Introduction: Perceptions of Masculinity and Challenges to the Indian Male

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"The physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid."—Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1880:566

"A boy trying to pursue girls is common but boys pursuing boys has become a fashion. Gay culture in Hyderabad is increasing drastically. All the gay men in Hyderabad go to clubs or pubs once every week or ten days to celebrate. They drink and dance with whomever they want."—TV9's homophobic story: Gay Culture Rampant in Hyderabad, 2011

"Gender inequality is a problem in this country."—Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, NDTV: 28 December, 2012

The quotes above are indicative of the changes that are taking place in Indian society with regard to the bipolar world of distinctive masculine and feminine attributes. Following in the footsteps of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the new emerging field of masculinities and men has made some significant progress in recent years. R. W. Connell's publications since the late 1980s and in particular, her landmark book *Masculinities: The Science of Masculinity* published in 1995 have provided a useful theoretical account of gender and can be used as a starting point for the discussion of masculinities. One of its central points is that there is not one model of masculinity but rather multiple masculinities. As far as Indian masculinities are concerned, the available literature which includes some interesting work by Nandy (1983), Srivastava (2004), Osella and Osella (2006) is rather limited. The interdisciplinary essays in the current volume are aimed at helping to close this gap.

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The subtitle of Connell's book *Masculinities* is *Science of Masculinity* and while some aspects of science such as, for example, clinical psychology, contributes to our understanding of masculinities, the main focus of the essays in the current volume is on how masculinities are socially, culturally and historically shaped. But a prime question we are confronted with is: how are masculinities formed and what contributions can they make to our understanding of the shaping of Indian men today?

One of the significant outcomes of the feminist movement since the 1960s has been to argue successfully that there is a distinction between sex and gender and that sex does not determine gender. This has led to a substantial literature exploring gender differences and their origins. Early feminist writers were mainly concerned with women's subordination in society and concepts of femininity. There has been limited attention focused on men and masculinity has been regarded as straightforward and unproblematic. But gender and sex have an ever-evolving meaning and recent feminist writers have criticized the idea that there is some essential female experience that divides all women from all men. Of the limits of the 1970s gender theory, Lynne Segal (1999:42) observed:

> Many men have little or no purchase on the power that is supposed to be the prerogative of their sex while a significant minority of women have access to considerable power and privilege. Gender binaries never exist in the contexts of race, class, age, sexual orientation and multiple other belongings— each with their deeply entrenched connections to power and authority, or the lack of it [quoted in Elliott 2009:190].

It is useful to remember that social movements in, for example, education, media, sports, religion, family and work helped the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. That period also saw the rise of gay liberation in many western countries. It was, however, Queer Theory that emerged in the USA during the 1980s which opposed the idea that heterosexuality was the only normal and natural sexuality and homosexuality was rejected as a distinct category of people and behavior (Fulcher and Scott 2003:170).

However, just as there is a great diversity in the feminist movement so that we speak of "feminisms," so too is there diversity in the field of masculinity, enabling us to speak of masculinities as they are influenced by such variables as class, caste, age, nationality and identity.

This volume draws together thirteen scholars concerned with exploring masculinity in an Indian context. A very large part of the thinking and writing about Indian men is confined to a narrow stratum with an urban, middle class bias. In the last few years there have been a few book length studies on various aspects of Indian masculinity which have used interdisciplinary approaches to the subject (Srivastava, 2004, 2007; Osella and Osella, 2006,

Alterno and Mittapalli, 2009). Theorizing Indian masculinity is a challenging experience. In a common sensical sense masculinity refers to characteristics or qualities which are considered typical or appropriate to a man. But how does an Indian man differ from others? Is it indeed even possible to make a distinction between the experiences of men in diverse societies that comprise our world or is there one hegemonic male authority that we try to problematize? These are some of the questions that the contributors to this volume had to grapple with when trying to understand Indian   masculinity.

Masculinity, unlike femininity, is most often unseen or unnoticed owing to the normativity of its nature. It is unmarked because it is taken to be the norm and not thought about unless in opposition to something else. It is precisely because of this "significant absence" (Barthes, 1967: 77) that its silence speaks. Over the years and across numerous contexts, men's bodies have become important sites where masculinity has been played out. Connell presents a new framework in order to provide a more convincing and nuanced explanation for the construction of masculinity. In her essay "Teaching the Boys: New Research on Masculinity" in 1996 she explained how masculinity is constructed from a very early age within the aegis of an education structure where practices such as curriculum division, sports and disciplining systems reinforced a gender dichotomy. Another striking feature of her essay was the recognition of the different forms of masculinity, which "do not sit side by side" (1996: 209) and she flatly rejected the idea of men being a homogenous group of oppressors. Masculinity can therefore be seen both as hegemonic and marginalized. Some masculinities are more honored than others, while others such as homosexuality and queerness flatly stigmatized and marginalized. Hegemonic masculinity refers to a position of authority and dominance. This hegemony is not just in terms of other masculinities but in relation to "the gendered order as a whole" (ibid). One manifestation of this aspect of masculinity is patriarchy. Walby (1990) calls it a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Patriarchy in India as in the rest of the world has seen a shift from its private nature, where women have been oppressed by their husbands, fathers and other male members of their family, to public patriarchy where they are collectively subordinated by a society led by men. Ancient Indian texts such as the *Manusmriti* contain numerous references of prejudice, hatred and subjugation of women under a patriarchal system:

> Men may be lacking virtue, be sexual perverts, immoral and devoid of any good qualities, and yet women must constantly worship and serve their husbands [5/156].

