its critics have argued, something of a backlash against feminism. Organised under the aegis of poet and activist Robert Bly (1990), whose best selling volume *Iron John* is the movement’s bible, these men believed that they have been emasculated by feminism and an effeminising culture. By retreating into the wilderness and by exercises in spiritual interrogation, they attempted to recuperate their own innate, masculine power. The movement succeeded in gaining quite a few adherents in the early 1990s and has been the subject of major controversy among sociologists. At the same time when the first wave men’s movement was consolidating, scholars in a number of disciplines began to introduce the critique of patriarchal masculinities into their work. While most of this scholarship was conceived within departmental boundaries (primarily anthropology, sociology, and history), it repeatedly acknowledged its debt to feminism in an attempt to politicise traditional disciplinary formations. Like the other intellectual insurgencies that arose in the wake of the 1960s (like women’s or African American Studies), these prototypes for what was to become masculinity studies were explicitly activist in intent. They were also the product of an identitarian politics that insisted upon the centrality and irreducibility of categories such as race, gender, and sexuality as a foundation both for activism and for the analysis of social, psychic, and cultural productions. Yet unlike the masculinity studies that emerged during the late 1980s, most of these critics implicitly or pointedly rejected psychoanalytical accounts of gender, preferring to understand sexual oppression in the context of economic and social history.

As many universities developed women’s studies in the 1980s, and as feminist theory and methods permeated the disciplines, more and more men started interrogating their own relationship with feminism. The 1987 collection of essays,
Men in Feminism, pointedly set out to consider what men could contribute to academic feminism. And while the book reaches no consensus, it is symptomatic of the increasing concern and anxiety of many men sympathetic to feminism who were abashed by their own complexity with patriarchal institutions and somewhat envious of academic feminism’s influence and prestige. The problem with men’s entry into feminism, was that they threatened to reverse its accomplishments, returning the spotlight of critical attention to masculinity and male anxieties (Modleski, 1991). Because the goals of feminism had not been fully realised, men needed to support the efforts of women rather than overemphasising their own sensitivity, and highly performative renunciation of patriarchal authority. While some male scholars attempted, however problematically, to fashion themselves to feminists, others tuned to the study of men as a corrective to feminism’s nearly exclusive focus on women.8 Although often complementary to feminism, there is a growing body of feminist scholarship that sees masculinity as a significant and necessary extension of its purview. One of the earliest and most important examples of convergence between the study of men and feminism was Sedgwick’s Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (1985). It argues that in literature, relations between men have consistently been mediated by women who are treated as conduits for male homosocial desire, vehicles to ensure the heterosexual character of the erotic traffic between men. As a founding text of masculinity studies, it demonstrates that normative, heterosexual masculinities are structured by triangulating practices in which women mediate male relationships. At the same time, however, its analysis of erotic bonds between men and of the way the boundaries between the homosocial and the homosexual are policed also marks it as an inaugural text of lesbian / gay / queer studies.

As Sedgwick’s work would suggest, much of the research on masculinity also derives from the scholarship on sexuality originating within lesbian/gay/queer studies. Michel Foucault’s groundbreaking 1976 volume, The History of Sexuality, challenged the universalising claims of psychoanalysis and biology, arguing that the distinction between normative and dissident sexualities was culturally constructed and historically contingent. Sexual perversion was not a universal constant, but a category produced by the sciences of sexuality that arose in the nineteenth century as aspects of
broader regimes of social control. In the 1980s, social historians such as Weeks (1985) and D'Emilio (1983) set the agenda for an emerging field of sexuality studies by examining the changing relationships between sexual practices and sexual subjects. Looking at legal, medical, and political discourses from different periods, they linked the production of various heterosexualities and homosexualities to changing historical circumstances. Unlike heterosexual masculinity, which has long assumed its own universality and transparency, gay and other deviant forms of masculinity have more consistently been forced to interrogate their own relationship to dominant gender configurations. As Kaja Silverman argued in her 1992 study, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, feminists invested in dismantling what she called the “dominant fiction” of patriarchal masculinity needed to attend to masculinities that “not only acknowledge but embrace castration, alterity, and specularity.”

Evidence for rapid study of masculinity studies during the last decade of the twentieth century is everywhere in the many academic conferences, topical anthologies, and courses are now being offered on masculinity. As many women’s studies programs move towards gender studies, masculinity may take its place alongside courses on gay / lesbian / queer topics. Yet these recent developments are by no means unproblematic and the study of masculinity continues to raise a number of important questions in an era of institutional downsizing, when academicians and administrators are sensitive to the rapidly rising and falling markets of intellectual fashion. Unlike many of the fields that are its models and precursors, masculinity studies analyses a dominant and oppressive class that has, arguably, always been the primary focus of scholarly attention. Does masculinity studies represent a beneficial extension of feminist analysis or does it represent a hijacking of feminism? In short, what is gained – and what is lost – when a field that had been defined as women’s studies, understood as both a theoretic and politically activist insurgency, changes its focus to examine the construction of those subjects who historically have subjugated women? Given the limited resources in universities to support teaching and research on gender, it seems an unfortunate inevitability that masculinity studies, if it were to gain any institutional status, would enter into a competitive relationship with other related/allied fields.
The Developmental Dimension Triggering The Study Of Masculinity

We may begin by asking a simple question: What do men, as a distinct group, have to do with the development process? Men play diverse roles in the economy, the community and the family. Men are husbands and fathers, brothers and sons. Across differences of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and religion, one of the few commonalities that men share, as a ‘distinct group’, is their gender privilege. Men, like women, are affected by gender based power structures that are interwoven with other hierarchical structures such as those based on race and class. Yet men, regardless of their positioning in other hierarchical structures, generally have a strategic common interest in defending and not challenging their gender privileging. A gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change (Connel, 1995).

Processes that confer privilege on one group and not another are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred. Thus, not having to think about race is one of the luxuries dictated by a dominant race, just as not having to think about gender is one of the patriarchal dividends that men gain from their position in the gender order. Men tend not to think of themselves as ‘gendered’ beings, and this is one reason why policy makers and development practitioners, both men and women, often misunderstand or dismiss ‘gender’ as a women’s issue.

Gender, as a determinant of social relations that legitimises and sustains men’s power over women, is inherently about relations between women and men, as well as relations among groups of women and among groups of men. Achieving gender equality is not possible without changes in men’s lives as well as in women’s. Efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into thinking about development requires more than a focus on women, however vital that might be; what is also needed is a focus on men. Yet, significantly, men continue to be implicated rather than explicitly addressed in development programmes focusing on gender inequalities and the
advancement of women. “In the gender and development literature men appear very little, often as hazy background figures” (White, 1997, 14-23). There is a growing recognition, however, of the need to define more precisely the relationship between men and ‘engendered’ development policy and practice, and examine questions of men’s responsibility for women’s disadvantage, as well as men’s role in redressing gender inequalities.

This recognition is, in part, a consequence of the conceptual shift from the discourse of Women in Development (WID) to that of Gender and Development (GAD): The GAD approach signals three departures from WID. First, the focus shifts from women to gender and the unequal power relations between women and men. Second, all social, political, and economic structures and development are re-examined from the perspective of gender differentials. Third, it is recognised that achieving gender equality requires transformative change. (United Nations, 1999, ix). The purpose of this deliberation is to discuss men’s possible relationships to this process of transformative change by exploring the meanings and uses of ‘masculinity’. Discussions of masculinity provide a place in which men’s involvement in producing and challenging inequalities and inequities in gender and other social relations can be investigated. Masculinity renders gender visible to and for men. Understanding the definitions and discourses surrounding masculinity can help in the analysis of how political, economic and cultural inequalities are produced and distributed not only between but also within the genders. Above all, an inquiry into the ‘politics of masculinity’ offers an opportunity to rethink men’s strategic interest in challenging the values and practices that create gender hierarchy (Greig, Mimmel, Lang, 2000).

Examining masculinity and the role it plays in the development process is not simply an analytical exercise, but has widespread implications for the effectiveness of programmes that seek to improve economic and social outcomes in virtually every country. “If development is not engendered, it is endangered” cautioned the 1997 Human Development Report. Gender equality is not only an end in itself, but also a necessary means of achieving sustainable human development and the reduction of poverty.9
Across a range of development issues and institutions, there is an increasing interest in men as potential agents of change and not merely objects of blame. Commenting on the role of men in the HIV epidemic, Peter Piot, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, has stated that “[T]he time is ripe to start seeing men not as some kind of problem, but as part of the solution”. The questions of “which men?” and “which solutions?” remain to be answered.

[IV]

Different Theoretical Approaches To The Study Of Masculinity

Positivist/Modernist Approach

Sociology has emerged as a child of the Enlightenment and has discovered its ancestral roots within the forms of thought and feeling that characterised the Enlightenment. The identifications of masculinity with reason have played a central role in western concepts of modernity and the forms of social theory and philosophy (Seidler, 1994). The Enlightenment established a sharp distinction between reason and nature and this antagonism to the ‘natural’ remains cultural within contemporary social theory that is cast within structuralist framework (Weil, 1988). Bacon talked about the new sciences as a masculinist philosophy. As men in their rationality were to remain unmoved by emotions and feelings, so were the sciences that were created in their image. Both Durkheim and Levi-Strauss rely upon a distinction between nature and culture, with the idea that nature can be identified with the ‘given’ and ‘unchanging’. It is important to recognise the part that sociology particularly in its positivist expressions, has played in stilling the critical voice of reason. Even if this was a masculinist voice it could still be critical, as it was, for instance in Hegel’s response to the Enlightenment. Hegel refused to legitimise existing social relationships as ‘rational’ because they were ‘real’. Within a positivist culture we are so used to accusing those who are prepared to imagine a different reality or to live different relationships with others as romantics and dreamers, that it can be hard to listen to what Hegel is saying.
For the Enlightenment, reason remained a central notion that brought into question traditional relationships of power and authority. It insisted that authority had to be prepared to justify itself. There was a democratic impulse which insisted that people were equally rational moral agents but equally there was another strain that sought to legitimate the authority of reason. It is this which connects to the authority of a ‘rational masculinity’, as if men could think of reason as their own and so legitimate the organisation of private and public life in their own image. On part, this resonates with a lack of interiority and inner life that characterises dominant forms of masculinity.

It is as if men learn to use their reason to define what is best both for themselves and for others. As men, we often take it to be our particular task to know what is best. Since we speak with the authority of reason, it is easy for others to be silenced. As men, we learn to set the terms within which others can speak. So for Kant it was only in relation to men that women could supposedly escape the hold of their natures and seek the guidance of reason. The authority of reason was clearly tied up with the patriarchal authority of men. Women and children were to exist in relation to men, not as persons in their own right. To the extent that Kant’s Enlightenment conception of reason still sustains liberal conceptions of freedom and equality, these visions remain set within men’s terms. This partly explains why feminist theory had eventually to challenge liberal conceptions of rights as adequate expressions of freedom and equality. The Women’s Movement learned to speak of oppression and liberation as a way of setting their own terms for participation in the public world of men.

The crisis of modernity is partly characterised by a loss of confidence in this vision of progress as well as the universal terms in which it is expressed. In its different versions this dream seems to have lost much of its grip on us. If we are drawn back to the Enlightenment, it is not to its historical confidence and its belief in progress, but to its scepticism. We have grown suspicious of its grand claims and even of its promises of a transformed life.
Weil (1988) came to recognise the tragic consequences of the split between the sciences and the humanities. The Enlightenment was shaped by this guiding opposition. It was integral to the Cartesian inheritance, though its implications for social and political theory still remain to be explored. The natural world was accepted as a world of forces governed by particular laws which could be discovered. The empirical world of science was the world of unfreedom and determination. Within the Cartesian framework nature was no longer conceived in living organic terms but as having died and only existing as matter.

It was through reason that science was able to discern the laws of nature. With Newton this was still conceived as a religious quest, for science was not yet thought of as a secular practice which sought to replace transcendental explanations with explanations from natural causes. But it is also crucial that the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth century conceive of science as a masculinist practice, as part of the development, as Francis Bacon thought of it, of a new masculine philosophy. Science was to be an objective activity that worked with impartial laws. As men in their rationality were to remain unmoved by emotions and feelings, so were the sciences that were created in their image.

With Descartes, we have a mechanistic conception of the universe in which it is only what can be quantified that is real and objective. If Weil is right, there is considerable tension between the vision of science connected to manual skills that Descartes espoused and what came to be viewed as Cartesianism, which tended to reinforce a sharp and unbridgeable gap between mental and physical labour. It embodied the categorical distinction between mind and matter that has done so much to organise our visions of modernity. It left us with a dualistic conception of the person who was caught between the determinations of the physical world, to the extent that we are embodied physical beings, and the mental world in which we could be free and creative.

This was to be reflected in the prevailing split between the sciences and the humanities. It was built upon a particular conception of nature – both our inner nature and the natural world we live in. In large part it set the terms for our traditions
of social and political theory which were largely expressions of the tensions of an Enlightenment vision of modernity that was largely taken for granted.

Within the Cartesian framework, there is little space for the social. It was Kant who worked out that as rational selves we could live as moral agents. He recognised that we live in different worlds and, to the extent that we are empirical selves, our behaviour is unfree and determined. But to the extent that we can abstract ourselves and lift ourselves above our animal natures, so we can be free and self-determining. As intelligible beings we can be moral agents too.

This vision of freedom and morality sets the terms for both Durkheim and Weber, though in different ways. Durkheim’s early work sets out a positivist vision in which we learn to treat social laws. In setting itself in opposition to psychologism, it questions the explanations that individuals might otherwise give of their behaviour in terms of intentions and motives. But it sets morality beyond reach of the individual, to be identified with the rights and obligations that are set by society. If our obligations and duties change this is largely because of the division of labour. It is the contractual terms of an organic solidarity that brings the workings of reason into a clearer focus within the social realm.

For Durkheim ‘the individual submits to society and this submission is the condition of his liberation’. The gendered language carries its own visions of authority, for if freedom is conceived of as wrought from an endless struggle against nature, so, if women are conceived of as closer to nature, then, as with Kant, it is up to women similarly to submit themselves to the authority of men as the condition of their ‘liberation’. Durkheim tacitly complies with a masculinist conception of freedom as wrought from a struggle against nature. He looks towards society for a deliverance and protection against the forces of nature. Invoking images forged in the Enlightenment and familiar to Kant, he has it that for man, freedom consists in deliverance from blind, unthinking, physical forces; this he achieves by opposing against them with great and intelligent force which is society, under whose protection he shelters. (Durkheim 1974,72).
Durkheim sets himself against a particular form of liberal individualism. He is confident that society ‘is the source and seat of all the intellectual benefits that constitute civilisation’ (Durkheim, 1974, 73), and that ‘from society derive all the essentials of our mental life’ (Durkheim, 1974, 73). He argues against the view that there is more in the mind of an individual than in the most perfect and complex society by confessing ‘that to me it is the exact opposite which has always appeared to be obvious’ (Durkheim, 1974, 67). He is convinced that ‘the assembly of moral and intellectual benefits which constitute civilisation at each moment of its history has its seat in the collective mind, not in the individual’ (Durkheim, 1974, 67).

This is a crucial insight that has helped form structuralist theory in the diverse hands of Althusser, Lacan and Levi-Strauss. It awakens us to the significance of structures of language, myth and customs, into which individuals are born and which help to organise their subjectivities. It teaches us a particular humility before these structures as we learn to appreciate the extent to which they help to form and organise our individuality and experience. Durkheim’s insights have remained a guiding inspiration for the implicit ‘collectivism’ that has underpinned a structuralist tradition.

The nationalist tradition of the Enlightenment which sets reason in a categorical way against nature is sustained by a structuralist tradition. It works to define culture in fundamental opposition to nature. For while nature is essentially given and ahistorical, it is culture that is largely conceived of as a linguistic phenomenon. We have learned to think of reason as an autonomous faculty, as the quality that separates us off from animals and so defines our humanity. Within twentieth century social theory, largely under the influence of Jacobson and Saussure, we have learned to think of language in these autonomous terms.

These are different incarnations of the prevailing Enlightenment distinction between reason and nature. For as nature is given, so the form that it takes is provided by the categories of mind. Our emotions, feelings and desires, as part of an unredeemed nature, learn to keep their silence. They are denigrated as sources of knowledge or as ways of developing a fuller contact with ourselves.
For as rational selves we learn that we can only know ourselves through reason and that reason is the only way that we can guide our lives. We learn to silence our natures and so we also become deaf to the cries of others, learning to treat them as 'emotional' or 'subjective'. The link between rationalism and Protestant conceptions of human nature remains part of the deeper structures of social theories which, like Durkheim and Weber, find a particular inspiration in Kant.

The denigration of nature goes hand in hand with the denigration of women who are supposedly closer to nature. It also connects to the denigration of our inner emotional lives which are not properly treated as sources of knowledge. So much of this has been left implicit within the dualities, say between holism and individualism, structure and action, meaning and cause, that have dominated contemporary forms of social theory.

It has meant that the various challenges of feminist theory to traditions of positivism, Marxism and Phenomenology have largely gone unheeded, for we have failed to appreciate the level at which they are working. It is not simply that social theories have tended to illuminate the experience of men and not women, but that they have also served to legitimate a particular form of masculine experience.

In crucial aspects, different forms of feminist theory have challenged fundamental assumptions that have structured a modernity that has largely been cast in terms provided by the Enlightenment. In challenging the conventional distinction that we make between reason and emotion it has subverted the notion of the national self that has been the guiding image of personal identity. It has worked to reinstate different forms of knowledge in a way that has brought into question both positivist and interpretative methods.

Not only has it served to indicate the partiality of the knowledge that sociologists have produced, but it has brought into question some of the assumptions upon which it was produced. It also helps us uncover different traditions of thought and feeling that have been lost under the dominance of an Enlightenment inheritance. It helps us rework the terms of modernity as we, more fully appreciate its different sources and influences.
Psychoanalytic Approach

Psychoanalysis offers to modern thought on masculinity a uniquely rich method of investigation, some illuminating general principles, and an immense variety of specific hypotheses and insights. These do not come without cost and risk (Connell, 1994). Psychoanalysis has a paradoxical position in discussions of masculinity. The Freudian movement made the first serious attempt at scientific research on masculinity and explanation of its major patterns. It can be noted that Freud did not set out to do research on gender.¹¹

It follows from Freud’s writings that adult masculinity, as an organisation of character around sexual desire, must be a complex, and in some ways precarious, developmental construction. It is not given a priori in the nature of men, as European culture generally assumes. It is not wholly defined by the active/passive polarity that Freud initially saw as underlying sexual and mental life, which in due course became the basis of Adlerian and Jungian theories of masculinity.

Freud introduced the issue of masculinity near the end of a long chapter on his patient’s famous dream about white wolves, while reflecting on the early history of the little boy’s sexual development. He toyed with an equation between activity/passivity and masculinity/femininity, suggesting that the latter was usually superimposed on the former at about the oedipal stage. But he noted that in the crisis of the boy’s emotional relation to his father, the feminine aim in relation to the father was repressed because of the fear of castration: "In short, a clear protest on the part of his masculinity!" (Freud, 1918/1955c, 47).

A pre-oedipal narcissistic masculinity was thus revealed, strong enough to force the repression of the strongest current in the boy’s desires. Through a long argument, far too complex to summarise here, Freud pursued the psychological consequences of this archaic current of emotion, of the homosexual desire repressed in the oedipal crisis itself, and of an identification with women and jealousy of the mother that coexisted with the other currents.

