

Tribhuvan University

Enforcement of Masculinity in Rabi Thapa's *Nothing to Declare*

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled,
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submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science at Ratna
Rajya laxmi Campus, for the award of Masters of Arts in English is the result of my
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All the sources used for the completion of this thesis have been fully and properly cited.

It does not contain any materials which to a large extent have been accepted
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the thesis.

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Letter of Approval

This research entitled “Enforcement of Masculinity in Rabi Thapa’s *Nothing to Declare* submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, by Netra Bahadur Basnet has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This study on Rabi Thapa's *Nothing to Declare* shows the position of our society to shape masculine or feminine role according to sex role. The main theme of the story collection revolves around the story of middle class youth in Kathmandu. As Nepali society is of patriarchal in nature contemporary middle class youths is the main concern of the story. Middle class youths are the main characters in the story which help to understand the contemporary modern generation. This study assumes that a homogeneous idea concerning the Nepali middle class misrepresents the contemporary reality. Generational difference in the Nepalese society and class identity lead Nepalese society towards extending society in a new direction that adds to social development in general. Out of this extension emerges the main concern of the text that presents male characters as the key people who come from middle class family in Kathmandu. Both in characterization and choice of the author in its presentation, the use of masculine attributes appear vivid. Thus, the presentation of the writer and characters' behaviors show the enforcement of masculinity in Rabi Thapa's *Nothing to Declare*.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Enforcement of Masculinity in *Nothing to Declare*

Defining Masculinity

Masculinity means having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men. Masculinity has to do with particular traits rather than biology. Male, manful, manlike, manly, mannish, bold, brave, gallant, hardy, macho, muscular, powerful, virile and red blooded are the pictures generally created for real men in our society. Nature makes us male or female, our biological definition; however, it is society which makes us masculine or feminine. It defines how men should behave, dress, appear, what attitude and qualities they should have, how they should be treated. Thus masculinity as a character is socio-cultural creation.

The issue of masculinity that the scholars raise nowadays is for recognizing differences between men, and is historically informed around dominant discourses or ideologies of masculinism. Masculine qualities, characters or roles are typical of or appropriate for a boy or a man. They have been used or applied in a various degrees of comparisons for recognizing the differences between men or boys. The comparisons are termed as more masculine or most masculine, the opposite of it may be expressed as unmanly or epicene and similar to it is termed as virility. In this respect it is not easy to answer in any absolute sense, the question 'what is masculinity?' Pointing out to the nearest answer to this question Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, the two scholars on masculinities define:

Masculinities are those behaviors, languages and practices, existing in cultural and organizational locations which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine. So masculinities exist as both a positive, inasmuch as they offer some

means of identity significant for males, and as negative, inasmuch as they are not the 'Other (feminine). Masculinities and male behaviors are not the simple product of genetic coding, biological predispositions. (15-6)

Depending on the definition by Whitehead and Barrett masculinities are the set of attributes, behavior and roles generally associated with boys and men. Masculinities are the traits which are socially constructed but made up of both culturally defined and biologically created factors. They are distinct from the definition of male biological sex. Masculinities are the existing roles which offer some positive means of identity for male but not for female. Masculine traits include courage, independence and assertiveness. These traits vary by location and context and are influenced by social and cultural factors.

Masculinity theory demonstrates that it is positioned in a large spectrum of sociological research that has been undertaken on the subjects of gender and sex. Reviewing some of the pertinent highlights of how research in this area developed, Gill Allwood asserts, "Sex role theory and the social construction of gender were pivoted points for developing research on masculinity and femininity" (77). To make the concept of masculinity clear Allwood further defines:

Sex role theory was used by early feminist, who in their search for an explanation for the difference between men and women developed various ideas about how gender was constructed and why masculinity and femininity were different. They tried how individual learned to behave in gender appropriate way, mainly through the agency of the family and school. (77-8)