However the theory of patriarchy is not without problems as Bradley (2013: 207) has argued, the difficulty of using a "totalistic theory based on

only one dynamic is that it presents a distorted view of all women as victims"
and all men as perpetrators. What we want to argue is that men carry the
burden of victimhood as well. The patriarchy that systematically subjugates
women also subjugates men who do not conform to the class/caste and sexual
subjectivity of the mainstream.

Indeed despite the fragmentary efforts made during the last few years,
there exists a vast difference that distinguishes the lives of men in different
parts of India which is impacted by caste, class, religion and sexual orientation.
It is therefore very difficult to put together comprehensive descriptions of the
vast and complex realities of Indian men in one   volume.

Colonial Masculinities

One of the most important areas of research in gender and postcolonial
studies is the analysis of indigenous masculinities within colonial contexts.
This contour of exploration foregrounds the gendered, race and class dynamics
of colonialism and nationalism and also provides opportunities for alternative
gender practices that challenge hegemonic structures of white, middle-class
patriarchy. In theorizing the production of masculinities in postcolonial sys-
tems, it is useful to remember that an interplay between power and structure
creates hegemonies which in turn transform indigenous ideologies of gender
and power.

Questions around representations are central to an understanding of
postcolonial masculinities. Masculinities in the colonies were created and per-
petuated as a contrast to the colonizers' own masculinity. For instance, native
African and Indian men were seen as hypersexual whose sexuality was a threat
to the virtuous white woman in imminent danger from such unchecked sex-
uality, thus creating a justification for colonizers to check and discipline other
cultures. The predatory nature of men was reviled and violently subdued
through colonial practices. Practices such as polygamy, sati, and burkhas were
seen as a part of the widespread patriarchy existing in the colonies and pro-
viding the pretext for the "white man saving the brown men from brown
men" (Spivak, 1988:297). The argument was that if Indian men could be so
patriarchal and violent within the confines of their family, how could they be
fair in their dealings with the British government (Sinha, 1995). This imag-
inary essentializing of colonial masculinities serves to both obscure and appro-
priate an unsettling difference.

Colonialism itself was a highly gendered process which was driven by a
gendered force of subordination. According to Mclintock (1995), to understand
colonialism and postcolonialism one must recognize that race, gender and

class are not distinct but rather come into existence in conflicting ways. Post-colonialism itself is an unsettling development and recent work by Rumina Sethi questions its scope and existence (2011). The masculinity of the post-colonial male then needs to be interrogated within contradictory sites of complex interaction between racial ideologies and the state. The postcolonial male has been represented as one with no agency whose subordinate presence in the colonial lexicon renders him powerless. However this assumption is based on a false universal and generalized colonial condition.

Much of the current scholarship about the nation and gender has fixated itself on the role of women who are constructed as symbols of the nation and "mother" land. Thus as the literary critic Sangeeta Ray (2000) points out, more than often the women's bodies become sites of contesting culture, tra- dition and the nation. However in recent years questioning this gendered ver- sion of nationalism has thrown up new questions on the role of masculinity and the male body. Kavita Daiya proposes that while violence by men against women has gained ascendancy in recent academic discussions, there needs to be a more deliberate focus on the violence suffered by male bodies in the pub- lic sphere (2006, 2008). John and Nair in their seminal work *A Question of Silence* point out that "questions of male sexuality have rarely been a focus of scholarly analysis except for celebrated instances of celibacy" (1998:15) in India. In fact the Gandhian gloss of the "necessity of overcoming desire as the irrevocable truth of the Indian male milieu" (Srivastava, 2004:15) has been commented upon by scholars such as Srivastava (2004, 2007) and Kakar (2007). This desexualization, de-eroticization of the Indian male sexuality is important in postcolonial India as it can be seen as a reaction to the imaginary essentializing of the hypersexual native male in the colonial era.

Queer Masculinities

The expansion of the British Empire in the eighteenth century also dic-tated colonial policies of sexual regulation, which were driven by a Victorian "fanatical purity campaign" (Bhaskaran, 2002:16). The British anti-sodomy law was introduced in Britain in 1860, which reduced the punishment of sod- omy from execution to imprisonment; however when enacted in colonial states like India as in Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, it was seen as a retrogressive move. The law states:

> Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term, which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine.

Explanation: Penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offence described in this section [Arondekar, 2009: 76; Bhaskaran, 2002: 15].

Prior to the enactment of this law queer sexuality was accommodated if not approved. As Vanita and Kidwai point out "at most times and places in pre–nineteenth century India, love between women and between men, even when disapproved of, was not actively persecuted. As far as we know, no one has ever been executed for homosexuality in India" (2000:xviii). However with the passing of this law, homosexuality was officially condemned by the state and framed as a criminal activity. This is not to say that colonialism entirely drove queer sexuality underground but rather it can be argued that colonial- ism acted as a device to obscure the queer identity, an unwillingness to "come out" to the public. It signified ambivalence about revelation of queer identi- ties. In colonial India the minoritization of queer sexualities was a political agenda of purporting queer sexuality as a "special oriental vice" (Ballhatchet, 1980; Bhaskaran, 2002). Ballhatchet (1980) suggests that sexual energy was another reason for imperial expansion, he mentions British men with "tastes which could not be satisfied in England ... agreeably satiated overseas" (1). However there was anxiety by the British administrators about the sexual freedom India posed for its people, and homosexuality was blamed on Indian customs. Lord Curzon once remarked: "I attribute it largely to early marriage. A boy gets tired of his wife, or of women at an early age and wants the stimu- lus of some more novel or exciting sensation" (cited in Ballhatchet, 1980: 120).