The line of thought remained speculative; Freud never became acquainted with the methods of social research. But its implications are profound. For here is the
germ of a theory of the patriarchal organisation of culture and the mechanism of its transmission between generations through the psychodynamics that construct masculinity. To develop the idea would be to tilt further toward social determinism than Freud ever did. Later writers on masculinity have moved exactly in that direction but have mostly abandoned Freud's theorising about the superego.

So Freud opened more doors than he walked through. But the leads he gave for the analysis of masculinity were remarkable enough. Beginning with conventional, essentialist ideas about a masculine/feminine, active/passive polarity in emotional life (a conception he could never quite shake off), he moved on to provide a method for the investigation, a guiding concept for it, a first map of the development of masculinity, and a warning about the limits of the idea.

Long before social constructionism became influential in discussions of gender, psychoanalysis had offered a picture of adult character as constructed through a long, necessarily conflict-ridden, process. This process produces a layered and contradictory structure. If social researchers on masculinity learn any one thing from the Freudian tradition, it should be this: Freud's concept of the unconscious, though immensely influential, is only one way in which this layering and contradiction can be represented. Sartre (1969), (1976) and Laing (1965), (1969), (1970) have provided another, in their analyses of contradictory commitments and practices.

Recognising a conflictual process of construction, psychoanalysis further recognises that the process can follow different paths. Indeed, this was fundamental to Freud's understanding of the neuroses as constructed from the same materials as "normal" mental life, put together in a different way. Psychoanalytic research has provided rich documentation of the diverse paths that the construction of masculinity can take, both within one society (as in the psychoanalytic work of the Frankfurt school) and between societies (as in the cross-cultural study of alternative nuclear complexes by Anne Parsons [1964]). The idea of multiple masculinities that is familiar in recent social research finds a precise meaning, and some of its strongest evidence, in psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis is often read as a theory of the individual, and Freud certainly dreamed of foundations in biology; but in truth it is a social science. Psychoanalytic
case studies are all about the relationships that constitute the person, the prohibitions and possibilities that emerge in that most extraordinary and complex of social processes, the raising of one generation of humans by another. Psychoanalysis does not provide an alternative or a supplement to social theories of masculinity; it is engaged in social analysis from the start. Psychoanalysis forces one to recognise that the social is present in the person – it does not end at the skin – and that power invests desire in its very foundations.

Yet the understanding of the social in most psychoanalytic work is severely limited (and in some instances, such as the Jungian tradition, practically absent). Questions of social structure and large-scale dynamics are often very remote. Those psychoanalytic formulations that are clearest about questions of social dynamics, or even make use of social-structural concepts – such as Adler’s (1928), (1956), (1992) and Horney’s (1932) work in the early decades, the Frankfurt school, and more recently Laing’s work on the family and feminist object-relations theory – are the most fruitful sources for the analysis of masculinity.

Given these principles, psychoanalysis provides a tremendous range of hypotheses, suggestions, insights, and guesses about the making of gender and the working of gender relations. Freud’s idea about the importance of castration anxiety, Adler’s argument about overcompensation, Jung’s suggestions about the gender dynamics of marriages, Horney’s and Dinnerstein’s (1976) arguments about the importance of boys’ fears of the mother, the Frankfurt school’s ideas about the impact of family power structure and societal alienation, Chodrow’s (1978) ideas about emotional separation, Lacanian arguments about the oedipal ordering of symbolisation, are all useful lines of thought. To treat one of them as the a priori framework for a theory of masculinity would be to misuse psychoanalysis (in a way unfortunately typical of its applications in the social sciences). But deployed in the detail of cases (which need not be only individual life histories, for as Dollard’s [1937] classic study of race relations showed, psychoanalysis can also be deployed in the study of collectivities and institutions), these ideas will greatly enrich understanding of the social dynamics towards which we grope with terms such as masculinity.
Freud did not succeed in founding a science, in his own sense of a positivist science of the mind. He founded something more ambiguous, and more interesting: an enterprise of scrutiny and theory that has the capacity to be both an ideology and technology of social control and a means of cultural critique and personal discovery. Both sides of psychoanalysis show in their tangled encounters with issues of masculinity. Freud's invention, according to me, is an essential aid in understanding men's gender and gender politics, but is never enough on its own. It is an instrument that needs to be used with precision, on the right kind of material, in full awareness of the social mysteries that create the mysteries of desire (Connell, 1994, 35).

Post-Modern Approach

The issues of complexity, ambiguity and fluidity are central themes in post-structuralist and post-modernist theories of gender. Postmodern approaches attempt to deconstruct false dualisms of mind/body, culture/nature, man/woman, modern/primitive, reason/emotion, subject/object, and so forth. Images of "fractured," "decentered," and "reflexive" selves that appear in postmodernist writing help to critically evaluate overly simple concepts and categories. In its more extreme forms, however, postmodernism's focus is solely on language and its role in the perception of reality. Discourse and cognition are important, but there is much more than this to social life. If one focuses too much on language as constructing reality, solutions to injustice tend to be clever word games, and the concrete bases of social inequality are slighted. Describing the social world as floating fields of symbols manipulated by reflexive agents probably captures a phenomenological "reality", but one needs to ground such analyses in patterns of material conditions (Coltrane & Hickman, 1992, 401-421). By relying too heavily on deconstructionism, one too easily overlooks persistence and oppression in favour of historical, symbolic, and subjective particularity.

Under the influence of Foucault, a school of gender researchers has studied how discourses ranging from medicine to fashion have classified, represented and helped to control human bodies, emphasising how systems of knowledge function as part of an apparatus of power. The approach has been particularly fruitful in relation
to sport, where the interweaving of cultural images of masculinity with the management and training of bodies has been powerfully effective. The postmodern tendency to ignore social structure undermines sociological attempts to understand gender inequality. It is now increasingly common to reject a sociology that seeks systematic regularities and patterns of causality. The postmodern emphasis on particularity and language also discourages one from seeking causal explanations. Without some concept of social causality, one can only describe a multitude of unique experiences and talk endlessly about that. Kuhn, (1970) and his successors were right in pointing out that science has no special claim to truth, but one still needs to look for causal patterns in the social world and ask why things happen as they do. Theories need to remain causal, even if most of the research methods cannot adequately prove causality (Lieberson, 1985). Perhaps one should reject both scientism and postmodernism while simultaneously relying on their contradictory root assumptions. In researching masculinities, one might look for both regularised similarity and particularistic difference. By using multiple methods and relying on diverse ways of knowing, one might move closer to some tentative conclusions about which theoretical explanations for gender inequality are most plausible.

[V]

Complex Trajectory Of Masculinity

If notions of masculinity, like the notion of gender itself, are fluid and situational, we must consider the various ways people understand masculinity in any particular setting. And we must explore how various masculinities are defined and redefined in social interaction. How do individuals present and negotiate a gendered identity? How and why are particular images and behaviours given gender labels? Who benefits from such labelling? And how do such labels change before different audiences and in different settings?

Examining how notions of masculinity are created and presented through interaction reveals clearly the relation between a multiplicity of gendered identities and power. While ideas of ‘male dominance’ and ‘patriarchy’ are neither sensitive nor appropriate tools for analysis, we argue that relations of power are an aspect of every social interaction. By dislocating any single notion of masculinity, we see that
particular versions of masculinity emerge in tandem with particular perceptions of equality or inequality. This means that people's experiences of the intersecting relation between gender and power are socially constructed and historically located.

The many themes which link the present study anticipate directions that anthropological studies of masculinity may take in the future: these include a focus on the processes of gendering, the metaphors of gendered power, and the relation between dominance and subordinate masculinities and other gendered identities in any given setting. Our argument rests on five premises (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994, 9-10). First, we argue that the male/female dichotomy has no intrinsic biological or other essential reality. Rather, this dichotomy is a potent metaphor for difference whose import must be understood in terms of historical and ethnographic specificities. This is not to say that dichotomous gender attributions are not available elsewhere, perhaps even as near-universal metaphors for aspects of human sociality. However, there are no fixed ways whereby these metaphors are grounded or employed in social life. They constitute only one among many other sets of metaphors used in the construction of human identities.

Secondly, we suggest that the oft-used analytic categories such as 'gender role', 'sexual orientation' and 'biological sex' have little explanatory value, since they too imply a false dichotomy between the sexed body and the gendered individual. Though this biological/social opposition has been the basis of most studies of gender, we insist that both the sexed body and the gendered individual are culturally constructed and that biology is no more primary or 'real' than any other aspect of lived experience.

Thirdly, we argue that the conflation of the notions male/men/masculinity and female/women/femininity in social constructions of difference must be investigated and documented historically and ethnographically. We suggest that the three terms do no necessarily overlap and that each term of the two triads has multiple referents which blur, qualify, and create the possibility of ambiguous interpretations in any particular setting. Thus notions of maleness, designations of manhood and attributions of masculinity have no essential referent, nor even a finite range of
referents. Rather, each of the three terms can be used to describe a wide variety of different and even flatly contradictory aspects of human bodies and human behaviour.

Fourth, we argue that interpretations of maleness, manhood or masculinity are not neutral, but rather all such attributions and labels have political entailments. In any given situation, they may align men against women, some men against other men, some women against other women, or some men and women against others. In short, the processes of gendering produce difference and inequality: and nowhere more obviously than in the versions of masculinity associated with (masculinised) notions of power.

Finally, we suggest that ethnographic studies of the production of gendered difference offer new ways of looking at ‘masculinity’ which takes us beyond the strictures imposed by continued use of a single category, ‘men’, on the one hand, and the endless play of fragmented identities on the other. In its hegemonic forms, masculinity privileges some people and dislocates and disadvantages others. However, such hegemonic discourses may themselves be dislodged over time. The shifting and contingent relation between ‘masculinity’ and ‘men’ and power becomes clear when we examine the enactment of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities in a single setting.

Our aim is to pose a series of open-ended questions in a cogent and radical way. Our explicit focus is on the negotiation and plurality of masculinities, while our theoretical premises are processual. We argue that indigenous notions of gendered difference are constantly created and transformed in everyday interactions. Relations of power are constituent parts of these interactions. The experience of hegemony lies in the repetition of similar, but never identical, interactions. This experience is never comprehensive; it changes over time and space. Multiple gendered (and other) identities, each of which depends on context and the specific and immediate relations between actors and audience, are fluid and they are often subversive of dominant forms.

This entire perspective demonstrates some of the problems that modern Western civilization is dealing with the discourses on masculinity. Before we look at
one's own civilizational context, it is important to draw some important lessons from this modern/Western notion of masculinity.

First, from Francis Bacon to Sigmund Freud, we see the affirmation of a thesis that tends to equate masculinity with power and reason. In fact, our recent sensitivity tells us that Baconian notion of science has definitely an aggressive, masculinist agenda causing a hierarchical duality between man and nature while nature is often being seen like a woman – irrational, vulnerable, unpredictable and need to be shaped, modulated, controlled by hard scientific objectivity. For Descartes, likewise, there is body/mind dualism and the Cartesian pure thought is almost phallocentric which is separated from all sorts of embodiment. In Sigmund Freud, a woman is an incomplete man. And hence perpetually living as castrated and wounded. For Freud, compared to men, women’s super ego is remarkably weak and women have a perpetual inferiority complex and sense of envy. We should not forget that Freudian Psychoanalysis, despite all its revolutionary implication, was situated in a typical male dominated social milieu characterised by the male head dominating the nuclear family set-up. Possibly Western modernity itself has privileged a mode of thinking and living that seeks to essentialise the difference between rational men and irrational women, ordered culture and chaotic nature, objectivity and subjectivity, power and love. This masculinist character of modernity manifested itself rather sharply in the colonial project in which the colonisers often contrasted their adult-like rational, courageous hyper masculinity from the passive, weak, emotionally vulnerable and effeminate colonised race. Historical documents as well as folk memories would suggest that during the British Rule in India a colonial bureaucrat would often be perceived as a ‘sahib’ with certain hyper masculine characteristics like horse-riding, passion for hunting and abstracted rationality.

Second, as our discussion suggests diverse movements are posing a challenge to the self-perception of modern West. Feminism has come as a reminder. It shows that civilization cannot go on if the half of the race is categorised as weak and passive. Instead it requires a new kind of milieu in which essentialist differences disappear and men and women experience a shared humanity. Possibly because of the assertion of feminism, one is becoming increasingly more sensible to a redefined masculinity which would celebrate the idea of a man having feminine characteristics like taste for
domestic work, caring children and things of that kind. Likewise it is possible to have an altered femininity that would celebrate a mother working as a pilot or a police person and making significant contribution to the public domain. Feminism has also come as a critique of some of the modernist theories of politics and knowledge like Baconian science, Cartesian rationality and Freudian psychoanalysis. Environmentalism has also generated a new kind of thinking centred on a more dialogic and communicative relationship between man and nature. And eventually post-modernism has seriously interrogated modern phallocentric fascination with the centrality of reason, a rational ordered universe and some totalising ideas like development and progress. It is making us more sensitive to multivocality and differences. There is no such thing, for post-modernists, as a universal hegemonic category like ‘Masculinity’ and ‘Femininity’; instead there may be multiple and even incompatible masculinities and femininities.

Third, because of the earlier two factors that have just been mentioned, it would not be wrong to say that in the Western discourse, we are witnessing an immensely interesting debate on gender constructs. There are the strong adherents of masculinist modernity equating reason and science with man. There are also feminists questioning this masculinist politics and asserting women’s right to reason and science. There are also feminists who would privilege the ‘feminist thinking’ like love, care and maternity and make the hierarchy of modernity upside down. And there are post-modernists who deconstruct all given categories and take us to a realm characterised by heterogeneity, differences and schizophrenia.

At this juncture, it is therefore important to see whether the debate that has taken place in our civilization is similar to or different from what is happening in the West. Of course in a globalised world, the discourses on Western modernity are bound to have an impact on us. But then, here is also a five thousand year old civilization which has fascinated sociologists and cultural anthropologists for its capability to reconcile the two currents – change and continuity, modernity and civilizational endurance, new values and a very stable cultural memories, science and mythico-religious beliefs and practices. Possibly in the debate on masculinity in India, we would witness this complexity. And one way of entering into this complexity is to initiate a rigorous discussion on our culture and masculinity.
PART-2

THE INDIAN CONTEXT

[I]

A Psychosocial Discovery Of The Indian Masculinity Construction
Vis-à-vis The Cultural Symbol

The title of this section is very ambitious. An early attempt to understand the construction of masculinities in India can be found in the writings of social psychologists like Sudhir Kakar and Ashis Nandy. The overwhelming importance of cultures in personality formation is now recognised by most dynamic psychologists. In India this remains practically a virgin territory. Recent years have witnessed the publication of important studies of Indian masculinities, but these have come mostly from NRI or foreign scholars. Kakar has enquired into the specificity of the normative matrices, family structures and socialisation processes which shape the psyche of Indian men. He has also examined Indian masculinities in the context of sexuality, popular culture and communal violence. Nandy has provided an influential account of the impact of British rule on the restructuring of masculinities in India. He argues that the hyper-masculinist British imperial ideology warped the fluid gender identities which characterised pre-modern Indian society, resulting in the inflation of the Kshatriya model of masculinity, which had earlier occupied a limited social space. However, this thesis has been recently challenged by two historians – Rosalind O’Hanlon and Mrinalini Sinha. The former has underscored the centrality of martial masculinity to society and politics in the late Mughal period, while the latter has pointed out that ‘British manliness’ and ‘Indian effeminacy’ were conjointly constructed within the imperial social formation. Other important insights of historical and contemporary relevance have come from Joseph Alter’s anthropological study of wrestling and nationalism in North India, Sanjay Srivastava’s study of the Doon School and Thomas Hansen’s analysis of communalism. But this is only a beginning, the dark subcontinent of Indian masculinity still awaits exploration (Kulkarni, 2001, 30). My effort in this section is to explore how our culture has looked at masculinity and the debate over it.
Let me point out following Kakar (1978, 8) that the use of 'Hindu' and 'Indian' interchangeably reflect not a misperception of synonyms, but simply the demands of readability, although, in fact, other religious groups in India have been profoundly influenced by the dominant Hindu culture. Even so, the effort to uncover unifying themes and to concentrate on the integrating aspects rather than on the (admittedly) large number of variations and deviations within the Hindu culture may still be considered by some a task of doubtful feasibility.

Now let us undertake a 'psychosocial discovery' of the Indian masculinity construction. An exploration of the psychological terrain of the Indian inner world must begin with the cluster of ideas, historically derived, selected and refined, through which Hindu culture has traditionally structured the beliefs and behaviour of its members. This so-called Hindu world image is so much in a Hindu’s bones that he may not be even aware of it. Such images, Erikson writes, are absorbed early in life as a kind of space-time, which gives coherent reassurance against the abysmal estrangements emerging in each successive stage and plaguing man throughout life (Kakar, 1978, 9).

It remains to be noted that the preconscious system of beliefs and values associated with the concepts of moksha, dharma and karma forms a meta-reality for the Hindus. Above and beyond the objective world of phenomena capable of validation which we term 'real', and the individual distortions and denials of these phenomena which we are accustomed to calling 'unreal', such world images (in any culture) constitute a third distinct category, both 'real' and 'unreal', a meta-reality which is neither deterministically universal nor utterly idiosyncratic but which fills the space between the two. It is culture-specific and harboured or accepted, often unconsciously, as the heart of a community identity. For such a meta-reality is not a system of abstractions, to be more or less hazily comprehended during the adult years; it is a part of the actuality of psychology and culture, absorbed by the child in his relationship with his adult caretakers from the very beginning of life as the underlying truth of the world in which he will spend his life – a world first conveyed to him by his mother.
The preference for a son over a daughter in a family is as old as Indian society itself. Vedic verses pray that sons may be followed by still more male offspring, never by females. Since ancient times, Hindu parents treat their male children with extreme indulgence. It need not be assumed that character is entirely determined by the treatment of the infant, but about a large population brought up in this way generation after generation; it is a reasonable assumption, argues Spratt (1966), that the average male will grow up with (1) a fixation at the stage of primary narcissism, the characteristic of the first few months of life (2) a fixation at the stage of exclusive love for the mother, which follows in the next few months; and (3) a relatively weak repression of the anal eroticism of about the same period. An important expression of narcissism is a strong libidinal cathexis on the semen. One outcome of this is yoga: it is shown that, in the yogi, the narcissistic drive takes the special form of an unconscious attempt to shape the personality on the model of the permanent phallus. The unconscious attachment to semen has other effects, in the relations between father and son, in the treatment of women, in forming the pollution complex, and in caste as well.

The narcissistic personality\(^{13}\) is typically the product of an upbringing in which the father does little to provoke the son’s hostility. The positive Oedipus complex, aggressive feeling against the father, is not strongly developed. The negative Oedipus complex, fear of castration by the father, the passive homosexual attitude towards him, derives from identification with the mother, and is strong. It results at the conscious level in a fear of offending those who stand for the father, either by showing them sexual rivalry, or by offering them violence, or by presumptuous behaviour. “A man, so long as he remains under his own father’s roof, must keep up the fiction of denying that he leads an active sexual life of his own. Not to do so is to be disrespectful.” It is still customary to touch the feet of the father and other older and respected persons.

Hindu self-abnegation seldom partakes of the nature of self-punishment. It does, however, show the three main features of the relation of the son to his parents in the narcissistic culture: the passive homosexual attitude to the father, self-castration in order to avoid conflict with the father and obtain his favour, and identification with the mother through self-castration and entry into the womb.