Based on the information provided by Allwood, it becomes clear that the manner in which masculinity has been developed and conceptualized is predicated upon social roles. Further, masculinity is made more complicated because it also encompasses the power difference that exists between men and women. Four basic qualities to be 'male' as our culture's blueprint of manhood have been enlisted as Robert Brannon, a leading psychologist in his article contends, "1. No Sissy Stuff, 2. Be a Big Wheel, 3. Be a Sturdy Oak, and 4. Give 'em Hell" (qtd. in Kimmel 272). Male should not be like a woman sharing emotional things. Sharing emotions makes him a 'sissy', a derogatory word that de-sexes and emasculates a male. He has to be successful, headstrong and indifferent about what others think about him and his deeds. Males are continuously scrutinized by other males; and they fear that they might lose their masculinity and become a 'sissy stuff'. They always fear failure. A masculine man is measured by his power, success, wealth and status. So he should 'Be a Big Wheel.' A man should also possess the quality of calmness and reliability in a crisis, never showing his emotions at all. This means he should 'Be a Sturdy Oak.' A man should also exude an aura of manly daring and aggression (Go for it. Take risk.). So he should also possess the quality of 'Give 'em Hell.' Thus, it is not the specific behaviors and actions of the individual that define masculinity; masculinity is a consideration of power structure and men's relationship to women and other men in social and cultural discourse.

Masculinity in *Nothing to Declare*

There are sixteen stories in *Nothing to Declare* which are passionate, pensive and at times disenchanted. They mirror the experience of the middle class youths of Kathmandu as they build lives, trying to make sense and pushing the limits of a rapidly changing but ever conservative society vividly imagined and deeply felt.

The stories move around the middle class youths in and around the Kathmandu valley. Most of the characters in the stories collected in this volume are young men and portray the characteristics of independence, sensitivity, studied, aggressive, assertive and courageous. Their strong attitudes, behavior, roles and language they speak have dominated the whole plot of the stories. In this sense the collection can be read from the view point of masculinity. The masculinity of the contemporary middle class youth seems to be constructed at a middle space between tradition and modernity. When we go through the collection, at the very beginning of the story “Initiation” masculinity is enforced in the story. The character Ashok, when he is ten is enforced for the Initiation (Bratabandha). Nepalese society believes that the Bratabandha transforms a boy into a man. Thus, becoming a man has special meaning in the Nepalese society. Hence, masculinity is enforced from the initial phase to the end of the story. The whole process of the ritual suggests importance of ‘being a real man’ in Nepal.

The research indicates that overall masculinity is constructed to look at socially accepted gender roles and applies these roles in a meaningful manner. It enables the individual to develop a unique belief that their role and identity have been challenged under the paradigm set in the patriarchal model of society. Men themselves are involved in the construction of masculinity. The collection of stories in focus in *Nothing to Declare* tells the stories of men in particular from the various sectors of Nepalese society.

Nothing to Declare centers round the middle class youths in and around the Kathmandu valley. It also mirrors the modern middle class of Nepalese society. Nepalese society which is feudalistic, Hindu patriarchal, is cultured to have masculine role. In the story “Initiation” Ashok who is ten year old is enforced to have Initiation

ceremony. In Hindu culture it is believed that after the initiation ceremony a boy supposedly becomes 'a man'. A man is taken as bold, strong, courageous, sensitive and well cultured. These are the basic characteristics of masculinity. Enforcement to have Initiation ceremony is the outcome of the culture that we follow. The first story of the collection reflects the culture that enforces masculine role in Ashok as Thapa states:

‘Chup! That’s enough, I have so many things to worry about and all you can do is whine. It’s a big day for you- you’re going to be a man once your Bratabhanda is done. Why should a real man be ashamed of wearing a loincloth like his father and his father before him?’ (1)

In these lines when Ashok complains about wearing loincloths for his initiation ceremony, his mother convinces him to stop grumbling and not to feel ashamed of wearing loincloths because he is going to be a real man after his initiation ceremony. A real man does not feel ashamed whatever situation he faces. These lines indicate the social construction of masculinity. Hence, society always tries its best to enforce masculinity through religious ideology, culturally and politically. Ashok is only the representative character of this story.

Hypothesis

It is assumed that Thapa exposes the ground reality of Nepalese society as it enforces certain norms and values through culture and religion which ultimately enforces them to have masculine role. Almost all the stories use native language like *Chup, Thulo Mama, Sano Mama, Sale* and obscene language like *Muji, Machikne* which has given the real life experience of Nepalese middle class youths in Kathmandu. It is also able to make the stories interesting to read. Rabi Thapa, in his stories, is trying to show male chauvinism and male supremacy in Nepalese society.

Most of the characters in the stories are male and they represent male ideology, hence the research aims to analyze his stories from the lenses of masculinity theory.