Ballhatchet describes the various debates in the Parliament at the possi- bility of sexual relations taking place between the white elite and the native subordinate groups. There was a need for sexual regulation and one major point of concern was the presence of prostitutes in the army cantonments, however, "the prospect of homosexuality was revealed in guarded terms by the authorities whenever there was a talk of excluding prostitutes from the cantonments" (1980: 162). This might seem contradictory to the Victorian morals of that time but it would appear that the fundamental concern was for the preservation of power by the authorities to regulate the lives of those under their command. Attitudes to sexual conduct are likewise correlated to the safeguarding of vested interests and constitution of power.

Robert Aldrich argues that "colonialism ... encouraged sexual irregular- ity, heterosexual and homosexual" (2003:4). The colonial aspects of homosex- uality suggest sexual ambivalence which produced both physical and emotional desire and also illustrate a variety of homosexual relationships. Aldrich also notes that "the colonies provided many possibilities of homoeroticism, homo- sociality and homosexuality" (ibid: 3). Thus there was a multiplicity of pos-

sibilities and perspectives in which queer bonding and queer desire could take place in the colony.

Homosexuality was also seen as a threat to masculinity. Ashis Nandy (1983) situates the homosexual criminalization of Oscar Wilde in a colonial context— for the valorization of masculinity. Mrinalini Sinha points out the colonial imagination's contradictory tendency to assign hyper virile masculinity and thus degenerate sexuality to some colonized males (often associated with the non-intellectual class) and hyper effeminacy (often paradoxically associated with the colonized elite who were the intellectual non-laboring class) to others (1995:19). Nandy, however, uses queer effeminacy and the anti-masculine image of Gandhi to critique colonialism. He writes, "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" (1983:45).

Drawing on Vanita (2000, 2002, 2005), one can state that modern homophobia in India is deeply intertwined with modern nationalism. In its attempt to revise and reconstruct nationalism for Independent India, masculinity becomes a foundation stone equating it to rationality, chivalry and moral superiority and sexuality and effeminacy (a form of non-masculinity) had no place in this new rhetoric.
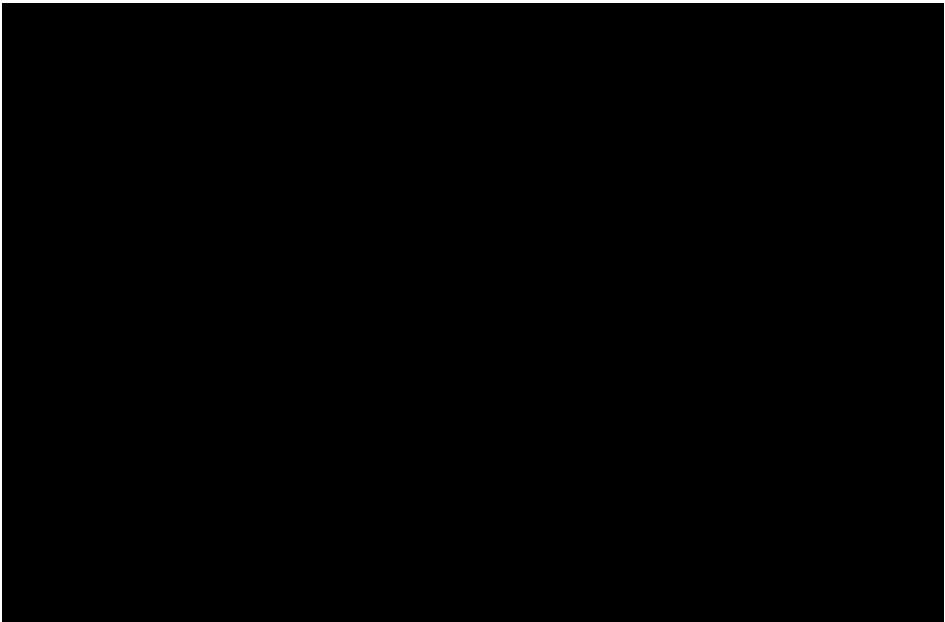
Queer Pride March in India, 2009 (photograph by Daniele Lazaretto).

Masculinity in Crisis?

Of late there has been a wave of media coverage about the crisis of masculinity. Anthony Clare in his book *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* says:

> At the beginning of the twenty first century it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that men are in serious trouble. Throughout the world, developed and developing, antisocial behaviour is essentially male [2001:3].

He goes on further to state that men who at one point knew of their role as providers for the family have found this role diminished in recent years and this set of changing circumstances of having to renegotiate their place within the social structure has exacerbated this "crisis." While Clare's choice of the term "crisis" may seem a little farfetched in this situation, it cannot be denied that the very form of masculinity is shifting and giving rise to new forms of masculinity(ies).