66
Narcissism and the mother-fixation must tend to be associated. The mother-fixation involves an unconscious desire to return to the mother’s womb, and also to castrate oneself in order to become a woman and so be able to identify with the mother. Yoga is an extreme expression of the narcissistic personality type, and its technique involves a drastic suppression of the sex function. It would therefore be expected that yogis should show indications of the mother-fixation.

In the Samkhya philosophy, which the yoga theorists profess, Prakriti, i.e. Nature, is active and is female; Purusha, the principle of consciousness, is inert and is male. The Shakta devotees identify Shiva with the Purusha, and Shakti with Prakriti; and as the human individual is compounded of the two, in the Shakta rituals he plays both parts and identifies himself with both. “Sexual union is transformed into a ritual through which the human couple becomes a divine couple... The mistress synthesises the entire nature of woman; she is mother, sister, wife, daughter.” “Tantrism (Shaktism) multiplies the pairs of opposites... the conjunction of opposites represents a transcending of the phenomenal world, abolishment of all experience of duality. The images employed suggest a return to a primordial state of non-differentiation.”

Kakar (1989,131-132) notes: It is the ubiquity and multiformity of the “primitive idea of being a woman” and the embeddedness of this fantasy in the maternal configurations of the family and the culture in India, which I would like to discuss in my own observations. My main argument is that the “hegemonic narrative” of Hindu culture as far as male development is concerned, is neither that of Freud’s Oedipus nor of Christianity’s Adam. One of the more dominant narratives of this culture is that of Devi, the great goddess, especially in her manifold expressions as mother in the inner world of the Hindu son. In India, at least, a primary task of psychoanalysis, the science of imagination or even (in Wallace Steven’s words) “the science of illusion” (can one call it Mayalogy?) – is to grapple with Mahamaya – “The Great Illusion” – as the goddess is also called. Of course, it is not my intention to deny or underestimate the importance of the powerful mother in Western psychoanalysis. All I seek to suggest is that certain forms of the maternal-feminine may be more central in Indian myths and psyche than in their Western counterparts.
The figure of the mother is indeed omnipresent in the psyche of Indian men. Given the experience of his mother's immediacy and utter responsiveness, an Indian generally emerges from infancy into childhood believing that the world is benign and the others can be counted on to act on his behalf. Setting aside our consideration of the unconscious for a moment, we can observe that an Indian child tends to experience his mother almost totally as a 'good mother'. The proportion of Indian men who express or experience an active dislike, fear or contempt for their mothers at a conscious level is infinitesimally small. In studies of family relations, sociologists confirm the existence of a very close mother-son relationship of the 'good mother' variety in different regions and social classes throughout India. It needs to be noted here that this idealized image of the 'good mother' is largely a male construction. This emphasis on a nurturing, fear-dispelling presence as the fundamental quality of the 'good mother' is unmistakable in the descriptions of the appearance of the goddesses. Indeed, in India the fear of isolation is projected on to the creator himself: in one of the Hindu myths we are told that creation began because Prussia, the soul of the universe, was alone and hence did not enjoy happiness.

Yet, what many typical myth fragments make clear is the ambivalence with which the mother is regarded in fantasy: she is both nurturing benefactress and threatening seductress. The image of the 'bad mother' as a woman, who inflicts her male offspring with her unfulfilled, ominous sexuality, is indirectly confirmed by the staunch taboos surrounding menstrual blood and childbirth throughout traditional India. The latest sexual dread of the mature female is also the main psychological reason for the unusual disparity in age between men and women at the time of marriage in India. All these contribute to the Hindu male's strong identification with his mother and a 'maternal-feminine' stance towards the worldly world. The expression of 'maternal-feminine' in a man's positive identity is, however, neither deviant nor pathological, but that which makes a man more human and enhances the possibility of mutuality and empathic understanding between the sexes. On the other hand, a precarious sense of masculine identity can lead to a rigid, all-or-nothing demarcation of sex roles; this kind of rigid differentiation is a means of building outer bulwarks against feared inner proclivities. In India, the child learns early that emotional strength resides primarily in his mother, that she is 'where the action is'.

68
The cultural parallel to the principal actuality of infancy is the conviction that mother-goddesses are reservoirs of both constructive and destructive energy.

The attitude of the son towards the father is of great importance not only for family life but for culture and politics too. The narcissistic son is relatively free from the aggressive, rebellious impulse, which is so common in the occident: he assumes the passive homosexual attitude. In spite of the extra-maternal sources of comfort and guidance provided by the very structure of the extended family, where most Indians spend the formative years of early childhood, psychoanalytically speaking, the Indian boy’s loss of the relationship of symbiotic intimacy with his mother amounts to a narcissistic injury of the first magnitude. The consequences of the ‘second birth’ in the identity development of Indian men are several: a heightened narcissistic vulnerability, an unconscious tendency to ‘submit’ to an idealised omnipotent figure, the lifelong search for someone, a charismatic leader or a guru.

The ambiguous role of the father in Indian childhood is yet another factor that contributes to the narcissistic vulnerability of Indian men. Fathers, whether strict or indulgent, cold or affectionate, are invariably distant. Kakar tried to identify three culturally influenced psycho-social constellations that emphasise the narcissistic vulnerability and emotional self-absorption of the masculine psyche in India: first, the length and symbiotic nature of the mother-son relationship; second, the rupture of this connection at the age of four or five and the radical alteration of the child’s ‘lifestyle’; and third, the little boy’s disappointment when he perceives his father as more of an onlooker than an ally in his boyish struggle to cope with his new life-circumstances.

The emissary of the culture demanding that the Indian boy relinquishes his intimate status with his mother is not just the father but the whole assembly of elder males in the family. The boy’s confusion and rage at being separated from his mother, all the more conflicted because it has been delayed, coincides with the oedipal stage in psycho-sexual development. But his fury is not directed towards the father alone; it is diffused against all the male authority figures who are collectively responsible for taking his mother away. It makes sense, symbolically, that in Indian Mythology, Ravana, the abductor of the ‘good mother’, Sita, has not one but ten heads.
Because it is diluted and diverted to include other elder males, Oedipal aggression against the father, in its 'classical' intensity, on the whole, is not common in India. This varies, of course, from region to region and among different social groups.\textsuperscript{16}

A minor outcome of the narcissistic development and the consequent weakness of repression is the high place given to the body in Hindu culture. In the West the affairs of the body are subject to a slight repression. Thus health is seldom discussed above the level of formal politeness. To the occidental, the Hindus appear a nation of hypochondriacs. He does not consider health a matter to be discussed with his spiritual adviser, whereas many Hindu spiritual teachers give detailed instructions on medical subjects. They seem to draw no line of division between physical and spiritual health.

The cult of the male body goes back to early times. Megasthenes refers to the Indians' regard for personal beauty and their care to augment it. The \textit{Agni Purana}, a religious work, contains a large section on medicine, and also beauty hints. "Libations should be poured on the fire in a fire-pit shaped like the yoni....the rite should be performed with oblations of wheat and rice when a general betterment of health and complexion is desired....oblations of bael and champaka will be followed by increased wealth and beauty." In the ancient literature, serious and light, there is a striking emphasis on the good looks of the heroes. In the \textit{Katha Sarit Sagara}, all the heroes are of dazzling beauty. In one story the citizens of Ujjayini resolved to commit suicide because the king was about to execute a handsome captive. The \textit{Yogatattvopanishad} declares that as a man proceeds with yogic practice he becomes as beautiful as the God of Love. Much attention was given to bathing and the application of unguents; indeed, this is still the case. "Having eased himself, the king should enter the bathroom. He should bathe every day, having cleaned his teeth....He should smear his body with scented sandal-paste, decorate himself with valuable ornaments, contemplate himself in a mirror, and see his face reflected in ghee in a golden vessel."

Of the prescribed daily ritual acts, a large proportion were concerned with the body - bathing, clothes, food, marking the forehead and other parts of the body - as were many of the rituals which marked the stages of life. Cutting the hair, shaving,
paring the fingernails and toenails, and rubbing the body with turmeric or sandal-paste are part of the marriage rituals of many castes. A book would be necessary to set forth the rules governing hair-cutting and shaving. Though yoga was intended to liberate the soul from the body, the elaboration of doctrine on postures and breathing suggests a strong preoccupation with the body. This was intensified by the Tantrics. Discussing their cult Mircea Eliade says, “Since the body represents the cosmos and all the gods, since liberation can be gained only by setting out from the body, it is important to have a body that is healthy and strong.”

The treasure of works produced in the past centuries in Sanskrit alone is quite vast. It is difficult to assess the bulk of it if the books of other Indian languages are also taken into account. However, only one book (in Sanskrit) was found out written exclusively on “man”. This is known as Purusa Pariksa, which deals with the conditions of purush’s (man’s) recognition, categories of man (in terms of the types as identified in society) and the significance of manliness in socio-political context. Vidyapati, the author of this work, is a very well-known poet of Maithili and a great scholar of Sanskrit, who lived in Mithila (the north-eastern zone of the state of Bihar in India) during the second half of the fourteenth century and first half of the fifteenth century. This book is also important in this context as it does not belong to the realm of dharmasastra tradition, that is, it covers the totality of man without ever giving primacy to religious or caste/varna consideration. It takes account of man participating in all social, religious and economic spheres of life (Jha, 2002).

Who is purusa? The analysis of Vidyapati’s discourse indicates that man can be distinguished from one who merely looks like man on the basis of some attributes. These attributes are courage or valour (saurya), sense of discrimination (viveka), boldness of will or perseverance (utsaha), acute wit (pratibha), exact memory (medha) and learning (vidya). Each has been discussed in detail before. Man is held as a variable and a manly man is supposed to manifest in his conduct the combination of the said attributes in a manner described in the last chapter. Such a man can afford to live with dignity and make his life meaningful not only to himself, but also to his society.
The above said attributes are discussed under three broad heads: 1. Bravery, 2. Wit and 3. Learning. It is not clear from the text as to which one is most important. Since the entire discourse begins with the section dealing with “The brave”, one may assume that bravery was considered more important by the author. Probably because of the crisis of his age that he describes in Kirtilata he might have thought of according primacy to it. Further, of the three constituents of bravery, it is viveka that has been held crucial. Without viveka, a man, in spite of having other attributes, tends to be a criminal, the most undesirable of all the unmanly characters such as coward, miser, lazybones, calumniator, etc., enumerated by the author, described before. Viveka guides one in the course of his attainment of purusartha (described in the last chapter). It is, thus, of fundamental importance characterising the being of man in the view of Vidyapati. There is another point regarding the said attributes of man that deserves consideration. Not a single one of these attributes can be supposed to be gender-specific. Courage or perseverance or exact memory, etc., can be possessed by a male and also by a female. One may, therefore, go beyond the text (of Purusa Pariksa) and suppose that the attributes of man posited by Vidyapati, are, in fact, those of manliness, that is, they are constituents of paurusa. And, paurusa is not a matter of monopolisation by male. A female can also have paurusa. So, it would be appropriate to consider the said attributes to be those of a human being, an individual (male or female). One may, however, have some hesitation in accepting this contention because the tales included in the text mostly narrate the stories of males. Since the age of Vidyapati was one of socio-political crisis of the Hindu world, he might have thought of the role of males as more important in the male-dominated society for defending the honour of the land. So, probably, he cited the examples of males for projecting his idea of manliness.

The Hindu conscience differs markedly from the European punitive personality type. The ego – ideal is formed in the same way, but the big charge of inward - directed libido, love for the self gives it a more idealistic character. The Hindu ego – ideal is undoubtedly more idealistic than the European one. On the other hand, since libido and aggressiveness are mutually antagonistic, if the charge of libido is strong, that of aggressiveness is likely to be weak. In the narcissistic psyche, therefore, inward directed aggressiveness is weak: the super – ego is weak. The Hindu
strives to act rightly or to improve himself, not so much out of guilt – feeling as out of love for himself and, derivatively, for the ideal. Stated briefly, if the occidental conscience is a product of fear, the Hindu conscience is a product of pride. The Hindu’s principal moral emotion is aspiration. But if in any Hindu this aspiration is weak, and the gap between ideal and achievement is wide, the weak super-ego does not cause the subject much distress.

The Hindu psyche is not free from guilt. But its guilt feeling is less intense than that of the punitive, and there also appears to be a difference of quality. The guilt of the punitive arises from the fear, experienced in early infancy, of an avenging father. The guilt of the Hindu arises from the fear of the operation of an impersonal law, *Karma*, implanted not in early infancy but in later childhood through verbal teaching, and in consequence less deeply felt.

[II]
Archetypes Of Indian Masculinity Construction

One of the important forces in the present study on Indian masculinity construct is to closely look at the various archetypes prevalent in the purview of Hindu culture and masculinity. The archetypes or the choice of the three archetypes, namely Krishna, Shiva and Rama, can be debated. I wish to state that they are all inclusive and exclusive. There are other archetypes as well. But here, my conceptual framework is that of ‘ideal types’ sociologically. So the archetypes and their constructs are not water-tight compartmentalised. Complexities and ambiguities are part of this effort. More importantly whether these archetypes are part of the myth, with religious connotations or part of the epics is debatable. But their relevance in terms of the broad framework of Indian masculinity construct perhaps cannot be doubted. Keeping in view all these complications, my effort is directed towards exploring the life, history and events of these archetypes with the distinct focus on the kind of masculinity construct in each of them. And how it differs from or resembles the notion of ‘hyper masculinity’ in Western discourses.

Relevantly, it is important to look at some of the archetypes that seem to have a great impact on our consciousness and cultural ideas. It is important for a
sociologist to cross the disciplinary boundary and understand how the archetypes tend to shape our collective psyche and consciousness. The fact is that Puranic Hinduism continues to have its appeal as far as the folk, classical and even mass culture is concerned, revealing how important the narratives of Krishna, Shiva and Rama are. From a classical Bharatnatyam dancer to a villager, performing Ram Lila; to a DTC bus driver keeping Shiva's picture in front of him; to old grandmothers telling the stories of Krishna to little children; to a commercial film-maker, borrowing the epic structure again and again to convey a conflict between good and evil, hero and villain – we experience the all-pervasive archetypes of our culture. These are ideals, guidelines and sources of inspiration. No notion of Indian masculinity would therefore be complete without looking at three such remarkably powerful archetypes, namely Krishna, Shiva and Rama.

**Krishna: The Dramatic Masculinity Construct**

The name Krishna means "one who attracts or draws." He is described as "the greatest spiritual figure that has appeared in the religious drama of the world." (Martin, 1996, 130-131). I wish to point out the significance of the word 'drama' in the last sentence which seem to bring the element of dramatic masculinity construct in this context. Lord Krishna is the most prominent figure of the Pauranic age not only from the point of view of Indian religion, but also Indian History and Culture. On account of the profound influence of the Bhagavadgita, He may be proclaimed as 'the Soul of India'. The historical Krishna of the Mahabharata, underwent a revolutionary change, which provided him with a web of legends and myths around his superb personality. As a result, lot of apocryphal matter in the form of legends got closely interwoven in his genuine biography.

*Krishna's* personality in history and legend is indeed many-faceted. There is no hero in the long history of civilisation, whose genius was so versatile and many-sided as Krishna's, who wields the greatest influence in the modern age.

Tradition knows Krishna as the singer of song-celestial, God of Gods (Mbh.Sa.P.); Lord of lilas (by the valiabha sect); Yogesvara and love incarnate (Bhagavadgita, IV.9.10;VII.14.19;VIII.7,14,16,IX,X;XI). For Krishna's biographical
account came to be associated with many legends and thus presently, it maintains the form of a legend and history. The sources, however, mostly present Krishna as a legendary hero, and the general Indian tendency (as preserved in the Puranas) has been to accept the legend as history. This is the reason why, it has become absolutely impossible to decipher a grain of truth out of the vast amalgamated Krishna legend in the Puranas.

Besides, the Krishna legend appears simultaneously in the Brahmanical and Non-Brahmanical works. As the Puranas, which constitute the major Brahmanical Sources of Krishna legend, are written in mythical and legendary style, the historical biography of lord Krishna i.e., the analogous of Krishna-story, also turned into a legend and a myth. With the result, many episodes of his life; his simple adventures have come down to us as legends through the Puranas and other sources (Goswami, 2001,9).

Krishna is usually portrayed as a blue-complexioned child full of pranks and mischief, or as a youthful cowherd wearing a crown of peacock feathers whose beauty entrances all who see him or hear the irresistible call of his flute. This is his present version. Two thousand years ago, when Krishna first moved into the Hindu pantheon, the god was a more sober and austere deity. In the Mahabharata, for instance, he is the wise adult and helpful teacher and counsellor. His nature began to undergo transformation around A.D. 500 in the Harivamsa (the genealogy of Hari or Krishna) which stressed Krishna's early years as a wilful, mischievous child and as the youthful, divine lover of the gopis, the cowherd girls. The later Krishna texts, Vishnu Purana, Padma Purana, and Brahmavaivarta Purana, are fascinated by, and focus upon, these aspects of the god: Krishna's freedom and spontaneity as the eternal child, the youth-Krishna's surpassing beauty and the seductive power of his haunting flute which breaks down human resistance to the appeal of the divine lover.

To a psychologist who must necessarily forsake the mystical explanations of legends describing Krishna's sixteen thousand wives, his unrestrained amorous dalliance with the village gopis, his voracious childhood hunger for milk, butter and curds and his completely amoral attitude towards stealing them, as well as his general inability to bear any kind of frustration, Krishna is all impulse and appetite, a highly
narcissistic being who incidentally benefits mankind while pursuing his own libidinous desires. The cult of Krishna affords his devotees all manner of fantasised instinctual gratification through an unconscious identification with him.

A consideration of the myths surrounding Krishna's childhood leads us back to the world of psychological experience as it is magnified in cultural imagery, for the Krishna myths highlight the main themes in Indian inner life. Filtered through the decorous symbolism of art and folk-tale, these myths present modal psychic conflicts and their fantasised resolutions in a socially congenial form.

In the Indian family the male child's early experience diverges significantly from that of his sister. So too, we find the myths of a single god such as Krishna, who is equally popular with both men and women, diverge; there are 'masculine' and 'feminine' Krishna legends. In spite of certain elementary features in common, all Krishna myths do not serve equally as a projective vehicle for the unconscious fantasy of both men and women. The enduring claim of the god Krishna to the devotional love of both the sexes reflects in part the fact that, unlike others in the Hindu pantheon, Krishna enjoys a more explicit 'dual mythology' (Kakar, 1978, 146). In addition to the legends that elaborate the inner world of Indian men, the god of love is surrounded by lore that evokes, and responds to, the longings of Hindu women. This differentiation of 'masculine' and 'feminine' myths about a single god-hero is rarely made in psychological analyses, embedded as they are in a venerable patriarchal tradition of myth-interpretation that simply ignores women in such undertakings. The Krishna myths, however, show both faces; the myths of Putana,\(^{17}\) Kaliyanag,\(^{18}\) Agasur\(^{19}\) and the lifting of Mount Govardhan are predominantly masculine in their orientation and appeal, while the Krishna-Yasoda and Krishna-Radha legends seem to be primarily, though not exclusively, addressed to women.