The research hypothesizes the male protagonists' behaviors as an urge to prove the masculine power and the constant need of being a 'real man'. This project is a search on Rabi Thapa's story collection *Nothing to Declare*. The protagonists, mostly the middle class youths highlight the masculine values in the middle class families of Kathmandu. Their attempts of becoming a bread winner of a family; winning a girl's love interest; boasting in front of other male peers; using abusive language; feeling a broader sexual freedom; are the attempts of gaining a sense of masculinity. Specifically, the patriarchal Nepalese society shapes the characters' behaviors and enforces the masculine values in them.

Review on *Nothing to Declare*

Nothing to Declare centers on the experience of Nepali middle class youths in and around the capital. It is a series of characters against the backdrop of the city and country in transition. It is about their aspirations, their disappointments, and their revelations. The story "Trial" located in the tourist area of Thamel, reveals the protagonist's feeling of root-lessness when living abroad and while attempting to seduce an Israeli girl. Until the girl leaves him he continuously attempts to win her favor showing the masculine trait of being 'a big wheel' and 'a sturdy oak'. Thus the sexual favor of the girl has become inspiration for arousing masculinity in him.

In "Home for Dashain" a police officer visiting his home at Dashain, the greatest festival of Nepalese people is brutally murdered by Maoists. Despite the threat prevalent in the insurgency period, he goes home feeling masculine enough. As a result of which it turns into his brutal murder.

In “Desire” we see a frustrating exploration of Nepal’s rigid social structures as a wealthy son is attracted to a domestic servant. A woman and her seducing, becomes an achievement for the wealthy son. He lures the girl and attempts to seduce her through his social position. For him she has such an attractive body that his masculinity rises up as he sees her. He easily ignores the individuality of the girl which highlights the masculine attitude towards a female body.

Critics have questioned whether the content will appeal to an international audience. Writing to *The Wave* magazine Paavan Mathema believes, “Any one of us could have written it” (2). While it is certainly true that anyone who has ever spent time in Kathmandu feels a stab of nostalgia for the characters portrayed and the places described, Rabi’s attention to deal and vivid depictions of the more mundane aspects of Kathmandu life make for fascinating reading. Consequently, there is a feeling as though many of the experiences are deeply personal, such as those of boarding school life in “Angels”.

The stories that are presented in the book give the glimpse of one’s life story in different style. One can remember their life’s event in anyone of the stories. One can memorize the events after reading the stories which are written chronologically. However, the style Thapa has chosen is much more different from that of the other writers. On the style that Thapa has created for his stories Paavam Mathema illustrates:

To say the least, *Nothing to Declare* is a worthy debut of a Nepali writer in English. Ravi Thapa has the kind of laid back style that keeps you turning the pages, even the story itself does not captivate. He does not try to cash in on the stereotyped image of Nepal, like most Nepali writers do, but keeps his stories quintessentially ‘Nepali’ with an

honest narration that tracks on the and social points we know as well.

The conversation stay colloquial, with an occasional machikne and mujhi, scattered around for the homely feel. (4)

The style that Ravi Thapa has chosen has made the whole story worthy and interesting enough to describe the life events of the common people in and around the valley. The laid back style that Tap has adopted gives the readers feel too much pleasure and relaxation and there is the absence of stress or worry. The readers go on turning the pages one after the other with relaxed situation until the end. There is not a single story that makes the reader feel bore, stress and worry. His stories do not have so conventional, formulaic, oversimplified or exaggerated image, conception or opinion. Instead, they are typical or of true nature and use of colloquials like machikne, muji, sale, thulo mama, sano mama etc. has added charms to the stories.