According to commentators in the field of masculinity studies such as Brittan (1989), women's demands for freedom and equality have left men confused about their role. The dependent housewife model of the family is in decline and one of the questions that come to haunt men is how can they prove their masculinity and superiority in these changing circumstances. Furthermore sociologists such as Bradley (2013) suggest that the rise of feminism together with new models of masculinity has emerged in response to economic and cultural changes. Thus the New Man (a softer caring creature), sometimes labeled feminized man, replacing Connell's hegemonic masculinity has led to a moral panic about what it means to be a man at the beginning of the 21st century.

Indian men growing up in the eighties and nineties have grown up seeing a particular form of patriarchal masculinity which is being challenged in contemporary times. So is masculinity in crisis? Most certainly it would appear that masculinity is in a period of flux, with the definition of what a man is and how he is to behave being uncertain. What is more certainly true is that masculinity as it was played out in the last few hundred years is definitely being challenged.

In an interesting article, Pradhan and Ram (2010) asked young males in India, what a "real" man is like and received answers such as "[being able to] earn and maintain a family, to take decision, to physically satisfy spouse/partner, and to procreate besides having a well built body" (546).

What these responses demonstrate is the unease men are having in recent years in adapting to the changing geographies within which their masculinity is based. Primary self defined characteristics such as maintaining a family and earning wages are now being taken over by many women and this has led   to

confusion over the nature of masculine performance itself. Interestingly the article also notes that the young men see aggressiveness and sexual domination as a form of masculinity, not just to prove their masculinity but to also stamp their superiority over the other gender (Pradhan and Ram,   2010).

In Popular Culture

Masculine representations in popular culture are both varied and at the same time also allowed for several masculinitie(s) to be represented. O'Sullivan et al. (2001:231) have defined popular culture as "of people in general; well liked by people in general ... usually synonymous with good in ordinary conversation." While this definition of popular culture as a site for the production of meanings that is "well liked" and "of people" in general might show a bias in favor of popular culture, the mainstream view of popular culture is slightly more skewed as Gokulsing and Dissanayake have noted. "Popular culture is also synonymous with what is gross, vulgar and cheap— unworthy of study" (2009:2). Therefore the transgressive potential of such a medium in perpetuating and representing masculinities is quite   rich.

One of the prime examples of this is Indian cinema. The role of Indian cinema in the Indian public imagination is unparalleled and therefore it is no surprise that this medium plays such an important role in the construction of public consciousness regarding social and political issues. Gokulsing and Dissanayake, writing about Indian popular cinema, contend that "the discourse of Indian Popular Cinema has been evolving steadily over a century in response to newer social developments and historical conjunctures" (2012: 17). Cinema in India participates in the continual reconstruction of the social imaginary. In addition to being a "dominant form of entertainment" (2012:15) Indian cinema also represents the interplay of the global and local. While popular Indian cinema has a long history of featuring cross dressing male stars in comic or song sequences— who can forget Amitabh Bachchan in "Mere Angane Mein" (In my Compound) from *Laawaris* (Abandoned, 1981), or Aamir Khan's cabaret dance in *Baazi* (Gamble, 1995)—representations of men and masculinity have changed over time. The effeminacy of Dev Anand characterized through his innumerable films which Kavi (2000: 308) calls "a strange effeminacy that bordered on the child like" and "had an innocuous sensuality about him that conspired to make his heroine into an oedipal figure" has largely been replaced. Desai (2004) critically notes how actors such as Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Raj Kapoor spawned a generation of Indian youth who modeled themselves on them. However the sensitive lover-boy hero was soon replaced by the masculinity championed by stars such as Dhar-

mendra (also known as the "He Man" of Indian Cinema). This trend has continued even today, when hypermasculinized actors such as John Abraham and Salman Khan have given actors such as Shah Rukh Khan a reason to prove their masculinity and virility to their female audiences by undergoing a complete makeover through adopting a muscular gym-toned body ("Dard e Disco" in *Om Shanti Om*, 2007).

While homosexuality is rarely addressed explicitly, many of these earlier films bear "the markers of queer suggestions" (Ghosh, 2009:59). Ghosh (2002) maintains that this fascination of Bollywood for a queer subculture can be traced back to Indian cinema's fascination with romantic love as an exalted emotion. This connotative homoeroticism can be traced through the same sex masculine friendship plots that drive several of these films. *Sholay* (Embers, 1975) and the recent hits *Dil Chahta Hain* (What the Heart Wants, 2001) and *Student of the Year* (2012) are testimonies of the passionate male friendship that exists within Indian cinema.