Krishna's destruction of Putana and her subsequent redemption, as a 'purified' being, represents one solution of the son's conflict. By killing the 'bad' mother in fantasy, the son obliterates the overweening and sexually ravenous maternal images in his psyche and leaves the benign, protective one intact. This is the only way he can survive as an individual, for libidinal as well as aggressive energy must be ransomed before he can engage in adolescent or adult relationships of intimacy; the 'bad
mother' in the mother must die in order that the son's capacity for individuation and for sexualising (and loving) others, may emerge. In the Putana myth, this emptying of the 'bad' mother of her life-giving sensuality and sexual vitality, as well as the necessary establishment of boundaries between her and her son, is condensed into a single, pungent image. As Putana falls down lifeless, her hideous demonic body suddenly begins to emit a pleasing perfume, the exciting smells that infuse the maternal embrace, the odour of her skin and sweat, the smell of milk around her nipple are neutralised, transformed, and rendered benign. The myths of Agasur and Kaliyanag are variations on one or the other of the themes in the Putana myth.

The Putana, Agasur and Kaliyanag myths may be seen as a cultural elaboration of 'pre-genital' fantasy. That is, these myths incorporate collective infantile wishes and anxieties common and paramount during the first two or three years of the infant's life. By contrast, the lifting up of Mount Govardhan represents the later, Oedipal stage of psycho-sexual development when the male world, represented by the father and the other men in the family, first intrudes upon the dyadic intimacy of Hindu son and mother.

The rebellion and dark passions that characterise the myths of Putana, Agasur and Kaliyanag are missing from those Krishna myths that are called 'feminine'. Some of these legends recount the tricks played by Gopal, the Babe-Krishna, on his foster-mother Yasoda, her anger at his mischief and ultimate forgiveness in an orgy of hugs, kisses and the inevitable 'overflowing of maternal milk'.

The rest of the legends, celebrated in centuries of devotional poetry, deal with Shyam, the Youth-Krishna, and his love-play with the gopis, especially Radha, his chosen consort, whose love for the youthful god is so great that she flouts parental prohibitions and social disapproval to be together with her god-lover. The love of Radha and Krishna, which has been one of the central features of the cult from the eleventh century A.D. to the present, is celebrated in legends and poems as an idyllic affair beyond the norms of traditional courtship. It is full of playfulness and joy, of mock quarrels and passionate reconciliations in which Radha often takes the initiative.
One of the central features of the 'feminine' Krishna legends is the infantilisation of the god and, implicitly of the ideal male by Indian women. In striking contrast to the masculine identification with Krishna, Hindu women perceive and experience him primarily as an ideal son – mischievous, irresponsible and intrusive in a delightful, almost thrilling way. At the same time, Krishna's very playfulness reflects the deep sensual comfort and security of the idealised bond of intimacy between Hindu mother and son. In contrast with the ripe sexuality stimulated in fantasy and exaggerated in certain rituals and festivals of the cult (such as Holi), Krishna, the god of the legends, is the saviour of women not as an adult male and lustful partner but as the son who is vital to the consolidation and confirmation of a Hindu woman's identity around the core of motherliness. The legends of Youth-Krishna as the lover of Radha do not alter the intensity of the Indian Woman's emotional investment in her son but rather serve simply, elegantly, to incorporate the fantasised fulfilment of her sexual desire for him.20 Radha-Krishna legends are thus illustrative of the Hindu Woman's unconscious fantasy of her son as her lover and the complementary male fantasy, incorporated in Putana and other myths, of the sexually ravenous mother. The masculine and feminine myths of Krishna thus neatly dovetail to highlight the dominant concerns and are fantasised by both Hindu men and women. It is significant to note that both men and women are fantasising the archetype of Krishna as an epitome of the Indian masculinity construct.

The cross-dressing aspect in the archetype of Krishna can be highlighted by the following story: Every night Radha would risk everything to be with Krishna. She would slip out of her house in the middle of the night and make her way through the woods to the meadows of Madhuvana on the banks of the river Yamuna, where Krishna would play the flute and enchant her with his winsome smile and passionate embrace. In her love for Krishna, Radha would sometimes be jealous, possessive, or quarrelsome. She felt that Krishna would never understand her anguish and longing until he could become her. So to pacify Radha, Krishna decided that one night they should exchange roles. At the appointed hour, Krishna wore Radha's clothes and Radha wore Krishna's clothes. She played the flute and he danced around her. She took the lead when they made love and occupied the active position. She dominated him. "Even then, Krishna, you cannot understand me," Radha told her beloved, "You
can dress like me, talk and dance like me, but you can never feel what I feel for we
can never exchange hearts.” (Pattanaik, 2002, 81-82).

By becoming Radha, Krishna makes the ultimate declaration of his love. This
episode has inspired rituals, such as the secret ceremony in Nathadvara where
Krishna-Srinathji is dressed as a woman. No one but the participating priest has seen
the image of Srinathji dressed as a woman. One painting of this form of the lord can
be seen in Amit Ambalal’s book on Rajasthani paintings from Nathdvara, Krishna As
Srinathji. Ambalal informs us that the painting was done based on descriptions given
by the head of the temple. Govardhanlalji, since no one else had actually seen the
apparel. After the painting was done in the early twentieth century, Govardhanlalji
issued a ban on painters, forbidding them to depict Srinathji as a woman.

The image of Krishna dressed as Radha captures the inherent tensions
between spiritual and material reality, between man and woman, between actuality
and appearance, between representation and reality, between sex and gender, between
culture and nature. Though Krishna and Radha exchange clothes and sexual roles,
the essential biological differences remain there. At dawn, Radha must wear a
woman’s clothes, behave like a woman, leave the wilderness of natural law, and
return to the village under the mantle of social law.

Krishna’s life as the pivot of the Maaharaas comes to an abrupt end when
duty beckons him to the city of Mathura. In an instant, he turns away from the
bucolic joys of the village and enters the wicked world of urbane politics. He gives
up Radha and his flute. The romance of Madhuvan loses priority as the corruption of
Mathura reveals itself. Krishna the lover, must become Krishna, the restorer of
dharma. The milkmaids cry and beg him to stay. Krishna leaves nevertheless. He
has to, for the playful god is also personified with detachment.

The story of the Gita derives from the great and ancient Indian epic known as
the Mahabharata, and tells of the critical moment at the beginning of the pitched
battle between the Kuru and the Pandavas. Arjuna, chief of the Pandavas,
considering what devastation will be brought to pass by the impending battle, refuses
to fight. Then Krishna, who has been acting as Arjuna’s charioteer and who is,
therefore, his closest comrade, counsels that under the inescapable circumstances of warfare, a true warrior cannot fall by the wayside, wretchedly, and do nothing – he must fight the battle before him.

What Krishna says in detail, and what finally convinces Arjuna to fight manfully, is the body of the teachings to be found in the Gita. The picture, here, depicts what for many Hindus is the moment of decision for Arjuna, when Krishna, his friend and God, instructs him, “Arise! Transcend your impotency. Your grovelling weakness and faint-hearted despondency ill-becomes a hero!” (Bhagavatgita II: 3). In our line-drawing as in most renderings of the “Gitacarya” episode of the Gita (lit., “the instructor of the Gita,” i.e., Krishna), Krishna is the dominating figure. He is invariably shown on a higher plane than his comrade who, throughout the text, is to be imagined as immobile, totally collapsed, barely able to rise to his destiny. Iconographically, Krishna is sometimes shown in his divine form with many heads and multiple arms (his “visvarupa,” or cosmic form, in illustration of his transfiguration in Chapter Eleven of the Gita). Here, as is more usual, he is shown with two arms only, in his human form. Krishna (which means, literally, “black”, or “blue”, or “dark”) is often further distinguished from Arjuna (which means, literally, “white,” or “fair”) by his coloration – a detail that sounds many resonances of an ancient, almost forgotten, prehistoric Indo-Aryan dialogue (Smith and Narasimhachary, 1991, 97-98). So far as the teaching of the Bhagavadgita is concerned, it is immaterial whether Krishna, the teacher, is a historical individual or not. The material point is the eternal incarnation of the Divine, the everlasting bringing forth of the perfect and divine life in the universe and the soul of man (Radhakrishnan, 1948, 28). There is, however, ample evidence in favour of the historicity of Krishna.

In the Gita Krishna is identified with the Supreme Lord, the unity that lies behind the manifold universe, the changeless truth behind all appearances, transcendent over all and immanent in all. He is the manifested Lord, making it easy for mortals to know, for those who seek the Imperishable Brahman reach Him no doubt but after great toil. He is called Paramatman which implies transcendence; he is jiva-bhuta, the essential life of all. How can we identify a historical individual with the Supreme God? The representation of an individual as identical with the Universal
Self is familiar to Hindu thought. The divinity claimed by Krishna is the common reward of all earnest spiritual seekers. He is not a hero who once trod the earth and has now left it, having spoken to His favourite friend and disciple, but is everywhere and in every one of us, as ready to speak to us now as He ever was to any one else. He is not a bygone personality but the indwelling spirit, an object for our spiritual consciousness.  


**Shiva: The Provocative Masculinity Construct**

The central god of the lunar group is Rudra, later known as Shiva — a minor god in the Rigveda with only two and a half hymns to him — yet one of the triad in the later pantheon. He is described as Kapardin (with matted or braided hair, Rigveda I: 114: 1, 5); Susipra (with a well-formed jaw) and Babhru (reddish brown in complexion, Rigveda II: 33: 5, 8). He has a Niska (a gold necklace) round his neck (Rigveda II: 33: 10) and ismultiform, strong-limbed, terrible and tawny (Rigveda II: 33: 9). Kapila (tawny) is the colour of Isana devata (Gopatha Brahmana I: 25). Shiva is three-eyed or born of three mothers (Tryambaka, Vajasaneyi Samhita III: 57), and is described as a giver of nourishment, of good perfume and clothed in animal skin (Vajasaneyi Samhita III: 61, III: 58). He is Nilagriva (blue-necked), sahasraksa (thousand-eyed) and Hiranyabahu (golden-armed) (Vajasaneyi Samhita XVI: 7, 13, 17). His reddish complexion is emphasised, for he is called Rohita (red, Vajasaneyi Samhita XVI: 19) as also Tamra and Aruna (tawny and reddish, Vajasaneyi Samhita XVI: 39).

Sometimes he is called Usnisin (having a crown or head-gear). The Vajasaneyi Samhita calls him Sitikantha (white; or blue-throated), Vyomakesa (with a shaven head). Hrasva or Vamana (short of stature and a dwarf), and Varsiya or Vrddha (old). Nilalohita (blue-red) is a frequent epithet of Shiva, as also Nilasikanda (blue-tufted) in the Yajurveda (Atharva Veda II: 27: 6, VI: 93: I, XI: 2: 7). One of his unexplained names is Krivi (Vajasaneyi Samhita X: 20). He is described as seated in a chariot (gartasad).

The epics know his shining (Diptani) as well as terrible (ghorani) appearance. But he has changed along the lines of the Yajurveda Satarudriya hymn and has grown
progressively sinister till, in the epic-Puranic period, very little of his original appearance remains. Thus he is now smoke-coloured instead of tawny, and one-eyed (Mahabharata VII: 201: 134). He is now three-eyed, for he created a third eye when his other two were closed (Mahabharata VII:201:138). Below his thighs is Agni’s region, above is Soma’s. He is called Rudra (fierce) because whatever is burning, sharp, harsh and mighty in flesh, blood ;and marrow is his (Mahabharata VII:201:44). He now carries a trident. He is fair, with matted locks, clad in bark and in animal skins, thousand-eyed and wondrous-limbed (Mahabharata VII:78:39).). He also carries the Pinaka-bow, the thunder, a flaming trident, a club, an iron dagger and a pestle —yet he carries the moon in his head and a fair armlet, and a garland of aksa seeds around his neck; in splendour he is like the sun (Mahabharata VII:200:63-71). Contradictory descriptions grow rife, for he is described as brilliant like the sun as well as very dark (mahakrana, Mahabharata VII:201:7,11). Gradually epithets are heaped on contradictory epithets until the picture becomes utterly blurred, undistinguished and unconvincing. In short the aim of these passages seems to be to make him appear as ‘Everything’.

In the Matsya Purana we are told of his eight manifestations: in the sun, earth, water, fire, air, sky, the yajamana (sacrificer) and the moon (XXVII:189). Of these his solar form is called Raudri Tanu. The same purana knows him as ten-armed (XXX:196). The Kurma Purana describes him as having created the Rudras in his own image: with matted locks, fearless, three-eyed, blue-red, with eyes in the forehead; (faces) covered with thick clusters of matted hair, holding tridents (VII:29). He is fierce-toothed, dancing in the sky, fire emitting from his mouth, with thousands of feet, eyes and heads (XVI:193).

It is clear that beneath the changing and mobile images there cannot be traced the evolution of a personality in any specific direction. What really happens is the syncretism of many Aryan, non-Aryan (and perhaps even non-Indian) gods, each bringing his own cultic image, traits, totems and functions, until in the resultant figure hardly a distinctive feature remains – and Shiva becomes at once a sectarian god (of the Saivas and Pasupatas) as also the kathenotheistic concept of the supreme being. The process was long, tortuous and complex and many of the factors can only be traced conjecturally now. 22 (Bhattacharji,1970,109-112).
Shiva's appearance, too, is different from that of the traditional image of the gods, almost all of whom are dressed in impressive attire and decked out with precious gems. Shiva has no gems. The epics call him Nilakantha and the Puranas give us the story of the churning of the ocean and state that Shiva drank the venom that arose, and hence is blue-necked. His neck, or the neck of a component god of the Shiva-complex, must have had some peculiar mark for another anecdote makes him Srikantha, saying that he bears the mark of Visnu's clutch on his throat (Mahabharata XII:330:65), another mark of the conflict of cults. The blue neck may also indicate an amalgamation with the cult of Karttikeya whose mount was the blue-neck peacock (Bhattacharji, 1970,139).

Being a provocative player on the stage of the inner world, Shiva, the Destroyer in the Hindu trinity, psychologically, the ubiquitous cult of Shiva is a cultural phenomenon that strikingly illustrates the narcissistic orientation of Indian men (Kakar, 1978,154). It can be noted that the use of the word provocative player is significant. It points to the provocative masculinity construct in this context. Shaivism proper, the creed in which Shiva is the supreme God, first appears in the early hymns of the Rigveda. In these hymns some of the features associated with Shiva, the personification of nature's destructive powers, are depicted in the Vedic deity, Rudra. He is called by the name Shiva (auspicious) in the latter portion of the Veda, as he comes to be represented as the patron of ascetics and described as the great god (Mahadeva). The distinctive features of his creed – moksha, attainable through loving devotion (bhakti), and god's grace (prasad) – are prominent in certain sections of the Mahabharata.

The worship of Shiva, however, is not focused on a human representation of the god, as it is with other Hindu gods and goddesses, but on his symbol, the linga, or phallus. The contradiction between Shiva's two aspects – the ascetism of the god and the eroticism of his symbol – has always puzzled Indologists.

The form of and the verbal references to the linga are charged with complex meaning. Shivalingas are, manifestations of earth, water, fire, air, ether, and of Shiva's own self (prithivi and/or jala, tejas, vayu, akasa, and atman). The linga of
Shiva has three significations. They are: linga as sign, linga as phallus, and linga as cosmic substance (prakrti or pradhana) which is the subtle body (linga sarira) of Shiva, who is the absolute reality, “the imperishable Purusa” (Linga Purana.1.20.70). The original meaning of the word linga is “sign,” a mark that proves the existence of a thing. Thus, the Svetasvatara Upanisad, where this word is used for the first time in the sacred tradition, says Shiva, the supreme lord, has no linga or mark (Svetasvatara Upanisad.6.9), meaning that he is transcendent, beyond any characteristic. As a distinguishing mark, linga also means a characteristic and, specifically, the sign of gender or sex. Linga, “sign,” not only signifies the existence of perceptible things, but also denotes the imperceptible essence of a thing even before the thing in its concrete shape comes to exist. Thus the form of fire, which exists in the kindling stick in a latent form, may not be seen, yet its linga is not destroyed but may be seized again by another kindling stick (Svetasvatara Upanisad.1.13). Fire in its latent condition, unkindled, the potential of fire, its imperceptible essence, is the linga of fire, in contrast with the indispensable to its visible form (rupa). The imperceptible essence of a thing, in its potentiality, is the linga of the thing. The insight of the Svetasvatara Upanisad conveyed through the word linga is formulated explicitly in the Samkhya and Yoga schools or ways of looking at things (darsana), that is, by looking at their appearance and at ultimate reality. Linga here denotes the “subtle body” (linga sarira), or concrete reality as it appears to the sense organs. In between the ultimate and concrete reality is prakrti, also called pradhana. Out of this imperceptible cosmic substance all things have come, and to it they will return (Kramrisch,1981,166).

Phallus worship is of course not unique to the Indian cult of Shiva. Both Phallic symbolism and phallus worship, not to mention the 'penis envy' among men jealous of their genital prowess and ever pitting it in fantasy against that of other men, are found in other cultures throughout history. The symbol of the phallus transcends the human limitations of the penis and incorporates the very essence of manhood. 'For the boy, the phallus represents the grown up man's greatness, strength, independence, courage, wisdom, knowledge, mastery of other men and possession of desirable women, potency – and everything else a boy may look up to in men and desire for himself (Vanggaard,1972,56). Thus, as the boy lives on in the man, men everywhere
and of all ages are phallus worshippers, although most societies have not institutionalised this universal male propensity into anything like the phallic cult of Shiva worship.

The symbolic linga of Shiva not only incorporates the little boy's desire and striving for the strength and 'agentic' ability of manhood by identifying with the anatomical reality and functional capacity of the erect male genital, it also serves a defensive function, psycho-analytically speaking, in that an identification with the great phallus is a bulwark against the anxiety triggered by the separation from the mother during the time of the second birth (Kakar, 1978, 154).

Psycho-analytic experience has abundantly demonstrated that a traumatic event in early childhood, such as the Indian boy's second birth, shatters his primitive, pleasurable confidence in himself and his powers. The earliest separation in which the boy turns away from the disappointing external world and seeks comfort and a sense of control in such defensive manoeuvres as 'I do not need anyone', 'I am sufficient unto myself', and 'I am perfect'. This compensatory activation of the grandiose self finds its mythological counterpart in the very concept of Shiva – remote from the world, isolated and self-sufficient in his mountain hideout of Kailasha.

In the young boy's inner life, the compensatory restitution of self-assurance and control is expressed primarily in a fantasised over-valuation of his body, its strength, intactness, invincibility, and especially of his penis. For in the inner world of the small boy, the self, the body and the penis are often interchangeable, with the phallus being a miniature representation not only of the body but of the 'total ego' (Ferenczi, 1938, 16). As we know, in the unconscious layers of the psyche this equation persists well into adulthood. Deep down, the penis remains a major focus of a man's narcissistic concern, such that any lapse in sexual potency is accompanied by a general loss of self-esteem and a dreadful intimation of collapse in every sphere of activity and livelihood. The fantastic image of a towering, universally admired penis is a powerful compensation for the Indian boy's expulsion from the maternal 'paradise'; the Shiva linga with which the adult devotee identifies himself, thereby 'possessing' its attributes, incorporates the boy's twin restitutive themes of bodily perfection and psychic invulnerability (Kakar, 1978, 157).
The fantasy becomes collective in the vivid portrayals and mythical elaborations of the linga found in the epics and Puranas, which form the Shiva devotees' catechism and inspiration. Many Shiva myths also incorporate the theme of phallic grandiosity.