Nothing to Declare draws its reader's attention into the life of a rainbow of Nepalese society. Ravi Thapa begins his collection with the story "Initiation" which captures the picture of a child's emotion during his bratabandha ceremony. But more than anything the story draws its readers in a world that pictures a parallel existence with some of the traditions that are prevalent in eastern states of India. The second story "Angel" remains the most moving story of this book which explores the theme of boys having sex with boys and bonds in a boarding school and outlines the creed of boarders which transcends boundaries between the nations in this region. Similarly, the title story "Nothing to Declare" deals with the subject that has the dubious distinction of being almost the national passion in Nepal – migration to the west. The idea of Nepalese braindrain is best described in the story named "Desire." Pointing to the vivid presentation of the Nepalese life Saurabh Kumar Shahi, a critic points:

Nothing to declare is a collection of short stories by Ravi that are either set in Nepal or amidst Nepalese Diaspora. A mix of sweet, sour, coming of age and sexual awakening sagas, *Nothing Declare* allows its readers to pip into the life of a rainbow of Nepalese characters like never before. Not all of the 16 stories are engaging, but a majority of them that are, are enough to spellbind you. (14)

There are sixteen stories in the collection and each of them is able to capture the life of Kathmandu. Mostly the stories are successful to capture the life of the middle class young generation. They can be taken as the stories of commoners. The collection does not go into the politics of the country to describe the events nor is it able to capture mythical incident. There are many things which can be the subject of stories like that of Maoist insurgency, bad traffic system, Yeti's stinking rivers which are also the main concerns of the foreigner's when they visit Nepal. However, Thapa goes beyond such subjects and is able to capture the life of the common middle class young people in all his stories in this book.

The tales in this volume are arranged in an age related progression, starting with the stories of childhood and moving into adolescent to the youth. This type of age chronology gives a new taste to the readers of the present society. In this regard Vidyadhar Gadgil, a notable critic comments:

This sparkling debut, with self-assured prose and convincing narratives, contains a number of gems – notably “The Trial” and the final story of the volume, “Valley of Tears”. There are some weak ones too like “Home for Dashain”-about Maoist violence an almost mandatory strand in any book on Nepal. Thapa sticks firmly to the world he knows, which is at one and the same time the strength and

weakness of this collection. Nonetheless, the volume leaves one looking forward to Thapa's next work, when his ambition will hopefully expand to give full scope to his ample talent. (7)

The analysis shows the weakness and strength of the story collection. The main aim of the collection is to focus on the middle class youth in and around the valley though it has also captured the lives of the rural area and the related Maoist brutalities during the insurgency period. Though all of the stories are convincing, they also prove the author's success in narration. In the collection the stories "The Trial" and "Valley of Tears" are found appreciable, while "Home for Dashain" is condemned. However, the volume leaves the way of the author's further step to work and help him to improve in his upcoming work.

The sixteen stories in Ravi Thapa's debut collection *Nothing to Declare* offers a mixed bag of lives and experiences of Nepal. The stories travel through the spectrum of experiences of the middle class educated young men of Kathmandu, alternately, disenchanted, passionate and pensive, as they move from the age of high school to age the of marriage. The stories are also the symbol of the moving society from the conservative to the modern one. In this respect Ranjita Biswa, a notable Indian critic comments:

Thapa's stories woven around young protagonists from Nepal whether at home or abroad are a mixed bag. The initial promises shown in the first story is not carried through uniform to the end. However, the plots are interesting glimpses into the Nepalese society which is similar in many ways to neighboring India's. (15)

The stories are led by "Initiation" which introduces the readers to the personal setting of an adolescent, Ashok in which he is going through the thread ceremony to initiate

him into adulthood. Similarly, in “Desire” Subodh, a rich employer’s son falls for the charms of the maid servant but cannot reach out beyond the social hierarchy. On the other hand “A Nepali Maid” sensitively portrays an old faithful servant Gauri’s life where the master and the servant are mutually dependent. Different scenario is presented in “The Trial” which is located in Kathmandu’s international circuit, the resto- bar, the pubs, at Thamel area- home to different travelers and local youths who look for a chance. But it is also a failed love story of a Nepali protagonist falling for an Israeli girl. In a way the story also reflects the rootlessness that causes pain, suffering and distress to many youths missing home while abroad but bored when back home. In the title story “Nothing to Declare” the feeling of ‘yet not be here’ is more than present. It presents a vivid scenario of a young boy, Bikram going abroad and experiencing a different European life style, visiting the bars, drinking, dancing with the girls and having sex with them.