Other instances of masculine representations can also be found in Indian television, which since 1992 has been one of the fastest growing television industries in the world. While shows such as *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* (Because the Mother-in-Law Was Also Daughter-in-Law Once) and *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki* (Story of Every Family) have dominated the Indian soap opera viewing public for years with its brand of Indian-ness espoused through women in traditional wear, stay at home wives, with limited or no sexual agency and men as breadwinners; what needs to be further interrogated is what reaction do these characters effect in public consciousness. An article in *Hindustan Times* (22 July 2012) argued that men were being presented with a dichotomy— while Indian cinema has been instrumental in its representation of female actors as strong characters with an agency,
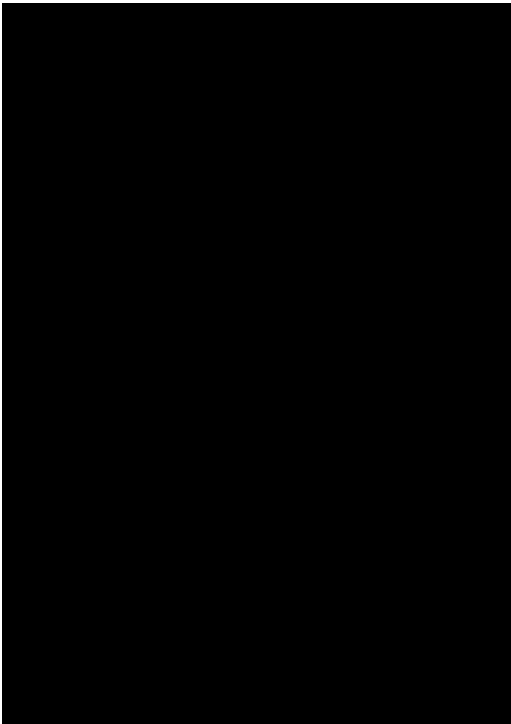
John Abraham in *Dostana*, 2008.

television continues to portray women in need of male validation. The Indian man in "crisis" therefore turns to the mother-sister ideal of the traditional Indian women portrayed on television to reinforce his masculinity and also reject the women with agency who threaten to imbalance this power equation. Scholars such as Rebecca Feasey (2008) have critically noted that television studies have produced a profusion of literature theorizing the representation of gender on the small screen; however most of this work has focused only on constructions of femininity in television. She observes that feminist research on representations of femininity and women's roles on television has provided significant insights but have left masculinity untouched. Leaving masculinity untheorized, further notes Feasey, allows it to be understood as unwavering and permanent, and therefore not worthy of critique or questioning.

In line with Feasey's arguments, both areas — the male viewership of Indian soap operas as well as (the few) masculine representations in Indian television— would merit further study. Of course Shah Rukh Khan's famous Lux soap advertisement, where he is shown bathing in a tub with rose petals and surrounded by a bevy of women is a testament to some of the inroads that have been made in the last few years in the representation of masculinity on Indian television.

Representation/Regulation/Exclusion: Overview of the Essays in This Volume

In the opening essay, "'Sane Sex,' the Five-Year Plan Hero and Men on Footpaths and in Gated Communities: On the Cultures of Twentieth-Century Masculinity," Sanjay Srivastava provides an overview of the modern culture of masculinity in India. According to him, masculinity in South Asia exists within different contexts. In the context of the twentieth century, he identifies a "new" masculine type whom he refers to as "The Five Year Plan (FYP) Hero." The FYP hero's manliness did not stem from "bodily representations or aggressive behaviour" but rather through a science based masculinity. This was represented in the films from the 1950s and 1960s through both the spatial habitat of the hero (highways and metropolitan places) as well as through profession (engineer, doctor, scientist). Nehruvian politics was ambitiously aimed at advancing India's technological and scientific objectives and India's postcolonial elite made their way to Silicon Valley and other "nodes" of information and technological revolution which characterized the new Indian modernity (and by extension the formulation of a new Indian masculinity). Srivastava's essay ventures on further to look at the demise of this form of masculinity

(the FYP Hero) and the rise of Amitabh Bachchan, the "angry young man" of Indian cinema. Srivastava notes that Bachchan's masculinity was based on his representation of the provincial male body relating to skin color, language and expression of homoerotic aura in several of his films. In the final part of this essay he focuses on "footpath pornography," by which he refers to Hindi language booklets available in North India characterizing a subaltern masculine culture. Thus, Srivastava, not only tries to make sense of the changing role of masculinity within Indian modernity but endeavors to provide a context for understanding its social potential.

In the second essay, "Critical Masculinity Studies in India," Mangesh Kulkarni critically surveys debates on indigenous masculinities and gives an outline of the emerging agendas for future research and teaching in the area. Critical masculinity studies has in the last few decades focused on examining how men and masculinities are gendered, and how those gendering processes intersect with other social relations and social divisions. This approach calls for studies on men that are critical, interdisciplinary, relational, materialist, deconstructive and anti-essentialist. Kulkarni argues that while critical masculine studies is yet to find an academic foothold within the Indian academe, it is needed for two very important reasons:

> For one masculinities are deeply implicated in a whole host of problems looming over the country, ranging from an abysmally low sex-ratio to communal violence. Besides, during the last two decades, the country has witnessed the emergence of men's groups, as also the publication of a significant body of writings examining various dimensions of men's lives [Kulkarni, this volume].

His overview of the current literature on CMS and agenda for future research and intervention makes a strong case for studies in Indian masculinity.

The notion of intersectionality, a sociological theory favored by feminist scholars was first put forward by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to address issues of race and gender within a composite framework. Intersectionality acknowledges the power overlaps and the complexity of layered identities. By layered identities, we want to propose the various scopes within which our identities reside ranging from class, caste, racial, sexual and national identities. Gender identities cannot be studied without this intersectional focus where all these different trajectories are addressed. Writing about intersectionality and gender, Sussane V. Knudsen says, "ethnicity is combined with gender to reflect the complexity of intersectionality between national, new national background and womanhood/manhood" (2006:61). Roshan das Nair's essay takes on this intersectional dimension focusing on intersectional gender, i.e., gender in interplay with other social categorizations and power differentials such as ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, age, etc. In this essay, "If Singularity Is the Problem, Could Intersectionality Be the Solution? Exploring the Mediation

of Sexuality on Masculinity," he explores how processes of social and cultural change can be initiated or sustained by integrating a critical understanding of intersectional gender, by counteracting multiple inequalities and processes of discrimination, and by other kinds of transformative work.