The manifest narcissistic obsession with the penis and the pervasive masculine self-doubt and ego-fragility underlying it become even more pronounced in the Hindu embellishment of the linga – the Gauripatta or yoni – the vulva-like base from which the phallus juts out. For in spite of fantasies of phallic grandeur, the penis itself is of course situated outside the body, exposed and vulnerable to injury from without, just as the outgoing self is ever susceptible to the outer world's encroachments. In situations of aggravated anxiety, the fantasy of the grand invulnerable phallus may not be a sufficient dam against the threat to self-esteem. The solution to the threat is a symbolic withdrawal of the over-cathected penis into one-self, into an internal organ, the vagina, where the phallus (and the ego) is safe and beyond harm.

Thus, in addition to the representation of masculine potency and the defensive fantasy of the grandiose self condensed in a single phallic image, the linga of Shiva arising from the yoni also includes the unconscious idea of bisexuality as a means of narcissistic self-sufficiency. Narcissistic bisexuality finds its cultural expression not only in the impacted symbol of the linga-yoni, but also in Shiva's form as Hara-Gauri or Ardhanarishwara, the deity who is half-man and half-woman, one of the most popular subjects in Hindu art, particularly in the Tantric schools. Here, the god is divided vertically, male on one side and female on the other. The classical dancers who depict Shiva in this form, one half of the body executing vigorous 'male' movements while the other half simultaneously carrying out flowing 'feminine' ones, splendidly convey not only the imagery but the emotion of bisexuality. Such mythopoetic expressions of Indian culture are not vestiges of a grotesque antiquity; they express powerful living forces in the individual unconscious – dark, ambivalent forces, repressed by most of us, that only the deviant, by means of consummate artistry, or intense mental anguish, dare to 'act out'.
In spite of their obviously limited representativeness, cases from Indian psycho-analytic practice vividly illustrate the correspondence between a cultural symbol, *Shiva* and his *linga*, and a modal childhood fantasy, bisexuality in the service of narcissism (Kakar, 1978, 157).

The *aksharas*, letters, of the alphabet of the *Devnagari* script, are understood to be mostly representative of the combined form of *Shiva* and *Parvati*, the letters representing the presence of *Shiva*, and the *matra*, the horizontal support, indicating the presence of *Parvati*.

The eternal feminine principle within *Shiva* has been illustrated by innumerable myths. According to one such myth, *Shiva* once took the feminine form of a mother in order to suckle a litter of piglets abandoned by their mother. This mother form of *Shiva* is known as *Matribhuteswara*. In abstract terms too the constant association of *Shiva* with *Uma* or *Parvati* is expressed in various conceptual ways. The concept of *Candravindu* implies that *Shiva* and *Parvati* are in a continuing state of unification. *Candra* implies *Shiva*, one of his popular names being *Candrasekhara*. Similarly, *Vindu* has a reference to *Parvati*, who is known as *Vinduvasini*, one who resides in the *vindu*, point (Pande, 2004).

From *Shiva* came the eleven *rudras* or vital breaths which carried the fiery essence of *Rudra* into all forms of life. It is said that *Shiva* asked the Great Goddess to divide herself into two aspects...black and white...from which sprang the infinite *Shaktis*, female powers. The cosmic dance of the *Shiva-Shakti* continuum has for eons engendered generations. One should note, however, that no progeny issued from the union of *Shiva* and *Shakti* – neither mortal nor immortal.

The cross-dressing aspect of the archetype of *Shiva* can be put forth by the following story: every night the milk maids of *Vraja* would circle *Krishna* and dance in the meadows of *Madhuvana* while he played the flute. This was the mystical dance of union with the supreme divine principle known as *Maharaas*. *Shiva*, enchanted by the splendour of this dance, decided to participate in it. He arrived on the banks of the *Yamuna* along with *Parvati*. *Parvati* joined the sacred dance, but *Shiva* was prevented from entering the magic circle because he was a man. In the *Maharaas*,

87
only Krishna was male, everyone else was female. Determined to join the Maharaas, Shiva bathed in the river Yamuna and the river-goddess transformed him into a woman. In this female form, Shiva entered the magic circle and began to dance. As the dance continued into the night, the milkmaids noticed that Krishna gave more attention to the newly arrived. Krishna's favourite Radha demanded an explanation. “He is Shiva, the supreme cosmic dancer, my teacher. I dance with him for him. “The milkmaids saluted Shiva and watched, spellbound, the divine dance of Nataraja (Shiva, the dancer) and Natwara (Krishna, the dancer) (Pattanaik,2002,78).

Another story: Shiva once saw Vishnu in the form of Mohini. Overwhelmed by desire, he embraced Mohini and spilt his semen. From the spilt seed was born a child who was given into the care of a childless king. The boy was called Manikantha, because at birth he had a jeweled bell round his neck.

I wish to refer to a story where Shiva was cursed to become an androgyne: Adishakti came into being three days before the three worlds came into being, three days before Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva were born. She attained puberty and with it came desire. She first created Brahma, but he refused to satisfy her passion as she was his mother. Enraged, Adishakti burnt him to ashes. Next came Vishnu. He too turned down her request. Enraged, Adishakti burnt him too. Then came Shiva. He tricked the goddess into giving him her third eye and all her powers before he was willing to satisfy her. Shiva then burnt Adishakti to ashes instead. Before she turned into a heap of ash, Adishakti cursed Shiva, “Since you rejected me, a woman like me will get stuck to you and become half your body.” Later, Shiva revived Brahma and Vishnu. They divided the ash mound into three and out of them came the goddesses Saraswati, Laxmi, and Parvati, who married Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, who took them to their abodes in Brahmaloka, Vaikuntha, and Kailas. Metaphorically, the Ardhanareshwara image reconciles two conflicting ideas: male and female, spirit and matter.

Many Hindu texts have simply accepted this duality without attempting to offer an explanation: ‘The yogi who thinks of Shiva as devoid of passion himself enjoys freedom from passion. Other texts have advanced the somewhat tortuous argument that the erect phallus is a symbol of chastity since the semen has not yet
been shed and the linga thus symbolises concentrated sexual vitality, which, in the Hindu tradition, it is incumbent upon yogis to transform into mental power. Psychologically, the linga does not have an erotic connotation, if by eroticism one means the direction of sexuality towards the world of 'objects', the desire for others. In other words, the linga is not a symbol of object libido but of narcissistic libido, of sexual investment in the self. Thus, although sexuality is the essence of the symbol, the linga is both 'chaste' and 'erotic' at the same time. The linga stands for the promise of potent manhood at the same time that it incorporates the defensive fantasies of the grandiose self and self-sufficient bisexuality in the service of narcissism. It condenses the manifold and the contradictory into a single visual image, an evocation of all that is impossible or difficult to put in so many words.

**Rama: The Self-Contradictory Masculinity Construct**

Rama has a somewhat complex character. There are conflicting elements in it, and some of his doings have given room for criticism and have been a subject of controversy. In a way, Rama stands for the highest in man – as son, husband, King and ally or friend of the oppressed (Sastri, 1995).

Rama, is generally regarded as an avatara ("descent," or incarnation) of the celestial Visnu. And, it was in that god's worldly manifestation that he presented the perfect model for man. Accordingly Rama is invariably shown with only two arms. That is to emphasise his most cherished identity as a human. As such, he is regularly depicted in one of several iconographic settings – at his marriage, standing with Sita by his side (kalyana-rama); or, poised in full battle array, often with his bow-string taut (rana-rama); or, seated with Sita enthroned at his side for their coronation (pattabhi-rama); or, standing with his bow in hand (kodanda-rama) and flanked by his royal companions, Sita and Laksmana, both of whom followed him in exile. In all these it is quite clear that Rama is the chief figure to consider – Laksmana on his right, and Sita on his left, are subordinate figures although both in their own rights have significance. Laksmana, on the Lord's favoured right side, is the very embodiment of service and support – tradition avers that he is an earthly form of Ananta or Adisesa, the cosmic Lord Visnu's primordial serpent couch. He represents, among other things, the faithful devotee who is honoured eternally for his attitude of
attachment to his master. *Sita* on *Rama*'s left, is the incarnation of Sri, *Visnu*'s eternal consort — an identity confirmed by the lotus held in her hand, suggesting in turn her association with *Laksni*. She personifies the ideal of conjugal trust and forbearance, for it was she as faithful wife who followed her beloved into his forest exile without hesitation, with infinite grace. In the centre is *Rama*, the prototype for the royal hero. He stands tall, courageous and upright, in reflection of the attitudes he maintained throughout his career as a prince who did not deviate from *dharma*. His garb is regal, and he carries the emblems of the warrior. The arrows lodged in his quiver are tokens of his concentrated *astra* — abilities to overcome evil, to vanquish all forms of vice. The bow in his left hand is his omnipresent power (*sakti*) to implement his will. It stands in the measure of his full height, potent and waiting, to be used at the critical moment to its fullest promise. It perfectly reflects on an inanimate level what *Sita* standing next to it, represents at a more vital level. *Rama*'s right hand descends in a popular signal of blessing, called — *asir-hasta* — note its shape is reiterated in *Sita*’s hand — and the gesture gravitates toward his feet. There, in many depictions, the artist will insert the presence of *Hanuman* the paragon of the humble devotee who wishes only to be at the blessed feet of his master.

There are other levels of interpretation which may be sounded to yield additional significance to the coincidence of these three figures. For example: according to *Vaisnava* tradition, each and every syllable in the inventory of lexicography has a special esoteric identity — “*a*” is *Visnu*, author of the universe, hence father of all; “*u*” is *Laksmi*, the teeming matrix out of which emanates all precious things, hence the great mother of all; and “*m*” is the *jiva*, or individual soul, which in relation to the cosmic couple, is offspring. By an arcane application of these elements to *Rama*, *Sita*, and *Laksmana* is produced the sacred syllable for meditation, “*Om*” (*a* + *b* + *m*). Or, for another example: the three *gunas* (“qualities”) may be associated with their personalities — *sattva* (“perfection”) is assigned to *Rama*, *rajas* (“dynamism”) is identified with *Laksmana*, and *tamas* (“concealment”) is ascribed to *Sita*. Their disparity is what prompts action both within the divine and human realms. Or, for yet another example: the first three human goals (*purusartha*) — *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama* — are themselves equated with *Rama*, *Laksmana*, and *Sita*.
respectively. And, the three of them, collectively realised, lead to the fourth and final goal, moksa! (Smith and Narasimhachary, 1991, 76-79).

Rama not only is a hero and paragon of the nobility of character (dharmavira, dhirodatta), but he embodies the story of a human destiny in its most sublime expression. So, to cast Rama's heroic character, Valmiki had to cast his heroic story, and to unfold his humanity he had to unfold the story of his human odysseys, and to unfold the story of his human odysseys he had to unfold the story of all such persons who had a deep bearing on Rama's life. So drawn, this is a somewhat exaggerated sketch, were we to consider it logically, for we could not rightly imagine that Valmiki intended every other story, every other destiny, every other character to be secondary to Rama. No, surely he did not do so. Whatever page we may turn up in the Ramayana, it immediately bespeaks the poet's intention to portray a whole cosmos of life, a cosmos of persons and their destinies, characters and emotions, of nature, of cities, of what not. What we mean to say is that Rama was the prime ideal in Valmiki's mind that moved him to take up the story as it was prevalent before him and make it an ideal story of life with an ideal ethical message, with Rama as its living ethical apex, with variegated ideal characters as living embodiments of an ideal ethical life, with many and variegated characters of life of variegated psychic temperaments drawn from variegated sections of life, from variegated classes of being, with a gallery of life itself and life's environment, with anything that would capture the fancies and imaginations of the people in a due rhapsodic and poetic sense with all conducing to form the stucco-work of a cosmos of life enthralling in its unfathomable richness and edifying in its unfathomable ethos (Wurm, 1976, 528-529).

If Rama was the prime ideal in Valmiki's mind that inspired him to retell the Rama story in the spirit of his poetic vision, Rama must have been much of an ideal character in the tradition before him, through this tradition seems to have been more in the line of a delightful akhydna than in the line of a delightful saga with an ethical message of life. So we can say then more truly that Valmiki's poetical vocation was awakened at the vision of the ideal character of Rama and that this vision itself filled him with a poetic mission to make his story an ideal saga of life, with an ideal message of life, embodying in itself a whole cosmos of life - spell-binding in its richness, edifying in its purport.
As Valmiki opens the curtain on Rama and sings the praises of Rama, he says everything about him he can say by way of words and the impressions these works convey, and he sings of a paragon of virtues, a dharmavira, greater and deeper than anyone could be. He sings of him as a model of an ideal and perfect personality, a personality sublime and super-human, a personality unrivalled by any other man in the world, in heroism unrivalled even by the Gods, resembling, as it were, the God of Gods himself. He sings of him as a model of humanity; a man unexcelled in idealism and yet a fellow traveller of man’s most human experiences of life.

Rama’s highest ideal in life is an unflinching and enthusiastic commitment to satyadharma, to the dharma that aspires for righteousness for the sake of truth and goodness and forgoes every concern about personal welfare, all considerations of worldly attachment and egoistic claims for justice, in a spirit of total self-sacrifice and forbearance towards any injustice done to him; a dharma that, uncompromising though it may be, has its resonance not in a temporal emotional attachment, but in the ever-lasting, supreme good of all beings, in a supreme altruism, an altruism that transcends all temporal attachment and seeks the eternal, spiritual welfare of beings.

So, we see a Rama, who in the midst of the most heroic firmness to his commitment, a commitment to which he is ever and unflinchingly loyal and loyal with the greatest cheerfulness of mind – a par-excellence expression of the most sublime altruism and the most total self-sacrifice – is the most human in tenderness of heart, affection and sympathy, is the most human in agony of grief and love, which is another and the most captivating expression of his sublime altruism – the spontaneous translation of his inmost ideals and principles.

To highlight the masculinity construct of the archetype of Rama, I refer to a passage: Throbbing with affection and sympathy on parting from his dear ones and his citizens, whose incessant devotion and protestations of love deeply move him, whose grief wrings as much his heart as it does theirs and which he does everything to soothe and gently divert; whose agony of love he keeps ever in mind during his forest-stay and, in a moment of deep depression caused by the absence of the comforting presence of Sumantra – the thought of whose ardent devotion violently
convulses his heart – is so traumatically re-awakened in him that he breaks into an unprecedented paroxysm of misgivings against Kaikeyi, whose purity of intention he would have never questioned in his mind.

*Rama*, thus, is not only the most sublime in sublimity, the most heroic in heroism, but the most human in human-ness, a human-ness which makes him truly and genuinely a paragon of humanity. And yet he is unequalled in his god-like and unsurpassably spell-binding, super-natural lustre and heroism in battle: a hero that delights gods and men alike, a hero who saves Gods and men alike from the terrible harassments of the super-demon Ravana, a hero who is veritably the refuge of all beings and in all respects: as a paragon of dharma and virtues, as a protector of the righteous and the oppressed, as a saviour of the world, as a king of blessedness.

The *Ramayana* is not just another epic poem (Kakar, 1978, 63). It is through the recitation, reading, listening, or attending a dramatic performance of this revered text (above all others) that a Hindu reasserts his or her cultural identity as a Hindu, and obtains religious merit. The popular epic contains ideal models of familial bonds and social relations to which even a modernised Hindu pays lip service, however much he may privately question or reject them as irrelevant to the tasks of modern life. This intimate familiarity does not mean historical knowledge, but rather a sense of the mythical figure as a benevolent presence, located in the individual’s highly personal and always actual space-time. From earliest childhood, a Hindu has heard of the *Rama* legend recounted on any number of sacral and secular occasions; seen the central episodes enacted in folk plays like *Ram Lila*; heard his qualities extolled in devotional songs; and absorbed the ideal masculine identity he incorporates through many everyday metaphors and similes that are associated with his name.

One day as King Janaka was ploughing, an infant sprang up from the ground who he named Sita. The child grows up to be a beautiful girl whom the king promises to give in marriage to any man who can bend the wonderful bow in his possession. Many suitors – gods, princes, kings, demons – vie for Sita’s hand but none is even able to lift the bow, until Rama, the reincarnation of Vishnu and the hero of the epic, comes to Janaka’s country and gracefully snaps the bow in two. After
their wedding, Sita and Rama return to Ayodhya, which is ruled by Rama's father, Dasharatha.

After some time Dasharatha wants to abdicate in favour of Rama, his eldest son. But because of a promise given to the mother of one of his younger sons, he is forced to banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years. Rama tries to persuade Sita to let him proceed in his exile alone, pointing out the dangers, discomforts and deprivations of a homeless life in the forest. In a long, moving passage Sita emphasises her determination to share her husband's fate, declaring that death would be preferable to separation. Her speech is an eloquent statement of the dharma of a Hindu wife: For a woman, it is not her father, her son, nor her mother, friends nor her own self, but the husband, who in this world and the next is her sole means of salvation ever. "If thou dost enter the impenetrable forest today, O Descendant of Raghu, I shall precede thee on foot, treading down the spiky Kusha grass". In truth, whether it be in palaces, in chariots or in heaven, wherever the shadow of the feet of her consort falls, it must be followed (Shastri,1962,233).

Both Rama and Sita, mourned by the citizens of Ayodhya who adore their prince and future king, proceed to the forest in the company of Rama's brother Lakshman. The Ramayana then recounts their adventures in the forest, most prominent and terrible among them being Sita's kidnapping by the powerful king of the demons, Ravana, and her abduction to Lanka. In Lanka, Ravana's kingdom, Sita is kept imprisoned in one of the demon-king's palaces where he tries to win her love. Neither his seductive kindesses nor his grisly threats are of any avail as Sita remains steadfast in her love and devotion to Rama.

Meanwhile, Rama raises an army from the Vanar (monkey) tribes in order to attack Lanka and bring Sita back. After a long and furious battle, he stands victorious and Ravana is killed. Doubting Sita's fidelity through the long term of her captivity, Rama refuses, however, to accept her again as his wife until she proves her innocence and purity by the fire ordeal in which the fire-god Agni himself appears to testify to her virtue. The couple then return to Ayodhya where amidst the citizens' happy celebrations Rama is crowned king.
But Sita’s ordeal is not yet over. Hearing of rumours in the city which cast suspicion on the purity of his queen, Rama banishes her to the forest where she gives birth to twins, Lava and Kusha. She and her children live an ascetic life in a rustic hermitage, Sita’s love for Rama being unaltering. When the twins grow up, she sends them back to their father. On seeing his sons, Rama repents and Sita is brought back to Ayodhya to be reinstated as queen. On her arrival, however, Rama again commands her to assert her purity before the assembled court. His abiding mistrust, and this further demand prove too much for the gentle queen who calls on her mother, the earth, to open up and receive her back. The earth obliges and Sita goes back to where she was born.

The ideal of womanhood delineated by Sita is one of chastity, purity, gentle tenderness and a singular faithfulness which cannot be destroyed or even disturbed by her husband’s rejections, slights or thoughtlessness. We should note in passing that the Sita legend also gives us a glimpse of the Hindu imagery of manliness. Rama may have all the traits of a godlike hero, yet he is also fragile, mistrustful and jealous, and very much of a conformist, both to his parents’ wishes and to social opinion.