Some critics have questioned whether the content will appeal to an international audience or anyone else is not clear. But it is true that anyone who has spent his/her life in Kathmandu will certainly feel nostalgia for the character portrayed and the place described in the collection. Rabi’s attention to detail and vivid depiction of the more mundane aspects of Kathmandu life makes for fascinating reading. However, it can be taken as a realistic vein of the contemporary Nepalese society and is praised the issue of the Maoist and of the youths. One of the critics, Sanjeev Uprety comments:

Thapa’s stories are written in a realistic vein, it is interesting to see that “Valley of Tears” the last story of the collection, ventures into the realm of fantasy. In this apocalyptic tale, the entire valley is drowned after a prolonged rainfall and turns into a lake again. The description of

the actual city structures and places- Bridge of Bagmati, gorge of Chobhar, Swayambhunath, Thankot etc. gives the realistic flavor of the story. (3)

It also proves that the setting of most of the stories is Kathmandu and its surrounding city. The city of Kathmandu, the bridge of Bagmati, the gorge of Chovar, Swayambhunath, Thankot etc. presents the real picture of Kathmandu and its surrounding. It is able to provide the realistic flavor locality in the story. Some stories like “Valley of Tears” are able to provide fantasy to its reader through various means such as the heavy rainfall which has made the valley drowned into a lake again.

Most of the stories collected in this volume are given the plot in and around Kathmandu as the experience of the common people. The experiences are well put in the form of short stories that everyone can relate in their real life. The real life experiences can be felt from hostel life, secret with siblings, youths, insurgency, desires and the traditions and cultures in Nepal. Nathalie Handal, one of the most diverse writer comments:

Most of the stories in *Nothing to Declare* located in Kathmandu as experienced by young people. They go to school, drink and smoke, have sex, go abroad and come back and get married. But the final story “Valley of Tears” is a millennial credit that seeks to wipe out all that’s gone before, particularly the mad contradiction present day Kathmandu has become. (5)

These lines by Handal on this issue justify that Thapa has set most of the stories on the background of Kathmandu depicting the life experiences of the young boys as experienced by them. Going to school, drink and smoke, have sex, go abroad and come back and get married are the real life experiences of the young people of the

middle class in and around the valley. Similarly, in “Valley of Tears” the frustration of the people of Kathmandu is highlighted by creating an imaginary scenario of a heavy rain that wipes out all the terrible consequences of human activities that have really ruined the city and turned it into the hell. Handel goes on to comment, “Valley of tears floods the city to restore it to its primordial state. I suppose you could call it the ultimate expression of frustration” (5). Such real life situations are vividly presented as his own life experiences by this young writer in his debut collection.

Ravi Thapa’s *Nothing to Declare* seems to document Kathmandu not in an attempt to hold onto the past but in an attempt to collect and understand it for future and present generation. In the story “Arranged Marriage” Thapa has drawn the dislocation to represent the cultural ground currently changing in Nepalese society. Pointing to the language structure in this story a critic, Stuart Mc. Carthy writes:

There are the moments of beautiful writings (see the conflict inherent in ‘The dust of decades inside made me wheeze, looking at an ancestral home; ‘Time folded into itself the cycle of rice and dal as night and day, with its Asian Proustian feel; ‘Frames of time softened carvings) laudable too, are the innovations of languages and structures- often compounding of new and old. The style ranges from the mythical (Valley of Tears) to simple and personal linear (Tiger) to emails lined up in a diary from (Arranged Marriage). (11)

These lines indicate the language style and structures Thapa has chosen throughout the collection. The critic praises the language style and structures as the moments of beautiful writings. Carthy finds them commendable enough and there is the introduction of something new in them and are mixed up with the new and old. The

style of the story represents diverse ranges from mythical, simple and personal linear, vulgar to modern like that of emails.

Drawing ideas from Connell and Kimmel from Masculinity studies this research focuses on how masculine character is deployed in regulative and tactical forms within Nepalese society that Rabi Thapa has carved in his collection *Nothing to Declare*. The stories like “Initiation”, highlights the compulsion of Nepalese youth to be ‘a real man’. This ritual needs to be institutionalized in presence of the whole society. The activities of so called ‘real man’ need to be full of rationality, dare and aggression. All protagonists of the collection of the stories are males. Female perspectives do not get importance they act as tokens to highlight male achievement. The stories “Desire” and “The Trial” have the maid and the Israeli woman as examples respectively.