Simon (2003) calls identity a seductive concept and a multifaceted phenomenon. One of the attributes of identity studies in recent years has been to address body politics and the emergent field of Fat Studies has evolved in similar ways to Women's Studies and Queer Studies to resist discrimination and promote body acceptance. Pranta Pratik Patnaik in his essay, "Bearly Indian: 'Fat' Gay Men's Negotiation of Embodiment, Culture and Masculinity," explores the intersections of identity that emerge for fat Indian men focusing on their experiences and perspectives. Through detailed study of a gay website and interviews, Patnaik contends that while the internet and queer dating websites such as Pink promote tolerance and acceptance for an oppressed class of men— gay men in this instance, at the same time it also systematically denies certain men representation because of their bodily attributes. Patnaik is right in observing that the media has played a very important role in promoting an "ideal typical male body" which has been detrimental to men who do not "fit" this mainstream image. He further contends that fat men are trapped in such hegemonic images of masculinity. Fat gay masculinity thus produces a collection of attitudes and assumptions which open up newer arenas for us to grapple with.

Kama Maureemootoo's essay adds a further dimension to the transformations currently taking place in Indian society with regard to how male same-sex relationships are viewed, investigating how levels of societal and individual acceptance continue to span a wide spectrum in spite of the 2009 decriminalization of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Incidents such as TV9 Telugu outing gay men using the dating/networking website Planet Romeo in 2011 in a news report titled "Gay Culture Rampant in Hyderabad" (quoted in this essay), are evidence that tolerance (let alone acceptance) of same-sex relationships is still fragmented. In "The Nation as Mimicry: The (Mis)reading of Colonial Masculinities in India," Maureemootoo examines the polarized debate ensuing from the death of Dr. Srinivas Ramachandra Siras, Reader and Chair of modern languages at Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh, India. Maureemootoo looks at his suspension from teaching duties and subsequent death in "mysterious circumstances" following a surreptitiously filmed sexual encounter between Siras and a male sex partner. The essay initially considers notions of tradition versus modernity, privacy versus infringement of rights, before examining how the concerns raised by the Siras case "are, in effect, postcolonial residues that haunt India's contemporary cultural and political scapes," formerly also occupying the thoughts of Indian nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth   century.

Moving forward, David A. Ansari in his ethnographic research conducted with South Asian queer men in London addresses the complex relationship which exists between culture, race and sexuality. In "Mobilizing for Sexual Health: The Experience of Queer Indian Men in London," Ansari examines how Indian queer men living in London challenge the stigma of non-heterosexual behavior and desires while collectively mobilizing for improved sexual health. Ansari conducted nineteen interviews with participants from a sexual health charity which provides sexual health and HIV prevention and support services to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in London. The findings illustrate that the men (interviewed in this study) face unique challenges to their sexual expression arising from cultural stereotypes of same sex activities, family and societal expectations of young men and religious proscriptions. Respondents described shared identities, spaces for dialogue, collective access to resources, mutual learning and long term connections formed with each other and with outside groups. Ansari's essay also highlights the factors affecting service uptake amongst these men and the strategies developed to address stigma and improve sexual health. These findings expand our current understanding of sexuality within ethnic minority communities in a multicultural society in the context of gender-based sexual and mental health programs.

Queer theory has historically engaged in a sustained critique of the normative standards of heterosexual masculinity; however our focus in this volume has been on a critique of the cultural readings of how masculinity is played out. Aniruddha Dutta, in his essay "Masculinities of Desire, Derision and Defiance: Global Gay Femmephobia and *Kothi-Hijra*-Trans Heterosexualities," offers an analysis of normative, counter-normative and politically ambivalent evocations of masculinity within spaces and milieus of gender/sexual variance such as *kothi*, transgender and gay networks in eastern India. Beginning with the question of what sorts of masculinities are valorized as objects of desire or ideals for subject-formation, Dutta interrogates the construction of a liberated and urbane gay identity framed around "good" masculinities as opposed to "backward" *kothis* and transgenders who supposedly desire the "bad" patriarchal masculinities and thus remain trapped in a victimized femininity. On one hand, he interrogates the notion of gender fluidity within urbane community networks as implicitly "good" and "progressive" and examines how it may conceal non-deconstructed masculine privilege, and on the other, he examines the evocation of "patriarchal" gender roles within non-metropolitan subcultures as being both potentially conservative and counter-normative. Dutta contends that recognizing how evocations and usages of masculinity might occur in such politically unexpected and unstable ways can help us imagine social change beyond tired binaries such as patriarchy and sexual progress or rural conservatism and urban liberation.

In "Corporal Punishment: English and Homosocial Tactility in Post-colonial Bengal," Niladri R. Chatterjee argues that there is an intriguing relationship between language/culture and the body. In this provoking essay Chatterjee writes:

> Men or boys who do not speak English hold hands in public, embrace each other a lot more, even kiss each other on the cheek far more frequently than those who can speak English. In fact, in my own English-speaking circle of friends I have noticed a particular horror of physical contact among male friends, and an inversely proportional lack of corporeal self-consciousness among those who do not speak English [this volume].