I wish to point out here that the masculinity construct of the Rama archetype is replete with vulnerabilities, weaknesses, self-contradictions, inner struggles, turbulences and storms apart from the virtues and humane qualities that bring forth a more human portrayal of the Rama construction. I wish to end with a story: King Dasharatha decided to crown his eldest son Rama as King and retire into the forest for a life of contemplation. However, on the eve of the coronation, his junior wife Kaikeyi summoned him to her quarters and demanded the two boons he had promised her years ago. On that day she had saved his life on the battle field. “Let my son Bharata be crowned king instead and let Rama live in the forest as a hermit for fourteen years. “Bound by his word, Dasharatha ordered Rama into exile. When the residents of Ayodhya heard of the happenings in the palace, they were heartbroken. They decided to follow Rama into exile, for they loved him very much. When Rama reached the river that separated his father’s kingdom from the forest, he turned around and said, “Men and women of Ayodhya, if you truly love me, wipe your tears and return to my brother’s kingdom, I have to go into the forest.” Men and women of Ayodhya obeyed Rama and returned to the city. But those people who were neither.
men nor women did not know what to do. They could neither follow Rama nor return to Ayodhya. They remained on the banks of the river until Rama returned. Rama blessed them and decreed they would be kings in the age of darkness, Kali Yuga (Pattanaik, 2002, 121-122). There is no “original” Ramayana. Since its earliest recorded retelling in Sanskrit nearly 2,000 years ago, there have been several hundred Ramayanas in several languages, some put down in writing, others existing only in oral form, each satisfying the needs of a particular period or a people. In Jain Ramayanas, for example, Rama upholds the Jain value of non-violence and leaves the killing of the villain to his brother Laxmana. The Ramayana in the Debi Bhagwatam (a scripture dedicated to the mother-goddess), focuses on female power and chastity. The Ramayana of the Hijras does not deviate from the grand subtext: the supreme importance of unquestioning obedience for the sake of social order. By remaining true to the spirit of the epic, the retelling empowers the Hijra community. Rama, the divine upholder of social laws, not only acknowledged their existence, but also granted them a boon to make up for his earlier oversight.

[III]

New Dimensions To The Masculinity Discourse

More detailed study is required of each of these archetypes of Indian masculinity construct especially the last one in order to bring out the complexity, the vulnerability, and the grey shades of the frames. This is a challenge to posit them vis-à-vis the linear hyper-masculine projection that the fundamentalist rightist forces are posing to appropriate the socio-political culture. The archetypes can be regarded as main-stream constructs of Indian masculinity or rather masculinities domain. I wish to point out here that there have been alternative traditions as well in India that seek to rethink and redefine the masculinity construct. I will discuss these alternative traditions briefly, namely, those proposed by the Mystic Tradition, the Bhakti Cult and the Gandhian discourse.

The Mystic Tradition

Each part of India is in some sense a microcosm of the whole sub-continent; each part also has, in some sense a unique and individual culture. In certain ways, the
Bhakti movement in Bengal has qualities of form and spirit that distinguish it from those movements in other parts of India. Its peculiarities of spirit were due mostly to the greatness of Caitanya; those of form to the primacy of Krishna and the interpretations of the legends of Radha and the Gopis (Dimock, 1966, 29).

For even while Caitanya lived, people considered him divine. Some thought he was an avatara, an incarnation, of Krishna; some thought he was Krishna himself. "Krishna, the source of avatars, came to earth in the form of Caitanya." And, most important for us, some saw him as Radha and Krishna, the divine lovers, in the most intimate possible union — in one body. "Radha and Krishna were one soul in two bodies ... then even the two bodies became one, in Caitanya." He was Krishna internally, Radha externally; his golden colour was that of Radha; his deep love and longing for Krishna were those of Radha; and yet, within, he had the full divinity of Krishna. When Radha and Krishna were two, neither could experience love to the full. Krishna, giving and receiving love, could not experience fully Radha's joy in giving and receiving, and so also with Radha. When they became one, in Caitanya, their joy was doubled. The reader must have begun suspecting the significance of this interpretation of the Sahajiyas.

The term 'sahaja' literally means 'easy' or 'natural,' and in this meaning the term is applied to a system of worship and belief in which the natural qualities of the senses should be used, not denied or suppressed. The historical development of such a belief is shrouded in mystery, for the cult, as we shall see, is one which requires mystery and silence.

The roots of these Sahajiya sects lie well within the ancient tradition of the Tantras. Both Tantrics and Sahajiyas believe that man is a microcosm, a miniature universe; both believe in unity as the guiding principle of this universe, that all duality, even that of the sexes, is falsehood and delusion and that cosmic unity is regained, or represented, by man woman in sexual union. Both believe in certain types of mental and physical control as the means by which man can know his true nature and relate the human and the divine within himself; both believe that there should be no caste division among worshippers; both are humanistic, and begin with
the analysis of the nature of man, and see as the end of man the gaining of the "natural state," the sahaja, the state of ultimate and blissful unity.

This is the tradition that met and blended with that of the Vaisnavas. Nor, despite the fact that the Sahajiya is humanistic and the Vaisnava theistic, that the Sahajiyas are monistic and the Vaisnavas dualistic, is this particularly strange. All things are unified within the microcosmic self. There are seeming dualities in the world, such as man and woman, human and divine, self and not-self. But such dualities are only seeming, and the first step towards restoring the natural and the normal state of unity is the realisation of this.

The Sahajiyas say that the visible form of man or woman is rupa. The svarupa (Krishna and Radha, male and female, or the material and non-material elements of man) is mingled with the rupa in a condition of unspecified but absolute intimacy. The nature of this mingling is incomprehensible to the human kind and has to be explained by analogy; the relationship of svarupa to rupa is that of the scent to a flower. "The scent of the flower is the nature of the flower; who can separate one from the other?" "The rupa and the svarupa are completely united. They are intermingled one with the other." The svarupa contains divine joy (rasa), and the rupa participates intimately in this: "That which is called the svarupa is the container of rasa: and the two are one" The svarupa is Radha and Krishna in blissful union. The svarupa can, and indeed must, be known through the rupa: "Absorption in the rupa, devotion to the rupa – all is contained in the rupa. He who understands this profoundly is one with the svarupa." The svarupa, Radha-Krishna, is full of rasa. It is this to which the worshipper should devote his attention: "If you worship the svarupa and sacrifice to the svarupa, if you know the svarupa as the ultimate of all things (sara)....you swim in a sea of rasa, which glitters when you touch it. In whom this rasa is manifest, his body is svarupa." This rasa is in the body: "When one knows that the lila of Radha and Krishna is manifested (in the body), that they taste lila in their rupas, that everything is contained in this highest rasa, that the body is full of this rasa, he tastes the rasa."

The Sahajiyas were especially concerned with the relationship of material (bhutatma) to non-material (jivatma) elements within the rupa, as well as with the
relationship of the *rupa* to the *svarupa*. All of these are, in some intellectually incomprehensible way, one. As the *rupa* and *svarupa* are bound up with one another, so within the *rupa* are the *jivatma* and *bhutatma* bound up with one another. There is thus a continuity between the material body and the highest form of the *svarupa*, which is bliss.

Man is a sort of hermaphroditic creature, and the two sides of his nature, in terms borrowed from ancient views of the dualism of matter and spirit, are called *prakriti* (female) and *purusa* (male): in the self is *prakriti* and in the self is *purusa*. Although the *svarupa* of the individual, and thus the *rupa*, contains both male and female, it seems as if the sex of the body is determined by a preponderance of one or the other aspect. *Prakriti* and *purusa* are spoken of as having two different *rupas*, each containing *rasa*: “In the self is *prakriti* and in the self is *purusa*; they are in two *rupas*, and in both is *rasa* manifested.” The *rupas* are here thought of as two parts of a whole; if there were not two parts, there could be no coming together into union. Unity can be considered the ultimate static state, but the process of the realisation of this unity is dynamic.

There are two possibilities then, for the realisation of unity. The first is the union of male and female *rupas*, making one single entity. Secondly, since every individual has within him both male and female elements, it is possible for him to realise unity entirely within himself. The second of these possibilities, the higher of the two, gives the notion of "becoming a woman" a new dimension. In one has an over-abundance of *purusa* in his system, and is thus male, in order to pass beyond the point at which he needs a woman as an aid to the realisation of blissful unity and to reach the point where he can realise it entirely within himself, he has to neutralise his maleness and balance male and female within himself. He has, so to speak, to raise the concentration of his *prakriti* in order to equal that of his *purusa*; it seems that, to gain equilibrium within the self, equal halves are needed to make the whole. Thus: “Having abandoned his male body, he becomes the *prakriti-svarupa*. On can know, therefore, the *svarupa* of Radha; it can be known within the heart. When one becomes *prakriti* by union with *prakriti*, it is not by means of his masculine body. God is hidden, but if one is purified, one can be saved, my brother.” When one is purified,
kama no longer remains. The worshipper cannot want a woman to satisfy himself, for he is no longer a man.

Basically, the Sahajiya teaching is simple enough: man is divine; all that he has to do is acknowledge that fact, learning to shed that part of him which keeps him from realisation of his true, infinite, and blissful Krishna-nature and, when the material husk is shucked off, to enjoy an eternity of pleasure. But, as the Sahajiyas were the first to admit, the path to this goal is slippery and right next to an abyss that extends all the way down to hell.

The Bhakti Cult

Hindu cosmology is feminine to an extent rarely found in other major civilisations (Kakar, 1978, 110-111). In its extremity (for example) in Tantric beliefs, god and creation are unconditionally feminine; in Mahanirvana Tantra, even the normally male gods Vishnu and Brahma are portrayed as maidens with rising breasts.

The most striking illustration of the cultural acceptance and outright encouragement of the passive feminine aspects of identity in Indian men is the Bhakti cult associated with Lord Krishna. Its appeal is dramatically simple. Renouncing the austere practices of yoga, the classical Hindu means of attaining moksha, the Krishna cult emphasises instead the emotional current in religious devotion. Personal devotion to Lord Krishna absorbs a devotee’s whole self and requires all his energies. Depending on individual temperament and inclination, this devotional emotion – bhava – may express itself in a variety of modes: santa, awe, humility, a sense of one’s own insignificance; dasya, respect, subservience and pious obedience; vatsalya, nurturing, protective (maternal) feelings of care; and so on.

The most intensely and commonly desirable feeling towards the godhead, a rudimentary prerequisite for the state of pure bliss, is held to be madhurya bhava, the longing of a woman for her lover, of the legendary gopis for their Lord. In an interview with Milton Singer, a Krishna devotee in the city of Madras articulates the systematic cultivation of this feminine-receptive stance and its transformation into a religious ideal: The love of a woman for her husband or for her lover is very much more intense than any other sort of love in the world, and I mentioned the gopis,
Radha, Rukmini, Satyabhama, and so forth, as instances in point. Their love was indeed transcendental. Even when the husband or the lover is a man, the woman’s love for him is of a very high order and when the Lord Supreme is the husband or lover of a woman, one can find no other love excelling or surpassing this love. The ladies mentioned above can therefore be said to be the most blessed in the world. If we concede this, we can ourselves aspire for this kind of supreme love for God. We can imagine ourselves to be those women or at any rate ordinary women, imaging that the Lord is our husband or lover and bestow the maximum love on Him...One can think constantly that he is a woman and that God is his husband or lover, and he will be a woman and God will be his husband or lover...You know the philosophy here that all men and women in the world are spiritually women, and the Lord alone is male – the Purusa. The love of the gopis, Radha, Rukmini, and Satyabhama explains the principle of the human soul being drawn to the Supreme Soul and getting merged in it (Singer, 1966, 130).

The cult primarily associated with Krishna, with its stress on bhakti or devotional activity, has faithfully reflected the change in the nature of the god. Whereas the Bhakti of Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita is staid and pietistic, its devotion channelled through a life of discipline and strict adherence to ethical and social norms, in the medieval Bhakti cults and down to the present day, Bhakti is no longer a pale and austere affair but rather emphasises intoxication and uninhibited response to the dark god, a release from the constraints and precepts of orthodox Hinduism.

Devotional activity, practised in groups composed of male and female devotees together, takes many forms. In festivals, processions, gatherings at temples and homes, the devotees sing, dance, enact the legends of Krishna’s childhood and youth, and chant his glories with an emotional fervour radically different from the meditative contemplation and emotional asceticism enjoined by other traditional Indian methods of enhancing spiritual experience. Krishna bhakti is a vision of the divine that is free and spontaneous, boisterous and anarchical. For as Krishna himself puts it: Till the pores of the body do not spill over with joy, till the mind does not dissolve, till tears of bliss do not begin to flow and the mind does not dissolve in a flood of devotion, until then there is no possibility of purification for the devotee. He
whose voice breaks with emotion, whose mind has dissolved and flows only in one direction, who does not stop crying for a moment yet sometimes breaks out in loud laughter, who leaving shame bursts into loud song and begins to dance, such a devotee purifies not only himself but the whole world (Bhagavata Purana, XI.14.,23-24).

This invitation to abandon self-control and self-consciousness perfectly captures the ecstatic nature of the Krishna cult. In psychological terms, he encourages the individual to identify with an ideal primal self, released from all social and superego constraints. Krishna's promise, like that of Dionysus in ancient Greece, is one of utter freedom and instinctual exhilaration.

The psycho-social meaning of bhakti is that it provides for, and actually uses, 'democratic' fantasies in which the inner and outer repressions exacted by life in a rigidly structured and highly stratified social order are lifted. Traditional codes of conduct, and relationships between social groups, between generations, and especially between the sexes, are abrogated in Krishna worship.

The Holi festival, then, with its exuberant polymorphous sexuality and insubordinate aggression momentarily obliterating all the established hierarchies of age, sex, caste and class, is an idealisation and elevation of instinctuality and an apt celebration of Krishna who, of all the Hindu gods, is accorded the greatest permission for instinctual indulgence. To a psychologist who must necessarily forsake the mystical explanations of legends describing Krishna's sixteen thousand wives, his unrestrained amorous dalliance with the village gopis, his voracious childhood hunger for milk, butter and curds and his completely amoral attitude towards stealing them, as well as his general inability to bear any kind of frustration, Krishna is all impulse and appetite, a highly narcissistic being who incidentally benefits mankind while pursuing his own libidinous desires. The cult of Krishna affords his devotees all manner of fantasised instinctual gratification through an unconscious identification with him.

The popularity of the Krishna cult has not only a psychological but also a social rationale – namely, its promise of salvation to the dispossessed classes. By
rejecting the conventional Hindu axiom that a person's birth, social status and caste membership govern his chances of reaching moksha, the Krishna cult actively welcomes and even recruits the participation of oppressed castes and classes in its devotions and ceremonies, an utterly unorthodox state of affairs. The sole criterion of merit in Krishna worship is the extent and intensity of devotion. The Bhagavata Purana is critical of the arrogance of high castes, and historically the Krishna cult has always drawn its support from the social and economic groups that were ‘despised by the rest of the society, but their poverty and distress made them naturally sympathetic to a devotional religion based on faith and simplicity’.

The Gandhian Discourse

Another important point to be raised in the present research endeavour is about colonialism, modernity and masculinity and the Gandhian redefinition of masculinity. Colonialism colonises minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds as a psychological entity. Crucial to the cultural co-optation was the process that psychoanalysis calls identification with the aggressor underlying stress on Ksatriyahood. Three concepts became central to colonial India: purusatva (the essence of masculinity), naritva (the essence of femininity) and klibatva (femininity in masculinity). Gandhi wanted to liberate the British as much as he wanted to liberate Indians.

But before delving deep in the analytical framework of the alternative Gandhian discourse on masculinity, one needs to look at the notion of androgyny. To put it simply, it can be stated as being alive to the man and woman within oneself.

Androgyny means overcoming the cultural parameters defining a man or a woman, and raising the issue of common humanity. Work then is defined in terms of ability and interest, and the distinctions between men's work and women's work would at once be devalued. Androgyny, then, is about fearlessness and role choices which are not biologically defined. Androgyny is not about bisexuality (which is a lack of clarity in gender identification or hermaphroditism which is a lack of physical differentiation). It is not about transvestism (though the latter becomes an important
code by which androgyny often articulates itself. One of the complexities of androgyny could be substitutability, which sociologically is not a problem when applied to role behaviour). The most interesting thing about androgyny is that it does not necessitate gender neutralisation (Visvanathan, 1996, 3017).

The most creative response to the perversion of Western culture and domination came from its victims. It was colonial India, still preserving something of its androgynous cosmology and style, which ultimately produced a transcultural protest against the hyper-masculine world view of colonialism, in the form of Gandhi. Gandhi’s authenticity as an Indian should not blind us to the way his idiom cut across the cultural barriers between Britain and India, and Christianity and Hinduism. Albeit a non-Westerner, Gandhi always tried to be a living symbol of the other West. It was in this sense that Gandhi wanted to liberate the British as much as he wanted to liberate Indians.

To put this awareness to political use, he challenged first the ideology of biological stratification acting as a homologue of – and legitimacy for – political inequality and injustice. As already noted, the colonial culture’s ordering of sexual identities assumed that

\[ \text{Purusatva} > \text{Naritva} > \text{Klibatva} \]

That is, manliness is superior to womanliness, and womanliness in turn to femininity in man.

Gandhi’s solution was different. He used two orderings, each of which could be invoked according to the needs of the situation. The first, borrowed intact from the great and little traditions of saintliness in India, and also probably from the doctrine of power through diving bi-unity in some of the \textit{vamachari} or left-handed sects, was as follows:

\[ \text{Purusatva} \]

\[ \text{Androgyny} \quad \text{\textgreater} \quad \text{Naritva} \]

That is, manliness and womanliness are equal, but the ability to transcend the man-woman dichotomy is superior to both, being an indicator of godly and saintly
qualities. To do this, Gandhi had to ignore the traditional devaluation of some forms of androgyny in his culture.

Gandhi’s second ordering was invoked specifically as a methodological justification for the anti-imperialist movement, first in South Africa and then in India. It went as follows:

\[ \text{Naritva} > \text{Purusatva} > \text{Kapurusatva} \]

That is, the essence of femininity is superior to that of masculinity, which in turn is better than cowardice or, as the Sanskrit expression would have it, failure of masculinity. Though the ordering is not inconsistent with some interpretations of Indian traditions, when stated in such a fashion, it acquires a new play. This is because the first relationship \((\text{naritva} > \text{purusatva})\) often applies more directly to the transcendental and the magical, whereas the second relationship \((\text{purusatva} > \text{Kapurusatva})\) is a more general, everyday principle. Perhaps the conjunction of the two sets makes available the magical power of the feminine principle of the cosmos to the man who chooses to defy his cowardice by owning to his feminine self (Nandy, 1983,48-53).

There are a few implied meanings in these relationships. These meanings were culturally defined and, therefore, ‘assumed’ by Gandhi, but could be missed by an outside observer. First, the concept of \text{naritva}, so repeatedly stressed by Gandhi nearly fifty years before the woman’s liberation movement began, represented more than the dominant Western definition of womanhood. It included some traditional meanings of womanhood in India, such as the belief in a closer conjunction between power, activism and femininity than between power, activism and masculinity. It also implied the belief that the feminine principle is a more powerful, dangerous and uncontrollable principle in the cosmos than the male principle. But even more central to this concept of womanhood was the traditional Indian belief in the primacy of maternity over conjugality in feminine identity. This belief specified that woman as an object and source of sexuality was inferior to woman as source of motherliness and \text{caritas}. Gandhi’s fear of human sexuality, whatever its psychodynamic explanation in Gandhi’s personal history, was perfectly consistent with this reading of Indian culture.
Second, while the dominant principle in Gandhian praxis is non-violence or avoidable violence, an implicit subsidiary principle is what K.J.Shah calls unavoidable violence. The principle of non-violence gives men access to protective maternity and by implication, to the godlike state of *ardhanarisvara*, a god half-man, half-woman. But given the cultural meaning of *naritva*, non-violence also gives men access to the powerful, active, maternal principle of the cosmos, magically protective and carrying the intimations of an oceanic and utopian beatitude. Along the same continuum, courage—what Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph call Gandhi’s new courage—allows one to rise above cowardice or *kapurusatva* and became a ‘man’, on the way to becoming the authentic man who admits his drive to become both the sexes. This courage is not definitionally wedded to violence as in *Ksatriyahood*, but it may involve unavoidable violence under some circumstances, particularly in circumstances where the alternative is passive tolerance of injustice, inequality and oppression—willing victimhood and acceptance of the secondary gains of victimhood—which are all seen as worse than violence.