Males check their masculinity through boasting on female attentions they get. They want to be ‘a big wheel’ to prove they are male enough. The story collection demonstrates how, on the basis of the normalization of masculinity, male characters are able to regulate female characters through the sexualizing of situation. Most of the characters in the story show their masculinity behavior by speaking the vulgar language as well. The fearless males use frequent vulgar words that give them a sense of masculinity. It is also said that the story is written from the masculine point of view because male characters are given priority in the role of the stories. Female characters are very less, which again highlights masculine behavior of the author. The research thus examines how masculinity is institutionalized in Thapa’s *Nothing to Declare*.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis and includes different reviews of critics. The second chapter

consists of masculinity theory, third chapter consists of textual analysis and the last one concludes the entire research work.

Chapter: II

Theory of Masculinity

Defining Theory of Masculinity

Masculinity theory is a systematic and scientific study of gender relation. Masculinity does not only deal with man; it concerns the position of man in gender order. This newly emerging theory studies the patterns of practices by which both men and women, though predominantly men engage in that position. Masculinity is also defined as a configuration of practice within a system of gender relation. This theory is inherently relational and does not exist except in contrast to feminism. Masculinity studies emerge within the last few decades of the twentieth century. These studies develop as a natural outflow of feminism and gender studies. Instead of thinking of masculinity as an integral part of male identity, masculinity studies have made it possible to consider the construction of the masculine gender identity as Adams and Savran define:

Taking its lead from feminism, masculinity studies is thus dedicated to analyzing what 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, resources and cultural authority. (2)

This field of enquiry thus offers theoretical hypothesis and apparatus through which masculinity may be scrutinized in order to deconstruct the processes and politics that inform masculine systems of power. Thus the masculinity studies have mostly been the terrain of sociologists and cultural theorists.

The study of gender along with the study of gender issues about man and masculinities has been expanded in recent decades. Public interest in these questions

has been developed across the social science, the humanities, the biological science and above all in other extensive fields. Masculinity theory deeply focuses its concerns on how men expose male behavior, what gender role they perform in relation to women, what qualities they should bear to be a real man and how the society approves their role in gender relation. Men in our society need approval from other males to be a 'real man'. The situation completely differs in case of women. R. W. Connell believes:

Masculinity studies take their cue from the general crisis of the subject and the other. It is part of the dilemma, those men whose masculinity, now verging on redundant, being defined as 'other', are not passively accepting this definition, but rather through deconstruction finding their own voice and legitimacy. The concept of the 'other' is used in literary and cultural studies these days. (124)

The tendency of 'Othering' the less masculine people highlights the power of the 'self'. Men live in continuous fear of being 'de-sexed' by the other men who make their homo-social world. Therefore, males are in a continuous pressure of proving their masculinity before the homo-social world.

Society believes a real man is bold, brave and powerful. Nature makes us male or female, it gives us our biological definition, but it is society which makes us masculine or feminine. It defines the way boys/men should behave, dress, appear, the attitude and qualities they should have, how they should be treated etc. Thus masculinity, as a character is socio-cultural. Sheila Ruth says:

Masculinism is the elevation of the masculine, conceptually and physically, to the level of the universal and ideals. It is a valuing of men above women. It is, as well, an honoring of a male principle

(conceived of as Mars, a warning configuration of qualities) above the female (conceived of a Venus, a serving and nurturing configuration).

(54)

As masculine gender identity is influenced and created by the individual's immediate societal and cultural context, societal and cultural changes bring a need for concomitant adaptation in masculine identity. This enforced process of adaptation is explored in *Nothing to Declare* especially through the character of 'Ashok' and to a lesser degree is reflected in the story of "Angel". Masculinity must be understood gender, and specifically masculinity, as a structure of social practice, one that is reproduced within historical situations through daily actions. Kamala Bahasin remarks:

Men are commonly described as aggressive, assertive, independent, competitive, and so on. Their attributives are based on the idea that there is something about men which transcends their local situation. Men are seen as having natures which determine their behavior in all situations. Notion of masculinity may change, men may dress differently, the bread winner ethics may collapse but it does not change male power as such; only the form, presentation or packing of masculinity may change. (9)

Masculinity can be characterized as one specific side of the gender coin. You've got masculinity and you've got femininity, characteristics of the male and the female. But masculinity is not just about gender alone; it is also about how gender affects one's actions, identity, and attitudes.