Chatterjee states that the pathologization of the male body gets underway in England at the same time when English becomes a public policy for the British government in Bengal and thus homosocial tactility should be studied in a way that takes into account the site of its performance and the class of subjects performing— an intersectional focus which like the other contributors to this volume, Chatterjee agrees needs to be engaged with. Chatterjee's essay asks the reader to problematize and read how "englishing" of the male body in Bengal have produced anxieties around tactility that did not exist   earlier.

The final essays of this collection focus on literary and cinematic representations of masculinity in India. In "Of Girmitiyas and Mimic Men: Alternative Masculinity in V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*," Vishnupriya Sengupta argues that in the course of depicting the tensions of an individual trapped in a claustrophobic ghettoized society and family ruled by a matriarch, the novel deals with the subversion of masculinity, evinced forcefully through the underlining concepts of the Girmitiya and "Mimic" man as they surface in the novel. Focusing on Naipaul's male protagonists, Sengupta has argued that the complex intersections between gender performance, nationalism, race and class destabilize Indo-Caribbean masculinities and aggravate the already unstable power balance at a personal and cultural level. As we have argued in this introduction, colonial masculinities in India have undergone emasculation as well as a level of anxiogenic hypermasculinity stemming from the colonized male's (supposed) unchecked sexuality. This essay further problematizes masculinity by focusing on the plight of Indo Caribbean men and the contradictions and negotiations that exist within gender performances, national identity and class positioning.

In choosing to encompass the material of our volume within the geographical boundaries of India, it is necessary to address the question of essayist heritage. In the next essay "Gay Writing and the Idea of Doubleness," Akhil Katyal addresses the question of whether writing on Indian masculinity can be appropriated by the *pardesi* hand. Examining whether the par (other) and des (country) outsider extends not simply to the non–Indian but to the   non-

resident Indian. In his essay, Katyal illustrates this through a paper that draws on an extended personal interview with Hoshang Merchant conducted in Hyderabad in July 2010. Hoshang recounts the relationship he shared with Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali and the impact on their friendship in the period after Ali turned down the offer of contributing to India's first collection of gay writing in 1999, driven by an apprehension of coming out to his father. Narrating the episode, Katyal writes, "'Perfidies,' he told me, campily, 'are never forgiven even if they can be understood.'" Katyal asks who is permitted to legitimately write a "gay story," why writing on masculinity appears to predominantly emphasize homosexuality, and questioning the fascination that exists as to the sexuality (or for that matter the gender) of the writer.

Tanmayee Banerjee's essay, "Negotiations of Masculinity in Riwik Ghatak's Partition Trilogy," reflects on *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (The Cloud-Capped Star), *KomalGandhar* (E-Flat) and *Subarnarekha* (Golden Lining), which address the dynamics of partition. The films show, through form and content, how gender equations get problematized in the post-partition immigrant society. Through an analytical discussion on these films Banerjee argues how masculinity has to negotiate with circumstances in the post-partition unsettled order of the society, in the first film through financial dependence of the male members on the earning female member of the family; in the second film through men's dependence on women for emotional and practical support; and in the third film through reduction of the male protagonist to the state of utter helplessness and his absolute failure to "protect" and "preserve." Banerjee further contends that the patriarchal paradigm suffered a restructuring in the immigrant families which migrated to West Bengal (India) from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after the 1947 partition of Bengal followed by the independence of India. It was due to the female members assuming the controlling center of these families either through obvious ways such as earning money or subtle ways of taking control of situations. Banerjee argues that these masculinities are in crisis and it is only through their relationships with women that they reach a point of resolution and assert their masculinity.

Sayantan Dasgupta, in "Masculinizing the (Post)colonial Subject: The *Amar Chitra Katha* Comic Book," investigates a popular comic book series that focuses on Indian history and mythology, to see how it locates itself in the context of gender politics and stereotyping. Dasgupta argues that this comic book series, which is written primarily for children, situates itself firmly within the politics of nationalism and finds itself engaging with various dis- cursive practices related to the formation of a national identity, specifically within the template of a colonial history. In one of these discourses, the *Amar Chitra Katha* seems to engage with the Orientalist construction of colonial subject races as effeminate, emasculated and passive. Predictably enough, the

Amar Chitra Katha responds to this by attempting to (re)construct an alternative model of history where the "true" Indian is shown to be a martial fellow. This construction, as Dasgupta points out, manifests itself in varied ways with regard to the various groups (Rajput, Mughal, Sikh, etc.), imbuing the *Amar Chitra Katha* iconography with a gender angle that cannot be ignored.