In Gandhi’s philosophy, womanhood represents a civilising force in human society. In his science of *swaraj*, women appear as a collective representation by means of which the superiority and inviolability of indigenous social tradition is demonstrated against the modern. The principles of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa*, *swadeshi* and *sarvodaya* reflect the manner in which the ‘feminine’ was used to condemn the powerful British state in India as ethically inferior. The power of love and non-involvement with violence and evil, the dignity of human labour as service or craft within the sphere of cottage or ‘home’ industries and the moral requirement for sacrifice not so much for the real family as for the ‘collective’ family and its welfare—were not to give rise to a reformed or perfected society without which home rule was meaningless. In the Gandhian programme, the twin ideals of *satyagraha* and *brahmacharya* formed the extreme poles of an individual discipline advocated for everyone (Srinivasan, 1987, 2226-2227).

All his life, Gandhi wanted to live down within himself, his identification with his own outwardly powerful but essentially weak, hedonistic, semi-modernised father and to build his self-image upon his identification with his apparently weak, deeply religious, traditional but self-confident and powerful mother. Apparently his mother
was the first satyagrahi he knew, who used fasting and other forms of self-penalisation to acquire and yield womanly power within the constraints of a patriarchal family. Gandhi's deep need to come to psychological terms with his mother by incorporating aspects of her femininity in his own personality is significant. Kakar (1989, 86) even goes to the extent in remarking – like all mothers, Putlibai, whose favourite Gandhi was by virtue of his being the youngest child and whose special object of care and concern he remained because of his sickly constitution, is an abiding yet diffused presence in her son's inner life, an intensely luminous being albeit lacking definition. One can discover her chimerical presence in Gandhi's relationships with various other women in whom she was temporarily reincarnated, his wife Kasturbai the foremost among them.26

Going back to the personal realm and dimensions, Gandhi came to believe that if he was ever to grow into a perfect brahmachari – achieve universality and union with God – he must, like some Hindu Brahmachari mystics, become physically and spiritually more like a woman, or rather, embrace in his person both male and female attributes. The nineteenth-century Hindu mystic Ramakrishna was thought to have identified himself so closely with women that he was able to "menstruate" by having periodic discharges of blood through the pores of his skin. Describing the perfect brahmachari, Gandhi writes, "Even his sexual organs will begin to look different." In Gandhi's view, women were altogether nobler than men. Their interest in sex was submissive and self-sacrificing. Their love was self-less and motherly, stemming from the demands of childbearing and child rearing. They were more virtuous than men, because they had a greater capacity for suffering, faith and renunciation, in fact for non-violence. They were therefore better qualified than men to teach "the art of peace to the warring world."27 (Mehta,1977,182).

Although Gandhi's wished-for feminisation was defensive in origin, one cannot deny the development of its adaptive aspects. For Gandhi, the cherished oneness with the maternal – feminine could not always be maintained and was often threatened by the intrusion of "phallic desire" in the form of his obsession with food where Gandhi plays out, what the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott calls, "basic oral fantasy".28 (Kakar,1989,127).
Roy (2002, 62-91) undertakes a semiotic reading of the familial and national(ist) economies of carnophilia, vegetarianism, and masculinity in the life and work of Gandhi, especially in his autobiography. The topic of Gandhi's vegetarianism (and his other forms of culinary discipline, including fasting) scarcely needs any introduction for scholarly and popular audiences of South Asian studies, or, indeed, for audiences more broadly conceived. Gandhi was almost as noted, indeed notorious, for his experiments in alimentation and elimination as for those in celibacy and non-violent political action. The fact of their forming a single associative continuum should be by now almost entirely commonsensical for modern audiences, with their knowledge of the intimacy between the gastronomic and the libidinal, as it was commonsensical for the experimenter himself. Yet while Gandhi's experiments with sexuality have received some attention, his experiments with dietics have – with few and often sketchy exceptions – been curiously under-read, or read as though their meaning is incontestably and reassuringly transparent; they are construed most typically as a simple extension of a lifelong philosophy of *ahimsa* (non-violence). A scrutiny of the details and the contexts of Gandhi's writings and practices on matters of dietary demonstrates, on the contrary, the profoundly complicated, equivocal, and transitional character of his gastropolitics, which was heavily reliant on the technology of experimentation (Nanda, 1985, 46).

The history of Gandhi's palate and its transactions with the world cannot but take into account its considerable ambiguities. The complicated and often unpredictable logic that attends this history serves to emphasise the haunting ways in which identities are, as it were, tested, sometimes disturbingly, upon the tongue, which is as inescapably a vehicle of violence as it is of pleasure. The accounts of the eating and abjuration of meat in the Gandhian oeuvre can serve as a useful point of entry into the investigation of two linked loci of Gandhi's dietary practices: the question of meat and modernity, and the question of meat in the gendered dynamics of the Hindu vegetarian household. These accounts can in turn illuminate the intimate and unexpected links among meat-eating, modern formations of masculine identity, and a national-political aesthetics of the body. The focus on ingestion/abstinence as parabolic form in Gandhi's autobiographical and civic projects allows us – precisely through its reading of the quotidian and the eccentric – to highlight the gendered
implications of Gandhi's preoccupation with his body and with the bodies that he sought to reform.

[IV]

Challenges Ahead

Another important area of concern is the contemporary trends in Indian society and the projections of masculinity in the project of techno-centric/developmental model, communal/fundamentalist assertion and militaristic/narcissistic nationalism. In the post Second World War World, science and development have been added with national security/defence as additional reasons of state (Nandy, 1988, 1). Development, as a post-colonial project, was reduced to continuation of the process of colonisation – it has become an extension of the project of wealth creation in the economic vision of modern western patriarchy which is based on the exploitation and degradation of nature and on the exploitation and erosion of other cultures (Shiva, 1988). Science and technology are not gender-neutral. In this analysis, maldevelopment becomes a new source of male-female inequality. Nature and women are turned into passive objects, to be used and exploited for the uncontrolled and uncontrollable desires of alienated man. Mies and Shiva (1993) develop an eco-feminist perspective situated in the necessities of everyday life systems. One feels the need to add globalisation in the purview of the analysis.

While discussing the trends of communal/fundamentalist assertion and militaristic/narcissistic nationalism, it can be pointed out that much of the recent violence in South Asia can be traced to the systematic efforts being made to impose American style melting pot model where primordial identities are supposed to melt upon Indian realities, which can be described as salad bowl of cultures where the ingredients retain their distinctiveness. A significant aspect of post-colonial structures of knowledge in the third world is a peculiar form of imperialism of categories produced and honed in the West. When religion, politics or religion-and-politics is discussed, there is an invisible reference point of the Western Man (Das, 1990, 81). Usually, modern scholarship tends to see zoalatry as a retrogression into primitivism and as a pathology of traditions. On closer look, it turns out to be a by-product and a pathology of modernity. An interesting point of entry into the problem is provided by
the parallels recently drawn between the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and that of the Hindu right in India in the last few years, notes Sumit Sarkar (Chatterjee, 1997, 228).

Hindu nationalism does not have a long past in India. Hindutva had a number of important features (Nandy, 1998, 56-62): It rejected/devalued the little cultures of India and sought to chalk out a new pan-Indian religion called Hinduism; religion more as an ideology than as a faith; sought to masculinize the self-definition of the Hindus and thus martialize the community; accepted modern science, technology, Baconian social philosophy which contributed to the development and sustenance of state power and promised to homogenise the Indian population. In this redefinition, the concept of Hindu is given a predominantly territorial component and the imagery of fatherland is borrowed from European nationalism and introduced into a culture that had specialised in sacralising the country as mother. To thus masculinize mother India, Savarkar had to even drop the word bhumi, land that was grammatically feminine (Nandy, 1998). Nandy points out that it is from the non-modern India, from the traditions and principles of religious tolerance encoded in the everyday life associated with the different faiths of India, that one will have to seek clues to the renewal of Indian political culture (Das, 1990, 85).

For Bourdieu (2001), masculine domination is carried through symbolic violence created mainly through symbolic channels of communication including recognition and even feelings. This is explored in dialogue with other theoretical trends in the field. But Bourdieu is not indifferent to the fact that men, too, are prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant representations. The impossible ideal of virility, for example, is the source of an immense vulnerability, including a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself, and which leads at times, paradoxically, to frantic investment in all the masculine games of violence – ranging from body-building and combat sports to even gang rapes. It is time to ‘rethink’, ‘unlearn’, move from ‘machismo to manhood’ and announce ‘tenderness is strength’.

From the discussions so far, I can clearly state that the kind of masculinity projection in the three archetypes of Indian masculinity construction are markedly different from the notion of ‘hyper-masculinity’ in Western discourses. In our case, the
projections have been varied and showed signs and shades of grey rather than simply black or white. In a way, the Indian masculinity appears much more varied and colourful, one can add the shades of rainbow that seem to be visible. One can point out that for Hindus, just as the word Shiva evokes serenity and the word Vishnu evokes awe, the word Krishna evokes love, all kinds of love, from the sublime to the sensuous. In the worship of Krishna, devotees are told to love the divine in human terms, considering the lord to be either their child, friend, teacher, master, or lover. To look upon Krishna as one’s divine lover is not difficult in view of the unabashed exotic form attributed to him – gentle face, curly hair, dark skin, welcoming eyes, mysterious smile, lithe limbs, bedecked with yellow silk, jewels, peacock feather, bright garlands, and sandal paste. In Krishna, the spiritual and the erotic cannot be differentiated. Especially the cross-dressing feature seem to add an altogether new dimension to the discussions. The androgynous persona of the Shiva archetype is very interesting and significant. Moreover, the complexity concerning the projection of the masculinity construct in the Rama archetype is a serious issue to ponder over. The vulnerabilities and self-contradiction of each of the archetypes make them more human and humane to study.

A careful look at our culture has already revealed the following:

- There is considerable ambiguity as far as the notion of masculinity is concerned. It is time that historically our society remains predominantly male-oriented. Yet, the cultural projection of womanhood has always been complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, we see the image of a subdued woman, almost a puppet in the hand of a ‘male protector’ be it a husband or a father or a brother. But then there are also ideals of intellectually vibrant and active and learned Vedic women like Maitreye or Gargi. We also see the aberration of the maternal power, the primordial energy and a symbiotic relationship of Purusha and Prakriti. Likewise, masculinity is not a narrative of one-sided domination over women. Instead as our reading of the archetypes suggest, we see a very complex reading of masculinity. Krishna’s masculinity embraces femininity, his political skill and diplomacy is integrated with his erotic, sensual and childlike appeal. In a way, there is a dancing masculinity – full of androgyny reconciling war and love, child and adult, man and woman. Likewise, Shiva is incomplete without Parvati. And


Rama, despite all his heroism, remains immensely soft, filled with a high degree of calmness, patience and endurance. And these ideals as we have suggested have further been developed by mysticism, Bhakti tradition and Gandhi's experience. It is indeed a complex and ambiguous situation because here is also a society which is witnessing female infanticide, dowry death, rape, violence, objectification of women and all sorts of brutal masculinities. Even a casual visit to an average Rajasthan/Haryana village would suggest the brutality of male domination. Possibly this conflict between some aspects of the empirical reality and the cultural ideals is often being manifested in our lives in cinema, politics and other articulations.

As a matter of fact, the challenge to the ideals of masculinity as embodied in the archetypes and other traditions like Gandhism has come from recent political as well as techno-economic forces. The growing technologisation and militarisation of society as well as the growth of violent, exclusivist, fundamentalist forces are creating a notion of masculinity which is terribly instrumental, aggressively 'rational' and devoid of tenderness, spirituality and poetic vulnerability. In a way, it is a phallocentric view of masculinity that is often being experienced through the narratives of a Kar Sevak seeing Rama only as a warrior and demolishing the dignity of the other religious community, or a technomanagerial bureaucrat thinking in a purely Baconian fashion and seeing development primarily as dominational over nature, or a 'warrior patriot' rescuing Kargil through the process of militarisation of the human mind. This hypermasculinity, it is obvious, is not in tune with our cultural ideals of masculinity. But then as we have suggested cultural archetypes, civilisational beliefs and traditions nurtured over the years do not die easily. Cultural memories have a long span of life and even in these changing times or in a technopatriarchal society known for its declining sex-ratio, male brutality and insensitivity to women, they continue to haunt our consciousness. And this heightened conflict is often been reflected in popular cinema. That is why, the representations of masculinity or masculinities in popular film is such a challenging endeavour. The question is how do these films project masculinity(ies) or its complexity, ambiguity and diverse layers in these changing times.
The central question that this thesis has posed is related to the representation of masculinity in popular cinema. Now my discussion has already narrated the discourses on masculinity. The fact is that these are not just cognitive and/or theoretical ideas. There is always an organic relationship between theoretical knowledge and lived cultural practices. That is why the challenge is to see how the ideas on masculinity are being articulated through everyday living, cultural idioms and other articulations. The challenge that I have chosen to undertake is to examine how one such cultural medium, that is popular Hindi cinema articulates these ideals, aspirations, anxieties or to put it briefly, complexities centred around masculinity. With this objective in mind, we would move to the next chapter.

Notes

1 The pangs, pathos, sense of alienation, pessimism, despair, self-contradictions of modernity come alive in the verses of the modernist poet, T.S. Eliot and many a time I find him very topically sociological.

2 As a key point, however, Parsons did make sex-role differentiation the problem, asking how it was to be explained. He rejected the biological difference argument as utterly incapable of explaining the social pattern of sex roles. Rather, he derived it from a general sociological principle, the imperative of structural differentiation. Its particular form here was explained by the famous distinction between “instrumental” and “expressive” leadership. Parsons treated sex roles as the instrumental/expressive differentiation that operated within the conjugal family. And he treated the conjugal family both as a small group and as the specific agency of the larger society entrusted with the function of socialising the young. Thus he deduced the gender patterning of roles, and their reproduction across generations, from the structural requirements of any social order whatever.

To this tour de force of reasoning Parsons added a sophisticated account of role acquisition, in the sense of how the role gets internalised. This is where psychoanalysis, with its account of the production of masculinity and femininity through different patternings of the Oedipal crisis, came into play. In effect, sex role becomes part of the very constitution of the person, through the emotional dynamics of development in the nuclear family. The institutional power that role theory enjoyed in sociology, especially in the United States — where as recently as the mid-1970s Komarovsky could describe it simply as “the generally accepted arsenal of sociological conceptual tools” — ensured that feminist questions would be posed in that framework, at least at the start. Could this framework encompass feminist propositions? Especially could it incorporate the notion of oppression, or as it was more often called in this literature, the power differential between men and woman? ...

Some feminist sociologists argued that this was perfectly possible; that role theory had been misapplied, misunderstood, or had not been extended to its full potential. Yet by the late 1970s, other feminist sociologists were arguing that the sex-role framework should be abandoned. Not only had the notion of “role” been shown to be incoherent. The framework continued to mask questions of power and material inequality; or worse, implied that women and men were “separate but equal.” The role framework, then, depending on which way one pushes it, can lead to entirely opposite conclusions about the nature of masculinity. One is reminded of the wax nose mentioned by Marc Bloch, which can be bent either to the right or
to the left. Role theory in general and sex theory in particular lack a stable theoretic object; there is no way that these different lines of argument about masculinity can be forced to meet. As argued in detail elsewhere, this is a consequence of the logical structure of the role framework itself; it is internally incoherent (Connell, 1979, 7-17).

3 "A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man," wrote Simone de Beauvoir in the introduction to The Second Sex. Whereas de Beauvoir's solution to the problem of man as the implicit subject of the western intellectual tradition was to concentrate on woman, the first chapter of this research endeavour identifies a growing body of scholarship devoted to addressing this historical imbalance by locating men and masculinity as the explicit subjects of analysis. Bring together work in the humanities and social sciences, this chapter serves as an introduction and a testament to the ways in which the analysis of masculinity has revitalised questions about gender across the disciplines.

4 Marc Feigen Fasteau, for example, wrote that because "the sexual caste system" is destructive for all, "men are beginning to seriously question the price of being thought superior." Intending his 1975 book, The Male Machine, as "a complement to the feminist revolution," he hoped that it would herald "the beginning of a whole new wave of both theory and activism".

5 Most of the men in the first-wave men's movement may have identified as straight, but they were deeply influenced by the diverse antihomophobic projects of gay men. In the many progressive discourses of the early 1970s that analogue the positions of women and gay men, misogyny is seen as being indissolubly linked to homophobia. By this account, patriarchal masculinities and institutions derive their power in part through the feminisation of gay men and women.

6 On the one hand, the call for a return to nature, spirituality and male bonding compensates for pervasive feelings of emptiness and alienation among many men, sentiments that deserve serious consideration. On the other, authors such as Bly and Sam Keene replicate the discourse of early twentieth-century wilderness movements, which advocated escape from the unwanted burdens of women, family, and social responsibilities. Michael Kimmel's book, The Politics of Manhood, (1995) collects many of the most important contributions to this important debate and helps frame it in terms of the history of fraternal orders, the rise of a therapeutic culture, and the changing economic position of middle-class white men since the 1970s.

7 During the 1970s, essays in the social sciences by anthropologists such as Gayle Rubin, (1975, 157-210) sociologists such as Joseph Pleck, and gay activist collectives such as the Third World Gay Revolution and the Gay Liberation Front, criticised patriarchal structures and analysed oppressive masculinities from very different perspectives.

8 For example, in the introduction to Manhood in America, Michael Kimmel (1996) praised women's studies while acknowledging that, as man, he felt alienated from its intellectual accomplishments. Because "American men have no history of themselves as men," he dedicated his work to the male audience that had largely been neglected by feminist discussions of gender.

9 Signatories to the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development recognised this when they committed themselves (in Commitment Five) to: Promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognising and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social, economic and cultural life, and in development (United Nations, 1995).

The nature and effects of gender inequalities worldwide have been well documented. In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action listed the following critical areas of concern: the
persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; violence against women; inequalities in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources; inequalities between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, and; gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in safeguarding the environment (United Nations, 1995a). Implicit in this listing is the identification of men and male-dominated institutions as the producers and beneficiaries of the gender order that disadvantages women in all spheres of life.

The dissident voices of Nietzsche, Freud and Wittgenstein have questioned the terms of modernity. In their different ways they understood that they have to understand ourselves as children of modernity if we are to grasp how we remain tapped within its ways. Simone Weil (1988) came to recognize the tragic consequences of the split between the sciences and the humanities. Foucault's "Madness and Civilisation" (1971) becomes a valuable source to study the relationship between masculinity and reason, for he traces the history through which we have learned to live in a Cartesian dualism and by disdaining imagination, dreams and fantasies as forms of 'unreason'.

Freud nowhere wrote a formal account of masculinity, though he wrote two dubious papers on femininity. To an extent, then, I have to reconstruct an inarticulate current of thought. Yet the materials are abundant, because Freud never stopped wrestling with issues about gender. One can distinguish three moments in the evolution of his ideas on masculinity.