Social Construction of Masculinity

In *Nothing to Declare*, Thapa pushes us to look at some of the more complicated issues that spring from masculinity, particularly through the ways male characters treat women. In the story “Desire” the protagonist, Subodh’s main focus on women is their visible body parts, their hair and their inner garments. The maid wrapped in towel, his female friend’s bra and the swell of her breast play a role in stimulating his sexual passion. Sexual aggression also provides ‘maleness’ to the men. In the story “The Trail” the male protagonist cannot digest the fact that he has an Israeli competitor and above that he cannot tolerate being defeated by his competitor. His prize would be to have the Israeli girl whom he wanted to seduce. Kamala Bahasin talking about transitorizes of masculinity says it can change according to the situation and society it belongs to. She further claims:

Men are seen as having nature which determines their behavior in all situations. Notion of masculinity may change, men may dress differently, the bread winner ethics may collapse but it does not change male power as such; only the form, presentation or packing of masculinity may change. Masculinity is local and subject to change. What does not change is the justification and naturalization of male power or masculine ideology. (9)

It is nature which determines the behavior of male. Naturally they are aggressive and competent. Nature determines their behavior in all the situations. The role they play in the society may change, the dress they wear may change, but the masculine power cannot change. It means that it remains constant naturally.

Men demonstrate masculine characteristics and behavior through various means and practices. Masculine roles, practices and behavior are determined on the

basis of their male body and cultural ideas of gender relation. Between the male body and cultural ideas there remains a zone in which men perform their masculinity in rituals, speech and gesture. The types of masculine rituals that men perform at male separated places are considered to be masculine rituals. In this sense Robert A. Nye argues:

Between the male body and cultural ideas of gender lies a zone in which men enact masculinity in rituals, speech and gesture. This is crucially important and under researched part of gender studies. It encompasses the historically male segregated setting of the work place, the gym, the school, the military training, the monastery, the club and drinking venues where masculinity has been transmitted from older to younger men by the force of personal example and the appropriation of technique. (195)

Certain cultural rituals in which only males are invited and taken masculine also make men to be different from women in their behavior and tradition. Their very ritual also contributes to the construction of their masculinity.

On the basis of the discussions above it is assumed that different types of masculinities prevail in our society. In the society male exercise a large amount of gender stereotype that can have profound consequences on them and their self esteem. Gender is socially constructed characteristics which the society expects out of its male members which do not always come naturally for all males. Connell, focusing his discussion upon the practices and relation that construct masculinity in the current western gender order categorizes four types of masculinity, “Hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized” (38).

Hegemonic masculinity is described as the dominant form of male behavior and is culturally valued the most in our society. It includes the qualities like heterosexuality, witness, physical strength and suppression of emotions. In this issue Connell defines:

Hegemonic masculinity is the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of man and the subordination of women.” (38-9)

From this definition it becomes clear that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant power of men over women or the like. Ravi Thapa’s story *Nothing to Declare* is full of hegemonic type of masculinity in which most of the characters, except minor cases play a dominant role against the female characters. Dhiraj in “Angel”, Sachin and Archana in “No Smoke Without Fire”, Subodh in “Desire” and Bikram, Gaurav, Suresh and Raghav in the title story “Nothing to Declare” deserve this characteristics. Similarly, the narrator, a Nepali boy in “Trial”, the Maoist rebel in “Home for Dashain”; and some drunken youths in “After Party” also deserve this characteristic.

Subordinate masculinity exhibits the qualities which are considered to be opposite of those norms and values in hegemonic masculinity. It exhibits the characteristics of physical weakness or be very expressive with emotional feelings. Gay men, effeminate men and homosexual men deserve to have such masculinity. In the case of subordinate masculinity Connell writes:

The most important case in contemporary society is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men. This is much more than a cultural stigmatization of homosexuality or gay

identity. Gay men are subordinated to straight men by an array of quite material practices. (39)

By examining Connell's view it becomes evident that there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men. Hegemonic masculinity plays a dominant role on the homosexual men, gay men and effeminate men. In the story *Nothing to Declare* Ravi Thapa enforces such patterns of masculinity by the presentation of the character of the hostel students who practice homosexuality in the story "Angel" and a gay in "After Party."

Complicit masculinity refers to the men who deserve the quality that does not fit the characteristics of hegemonic but does not challenge it. It often admires and accepts the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. It is the majority of men who gain from hegemony since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend and take advantage from the subordination of women. In the context of complicity Connell writes, "Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy are complicit in this sense" (40). In *Nothing to Declare* Ravi Thapa has enforced this type of masculinity in the story "Arranged Marriage" by presenting the role of the narrator who remains old bachelor and is looking for a girl to get married and settle a family life.