The final essay of this volume, "Rethinking the Circuits of Male Desire Across Multiple *Dostanas*" by Dashini Jeyathurai, looks at two productions of the popular Bollywood film *Dostana* (Friendship) in 1980 and 2008 and traces the "invisible" male triangle. The 2008 *Dostana* has received widespread scholarly attention as a significant queer text in mainstream Indian cinema (Baker, 2012; Dudrah, 2012; Dasgupta, 2012; Ghosh, 2011), which simultaneously invokes "the phobic and the erotic" (Ghosh, 2011:65). *Dostana* uses the male body to arouse an active desire from the film's viewers. Male bonding has always been a primary feature of Bollywood cinema as described earlier in this introduction. Like most Bollywood films, friendship is celebrated in this film; however the physical intimacy is inscribed within a pleasurable spectacle which offers the viewers multiple locations of identification. It is useful to emphasize that the act of seeing and deriving pleasure needs to be seen as dialectic with an ever slipping trajectory of signification sliding the pleasure of cinema on to ambiguous realms of intertextuality. John Abraham demonstrates this successfully in the semi-nude sequences of the film. Jeyathurai offers to read the "invisible" third character in both films who is introduced as the "other" to codify male desire and highlight the supremacy of the "dostana" (friendship) shared by the two leading men. She concludes by saying that both films tease the implications of a cinema space that is increasingly masculinized and eroticized and invites us to consider how the homoeroticism of the genre may offer a viable language with which to narrate male queerness.

Concluding Remarks

All essays in this volume demonstrate how reading masculinity from a gender and queer studies approach provides particular insights about power relations, representation politics and nationalist agendas within the backdrop of cultural complexity. The explorations in this volume, as Ruth Vanita in the Foreword mentions, move in many directions. We do not and cannot claim this work to be representative of all the changes that have been happening but hope some of the issues brought up in this volume will open up new areas for further enquiry. It is clear from the essays in this volume that the time is ripe for a comprehensive approach to the challenges which masculinity studies

pose for the Indian male. This volume identifies some issues which may help towards its understanding. In particular it draws attention   to

(a) Thinking outside the bipolar box
(b) Identifying gender as an integrated narrative

The study of masculinities as a constructive response to feminism has come a long way since it first emerged out of the woodwork in the 1980s. There is already a strong growing scholarship in the area including some seminal work on Indian masculinities (Srivastava, 2004; Chopra, Osella and Osella, 2004; Osella and Osella, 2006, Kulkarni, 2007). Kavita Daiya pro- poses that while violence by men against women has gained ascendancy in recent academic discussions, there needs to be a more deliberate focus on the violence suffered by male bodies in the public sphere (2006,   2008).

The question of intersectionality and gender as an integrated narrative permeates almost all the essays in this volume in diverse ways. It is also evident that research on gender is constantly reinventing itself as it seeks to reach beyond itself and engage the global (as Ansari and Nair's essays demonstrate). The contributors have demonstrated this trend from their diverse vantage points. It also emphasizes what is distinctly and characteristically local and place bound in fascinating ways. This dialogue between the global and local approaches towards masculinity and gender is crucial to a proper understanding of the nature and significance of masculine culture in   India.

Along with this, the issue of commodification also becomes a salient issue in the re-description of masculinity. This is demonstrated through the hyper-masculinized bodies that are displayed in television advertisements, films and magazines. Gokulsing and Dissanayake argue that "in contemporary capitalist societies, popular culture operates within the space of consumerism. Therefore the manifold relations that exist between consumption and popular culture need to be recognised and explored" (2009: 278). Our identities and subjectivities are after all constructed by what we consume. As Patnaik has noted (in this volume), the media and by extension popular culture plays a huge role in promoting certain body types and deriding   others.

This collection also explored the ideals of masculinity that are embedded and imbibed by young Indian school-going boys who are introduced to these ideals through popular comic books like *Amar Chitra Katha* (Sayantan Dasgupta, this volume). The *Amar Chitra Katha*, which remains one of India's leading comic book series promoting "the route to your roots" and the "glorious heritage of India" highlights and appeals to the nationalist sentiments of consumers. Karline McLain has noted that despite the appeal of this series it has also been challenged by many who see its vision of Indian ness as limited and even exclusive, "marginalisation of muslims and other non Hindu's from

the national past, the recasting of women in traditional roles and the privileging of middle class, upper caste Hindu culture" (2009: 159). We see again the pressing need for an intersectional focus within masculinity studies. The understanding of gender discourses, especially those relating to masculinity necessitates the comprehension of the "materialities of discourse and their relations to power" (Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 2009: 278). As one reads the essays in this volume, these facets of exploration need to be kept in mind.

Much of the literature on gender is at the level of individuals (See Butler, 2004, for example). More needs to be done at the intersectional level. Variables such as class, caste, disability, age, nationality and identity need to be explored at the intersection of policy and politics. Masculinity cannot be studied without acknowledging this intersectionality and masculine studies like women's studies needs to engage with queer identities, class differences and so on. As Rukmini Sen (2013) in response to the 2012 Delhi rape case puts it:

> Will some of the people who have vented their anger in protest against the gang rape of the medical student raise at least their voice in support of a sex worker's livelihood, a heterosexual person's right to live with a partner without marriage, a lesbian or gay person's right to choose a partner ... and not pass moral judgements on these groups of people?

Sen's call for an intersectional focus is what the contributors and the editors have tried to do when putting together this volume. In addressing masculine cultures, it is imperative to situate this within a national, class/caste framework. In putting together this collection, we were motivated by a desire to capture the complex operations of gender narratives. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's quote at the beginning of this introduction is indicative of the work that needs to be done within the field and this volume is one of the steps taken in that direction.

Note on transliteration: We have retained the various forms of transliteration adopted by the individual authors.

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