The first was contained in the initial statements of psychoanalytic methods and concepts. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1953a) set out Freud's basic principles: the continuity between normal and neurotic mental life, the concepts of the unconscious mental processes to be read through dreams as symptoms. The Oedipus complex, "the fateful combination of love for the one parent and simultaneous hatred for the other as a rival" (Freud, 1931, 229), was introduced only in a guarded manner in this book. But in the next few years it was proclaimed the key moment in psychosexual development. What precipitated the oedipal crisis, for boys, was identified as rivalry with the father and terror of castration. These ideas were crystallised in the Little Hans case history (1909)/1955a, 149). Freud now had a definite idea of a formative moment in masculinity, and the dynamics of a formative relationship. The "Rat Man" case history (Freud, 1909/1955b, 151-249) confirmed these ideas and showed how the father complex played out in an adult obsessional neurosis.

The *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905/1953b), an abstract of early psychoanalytic thinking and the classic of modern sexology, offered the idea that humans were constitutionally bisexual, as a way of thinking about sexual inversion. Homosexuality, Freud argued, is not a simple gender switch: "A large proportion of male inverted retain the mental quality of masculinity." So there is an important distinction between the choice of a sexual object, that is the structure of one's emotional attachments, and one's own character traits. (This distinction is still not always grasped in discussions of gender.)

In the second and third essays Freud offered a narrative of psychosexual development from infancy to adulthood, suggesting among other things that boys' and girls' sexuality diverges sharply only in adolescence. The explicit comments on masculinity were few, but there was a strong implicit argument. The general theme of the *Three Essays* was that adult sexuality is constructed by a long and conflict-ridden process, in which original elements are combined and transformed in extraordinary ways. The process may take unexpected turnings (perversion), seize up (fixation), or fall apart (regression) at any step along the way.

How we learn to evaluate the project of modernity and whether it has exhausted itself as we have moved into the post-modern era that can only be grasped in radically different terms, has become a central questions in social theory and philosophy. Often we confuse pluralism with relativism, as anything seems to go within the post-modern world. What we see is what we get, if we are to believe Baudrillard. Seidler (1994) begins by asking different questions,
for in some crucial respects much of the discussion about post-modernity shares assumptions with those of modernity that it is seeking to break with.

The term narcissism is in current use and is considered uncomplimentary. Freud took it from the Greek story of the youth who died of excessive self-admiration, but he gave it a technical sense. According to the theory, in every psyche a certain quantum of libido is directed (cathected) upon the ego. This condition is established in the first months of life, and some trace of it remains: this is called primary narcissism. But in some cases an abnormally big charge of libido is cathected on the ego. This is secondary narcissism. The view here maintained is that the normal Hindu psyche shows secondary narcissism.

In this context, one can refer to that: In 1929 Girindrasekhar Bose, the founder and first president of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society, wrote to Freud on the difference he had observed in the psychoanalytic treatment of Indian and Western patients: The real struggle lies between the desire to be a male and its opposite, the desire to be a female. I have already referred to the fact that the castration threat is very common in Indian society but my Indian patients do not exhibit castration symptoms to such a marked degree as my European cases. The desire to be a female is more easily unearthed in Indian male patients than in European....The Oedipus mother is very often a combined parental image and this is a fact of great importance. I have reason to believe that much of the motivation of the maternal deity is traceable to this source (Kakar, 1989, 129-130).

Bose (1926, 74) then goes on to say that though the castration threat is extremely common—in girls it takes the form of chastisement by snakes—the difference in Indian reactions to it are due to children growing up naked till the ages of nine to ten years (girls till seven) so that the difference between the sexes never comes as a surprise. The castration idea, which comes up symbolically in dreams as decapitation, a cut on a finger, or a sore in some part of the body, has behind it the "primitive" idea of being a woman.

Indeed, reading early Indian case histories, one is struck by the fluidity of the patients' cross-sexual and generational identifications. In the Indian patient, the fantasy of taking on the sexual attributes of both the parents seems to have a relatively easier access to awareness. Bose, for instance, in one of his vignettes tells us of a middle-aged lawyer who, with reference to his parents, sometimes took up an active male sexual role treating both of them as females in his unconscious and sometimes a female attitude, especially towards the father, craving for a child from him. In the male role, sometimes he identified himself with his father and felt a sexual craving for the mother; on the other occasions his unconscious mind built up a composite of both the parents toward which male sexual needs were directed; it is in this attitude that he made his father give birth to a child like a women in his dream (Bose, 1948, 158).

The main thrust in the entire Kakar oeuvre, 'The Maternal-Feminine in Indian Psychoanalysis,' carries the much-discussed Mohan case study. It can be read alongside the Pran case-study and the Deven and Kiran studies clubbed together as 'Maternal Enthralment' in Kakar's recent Culture and Psyche (1997). It is in the Mohan case study that Kakar first makes explicit the link between culture and psyche that has become his trademark by showing in the Indian context 'the construction and experience of the self are influenced by culture from the very beginning of life' unlike Freud's "timetable" of culture entering the psychic structure relatively late in life as "ideology" of the superego....which has continued to be followed by other almanac-makers of the psyche, including 'self-object' theorists like Heinz Kohut. To get inside 'Mohan's inner life,' Kakar explores the myths of Ganesa and Skanda, from the Shiva Purana, which are still 'vibrantly alive' in India and 'constitute a cultural idiom which aids the individual in the construction and integration of his inner world.' 'Here Ganesa and Skanda are personifications,' Kakar observes, 'of the two opposing wishes of the older child at the eve of the Oedipus stage. He is torn between a powerful wish for independent and autonomous functioning and an equally strong pull towards surrender and re-immersion in the enveloping maternal fusion from which he has just emerged.' For Mohan, 'the Ganesa
position is often longed for' although 'it does not...represent an enduring solution to the
problem of maintaining phallic desire in the face of the Great Mother.' The Skanda position,
too, runs into trouble when his lust turns rampant. The Goddess intercedes and Skanda
began to see his mother in each of the wives of the gods he sought to seduce. So for
Skanda, as for Mohan, all the women he desired turned into his mother and he became
passionless. The anthropological-minded Stanley Kurtz – with an altogether different agenda –
analyses one of Mohan's reported fantasies where he imagines himself having intercourse
with the naked corpse of a beautiful woman hanging from a tree while other members of the
same jungle tribe are eating parts of the hanging corpses which they themselves have hung
on the trees. Kurtz interprets this by using an episode in the Padma Purana which involves
Shiva's sexual sacrifice to argue that 'without Shiva's sacrifice, without his voluntary turn away
from incest, the group of goddesses threatened to consume and destroy even Devi (the
natural mother) herself. In fact, M is wishing for such a group action against his mother....'
But you can't use 'counterfactual conditionals' (to borrow Harvard philosopher, the late Nelson
Goodman's well-known concept), especially in a myth, to argue what could have happened in
the myth if Shiva had not made his sexual sacrifice. In effect, Kurtz is writing his own Purana!

16 Let us bring in the caste dimension in the analysis. According to Spratt (1966,172-173):
Caste gets passed through three main phases. In the first phase relations with other castes
were governed by the magical or religious feelings called taboo. Probably an element of that
character still clings to it. In the second phase, when foreign tribes entered the social
organism as new castes preserving much of their tribal character, caste changed accordingly.
The relation to other castes must have come to resemble the relation of the tribesman to the
foreign tribes; in particular, some castes continued the practice of acquiring life-substance
from other, or at least from higher, castes. Traces of this feeling still exist. Finally, when a
caste acquired the pollution complex, its attitude to other castes was dominated by the
feelings concerning pollution, together with the other characteristics of the narcissistic psyche.

Caste is bound up with narcissism in various ways. The weakness of external cathexis limits
social solidarity to narrow groups. In particular it tends to limit cathexis to kindred, or people
believed to be such, with whom identification is easy. The sub-caste, the unit within which
marriage is restricted, is regarded as a kinship group. This tendency to segregation is not
merely a negative outcome of the weakness or external cathexis. The narcissistic type shows
a positive urge to withdraw into its tortoise-shell, and this urge is probably transferred by
identification to the sub-caste.

17 Krishna, the reincarnation of Vishnu, the Preserver of the Hindu trinity, is said to have been
born to rid the earth of the tyranny and oppression of King Kamsa. According to legend,
Kamsa, informed of the prophecy that the eighth child of his uncle's daughter would one day
slay him, confined his cousin and her husband in a prison and killed all their offspring as soon
as they were born. But Krishna, the eighth child, was smuggled out of the prison and taken to
live with foster parents in another part of the kingdom. Kamsa, learning of the infant Krishna's
escape and yet ignorant of his exact whereabouts, instructed the demoness Putana to kill all
the boys born in the kingdom during the month in which his cousin had expected the birth of
her child. Putana went around the kingdom, obediently carrying out her master's orders.
Transformed into a beautiful woman, with a deadly poison smeared on her nipples, she finally
came to the house where Krishna lived in the remote region of Gokula. Pretending an
up surge of maternal love and relief that she had at last found him, she took Krishna from his
foster mother and gave him her poisoned breast to suckle. Krishna sucked so hard that he
not only drank all the milk Putana had to give, he also sucked her life away. The maternal
monster swooned, with Krishna's mouth still at her breast, and as she fell dead, she resumed
her original hideous form. The legend concludes that Putana nevertheless attained moksha
since she had acted as a mother, albeit a malevolent one, to the infant-god.

The Putana myth contains several themes, such as the attempt to kill the infant god, that
occur in the mythologies of other civilisations. Krishna's suckling feat has a parallel in the
ancient Greek account of Heracles sucking so hard at Hera's breast that she throws him off in
agony, the milk spurting out of Heracles' mouth to form the Milky Way. Yet the psychologically
critical thematic items in the *Putana* myth that are perhaps unique to Hindu culture are the poisoned breast, the fight for survival between the malevolent mother and the voracious infant, and the capital punishment and subsequent redemption of the ‘bad mother’.

*Putana’s* poisoned breast thus symbolises the Indian boy’s critical psycho-social dilemma: how to receive nurturing without being poisoned by it, how to enjoy his mother’s love and support without crippling his own budding individuality. This universal developmental dilemma is aggravated in the Indian setting (it creates an insoluble conflict for some Hindu men) because of the profound, often unconscious reluctance of the Hindu mother to ‘release’ the male child, to let him go in an emotional sense, for as we have seen, he is the psycho-social guarantor of her own identity.

In this regard, the fantasy of poisoned milk or poisoned breast resembles the ‘double bind’ in certain cases of schizophrenia in which the mother is perceived by the child to have given a contaminated love. That is, unconditional maternal love and empathy, responsive to the child’s needs, are missing; the price of the mother’s nurturing being that the child remain an extension of her person and a fulfiller of her needs. The legendary *Putana* thus represents the dangerous ‘schizophrenogenic’ mother who has her son in an emotional clinch in which neither can let go; the mother wields the weapons of ‘love’, maternal solicitude and self-sacrifice, with an unconscious virtuosity that keeps the son in ambivalent emotional thralldom. Yet we must remember that although the imagery of the poisoned breast reflects the dark side of the legacy of the prolonged, intense mother-son relationship in India, this same relationship is decisive in rooting Hindu personality in the rich soil of trust and devotion and sensual care. After all, Krishna not only survives, he positively thrives.

Although secondary to the theme of poisoned maternal love, the theme of maternal sexuality and its impossible aims is by no means absent. For we need not subscribe to the view that the killing of maternal monsters is always a disguised form of incestuous intercourse to recognise that *Krishna’s* avid fastening of his mouth to *Putana’s* nipple, not releasing it till *Putana* falls down lifeless, is an act of oral sexual violence that combines both the infant’s excitement and his anger. This image may be construed as a fantasied fulfillment of the mother’s sexual demands and at the same time a grim revenge on her for making such demands at all.

18 The myth of the serpent Kaliyanag is a more ‘developed’ version of this fantasy, in the sense that here the passions projected onto the ‘bad mother’ are not annihilated but appear capable of being tamed and controlled. In this myth, *Krishna* represents the Hindu ideal of the strong ego, one that must struggle with instinctual drives in order to contain and transform them rather than make futile attempts to destroy and deny them. One must, the legend seems to say, dive into the unconscious pool of instinctuality and confront its awesome nature, an instruction from the ancestors reminiscent of the yogic injunction to plumb the depths of the waters of *chitta* in order to know the self. At another level, Kaliyanag represents the mother’s passions, or more accurately, the son’s own anxieties and affects triggered by his (conscious and unconscious) perceptions of her, anxieties that must be laid to rest without destroying the life-giving maternal imago in the psyche. The subjugation of the serpent represents a resolution of this dilemma, by means of which the son takes a developmental step forward towards adulthood and ‘genitality’, relatively free from the ‘poisonous’ incestuous passions of infancy.

19 The monster Agasur lies in wait, its huge mouth open and ready to swallow the child *Krishna* and his friends as they innocently walk into its mouth; *Krishna* kills Agasur by bursting out of its throat. The gaping-jawed monster of the legend is a symbolic projection of the child’s own hunger for sustenance while its murder presents the elimination of these intense infantile needs, the end of orality.

20 For we must remember that *Radha* was years older than *Krishna* and fell in love with him when she was already at the age of marriage, while he was still only a young boy.
The man of the world is lost in the varied activities of the world. He throws himself into the mutable world (ksara). The quietest withdraws into the silence of the Absolute (aksara) but the ideal man of the Gita goes beyond these two extremes and works like Purusottama who reconciles all possibilities in the world without getting involved in it. He is the doer of works who yet is not the doer, kartaram akartaram. The Lord is the pattern of an unwearied and active worker who does not, by His work forfeit His integrity of spirit. The liberated soul is eternally free like Krishna and Janaka. Janaka carried on his duties and was not perturbed by the events of the world. The freed souls work for the guidance of men who follow the standards set by the thoughtful. They live in the world but as strangers. They endure all hardships in the flesh and yet they live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth but their citizenship is in heaven. "As the unlearned act from attachment to their work, so should the learned also act but without any attachment, with the desire to maintain the world-order (Radhakrishnan, 1948, 72-73).

Of the nocturnal massacre described in the Sauptikaparvan (book X) of the Mahabharata it is said that it should not be thought that Asватhамan was the author of this havoc, the real author was Shiva (Mahabharata X:18:26). Again Shiva is associated with the night, treachery and cruelty and is conceived as the real power behind a gruesome scene. One remembers that it was Shiva who created Danda (punishment) and Asi (the scimitar) at Brahman's bidding, thus fulfilling his task as Kaïa and Mahakala, for, according to the apocalyptic passages in the Puranas, Shiva is the god in charge of the ultimate annihilation of all creation (Pralaya, or samphara).

There is an anecdote to explain this lack. Both Bhṛgu and Shiva desired Uma, Himavat chose Shiva, Bhṛgu cursed him saying that he would never acquire precious gems (Mahabharata XII:329). This perhaps indicates the popular component god who wore no jewels.

For example, in the Mahabharata, Krishna praises Shiva: 'His lingam is fixed and immovable for all time. He is for this reason called sthanu....Because his lingam always observes the vow of continence, therefore, all the worlds adore it.....The rishis (sages), the gods, the gandharvas (heavenly singers), the apsaras (heavenly nymphs), adore that lingam of his which is ever erect and upraised.

Thus it is related that Brahma and Vishnu, Shiva's counterparts in the Hindu trinity, once started arguing as to which of the two was a greater god. As they stood there, each one boasting of his attributes, a flaming phallus materialised before them. The phallus was so huge that neither its beginning nor its end was visible. Greatly intrigued, the two gods decided to investigate, one of them diving towards its roots, the other taking off into the air. But no matter how far they went, neither Brahma nor Vishnu could reach the extremities of Mahadeva's linga.

In a second version of the same myth, the fantasy of the great phallus is explicitly related to a wound to Shiva's self-esteem. 'Brahma and Vishnu asked Rudra (Shiva) to create. He said, "I will do it," and then he plunged into water for a thousand years. Brahma and Vishnu began to worry, and Vishnu said, "There is not much time left. You must make an effort to create, for you have the ability and I will give you the female creative power." Brahma then created all the gods and other beings, and when Shiva emerged from the water, about to begin creation, he saw that the universe was full. He thought, "What will I do? Creation has already been achieved by Brahma, and therefore I will destroy it and tear out my own seed." He released a flame from his mouth, setting the universe on fire, but eventually Brahma propitiated Shiva who broke off his linga, saying, "There is not much use for this linga except to create creatures." He threw the linga upon the earth, and it broke through the earth and went down to hell and up to the sky. Vishnu and Brahma failed to find the top and bottom of it, and they worshipped it. In yet another legend, the combined efforts of all the gods in the Hindu pantheon could not subdue a fiery, leaping linga till the mother-goddess came along and held
it within her vagina; here, the myth incorporates not only the theme of phallic grandiosity but also the wish to regain the lost symbiosis with the mother.

We find the second theme, psychic invulnerability achieved by means of identification with the 'ever erect and upraised linga', in numerous legends in which the devotee achieves moksha by merging with the phallus. Thus, King Jalpa of Assam, who was steadfast in his devotion to the linga, heard a voice coming from inside the phallus forgiving his sins and drawing him into the linga. Sculpted reliefs on the faces of Hindu temples often depict a boy holding fast to the linga from which Shiva emerges to slay Yama, the god of death and the harbinger of the ultimate narcissistic injury, annihilation of the self.

26 Gandhi espoused the woman's cause by beginning the reform in his own home. As Amrit Kaur (1942,iii) remarks that being as harsh as truth and a merciless critic of himself, the moment he realised he was a 'slave-holder' as he has called himself, his attitude to his wife changed and with that change began his work for the emancipation of womanhood as a whole. With his masterly pen and from every platform he has, throughout his long life of service, preached against the wrongs done to women in the name of law, tradition and even religion. He has spoken out fearlessly against enforced widowhood, purdah, the dedication of girls to temples, prostitution, early marriage, the dowry system, the economic bondage and marital slavery of women. "Man and woman are equal in status". In his own institutions and programme of work, he has paid equal attention and equal place to girls and women. Amrit Kaur writes, "Those of us who have been privileged to come close to him and serve him have found in him not only a "Bapu" - a wise father, but what is far more precious, a mother, before whose all-embracing and understanding love, all fear and restraint vanish.

27 Gandhi's relationship with women and the passions they aroused are, then, more complex than what he reveals in his own impassioned confession. Nor does a recourse to traditional Hindu explanations and prescriptions for their "diagnosis and cure" reflect adequately the depths of the inner life in which his desires found their wellsprings. Beset by conflicts couched in moral terms familiar to Christian and classical psychoanalyst alike, he struggled with the yearnings aroused by the goddess of longing besides the passions provoked by the god of desire. Or, to use a well-known Indian metaphor in which a woman is said to have two breasts, one for her child, another for her husband. Gandhi's unconscious effort to shift from the one breast to the other - from man to child - was not always successful. He was a man in spite of himself. We know that the sensuality derived from the deeply felt oneness with a maternal world, a sensuality that challenges death, energised Gandhi's person, impelled his transcendent endeavours, and advanced him on the road to a freedom of spirit from which India, as well as the world, has profited. Yet we have seen that throughout his life, there were profound periods of emotional turmoil when this original and ultimately illusory connection broke down, emptying him of all inner "goodness" and "power" (Kakar,1989,128).

28 "When hungry I think of food, when I eat I think of taking food in. I think of what I like to keep inside and I think of what I want to be rid of and I think of getting rid of it" - whose underlying theme is of union with the mother. Gandhi's experiments with various kinds of food and a reduction in its intake - in his later years, he abjured milk completely so as not to eroticise his viscera - appear as part of a involuted and intuitive effort to recover and maintain his merger with his mother.