Marginalized masculinity refers to the group of men who cannot fit into the hegemonic masculinity because of certain characteristics like race and class but still subscribes to the norms of hegemonic masculinity like physical strength and aggression. Marginalized masculinity can also be assumed as the interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race which creates further relationship between masculinities. In this issue Connell states:

Race relation may also become an integral part of the dynamics between masculinities. In a white supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic role for white gender construction. For instance, black sporting stars become exemplars of masculine toughness, while the fantasy figure of the black rapist plays an important role in sexual politics among whites. (41)

On the basis of this pattern of masculinities it is evident that there exists the group of people in the society whose hegemonic characteristics have been marginalized by being different race or class. In *Nothing to Declare* Ravi Thapa enforces such types of masculinity by presenting a black character, Musti in the title story “Nothing to Declare” and Ramesh, a police officer in “Home for Dashain.”

History of Masculinity Studies

Masculinity Studies, also known as Men’s Studies is interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning men, masculinity, gender and politics. As a relatively new field of study formed largely in response to, and as a critique of an emerging men’s right movement itself a response to both the real and perceived advantage brought to women by feminist political action and as such, has been taught in academic setting only since the 1970s. In many universities, men’s studies is a correlated to or part of a longer women’s studies or gender studies, program and as such its faculty trend to be sympathetic to or engaged in feminist politics.

Although the scientific study of masculinity emerged only from a few decades before the beginning of the 20th century, it is argued that it has taken almost four centuries to take the present form of the study. In this regard R.W. Connell writes:

Masculinities come into existence at particular time and place and are always subject to change. Masculinities are in a word historical . . .

But so far the argument has lacked historical depth and appropriate scale. To understand the current pattern of masculinities we need to look back over the period in which it came into being. Since masculinity exists only in the context of a whole structure of gender relations, we need to locate it in the formation of the modern gender order as a whole- a process that has taken about four centuries. (245)

If we analyze Connell for the development of masculinity theory, it takes almost four centuries. Connell pointed out that the modern gender order began to take its shape in Europe and North Atlantic from the 15th century after the capitalist economy came into being. With the rapid development of cultural change its existence is also seen in different manner. What we understand about masculinity is the outcome of the past, which takes long time to develop.

As it is taken relatively newness and the debate over the purpose or mission of men's studies, the boundaries and subject of men's studies are always under debate and constantly changing. This is also due to the fact that many male and female scholars of men's studies have varied and often disagreeing politics, including feminist, pro-feminist, the men's movement, men's right and advocacy, the myth poetic men's movement and masculine. Some men's study scholars also figure the loss of male privilege as a form of male oppression, pointing to women's superiority in reproductive freedom and choice, as well as archaic attitude towards child custody and domestic violence laws that criminalized men without a jury trial. Despite this, the majority still identify as feminist or pro feminist and hold that whatever gain have been made by women are still dwarfed by the inequalities they face in the home under law and the job market as well. Some feminists contend those men's studies are unnecessary as related discipline. Such studies; history, psychology, political and

literature are already dominated by the theorist and text of men. Masculinity cannot be understood separately from its relation to femininity. One dynamic in the post war growth of feminism was women's perceived need to escape from the definition by masculinity and patriarchy.

The feminist movement of the late 1960s and 70s did more than just bring to light the inequalities that existed between men and women. The movement also increased public awareness of how issues such as gender, sex and sexuality are defined. As a direct result scholars began to investigate more on the evolution of masculinity theory and how it can be applied in the present modern world. With the realization that issue such as gender and sex have ever- evolving meaning, it is clear that any attempt to understand this issue must be framed in a modern context with consideration of cultural and social realities. To look at the evolution of this theory it will be possible to elucidate the role that the theory plays in the current social discourse. It also helps to highlight the importance of this theory. A critical review on the evolution of this theory, what has been written is that after the long research on the sociological and gender sex, it was positioned in a large spectrum. In particular, this theory observes:

Sex role theory was used by early feminist, who in their search for an explanation for the difference between men and women developed various ideas about how gender was constructed and why masculinity and femininity were so different. They tried to explain how individual learned to behavior in gender appropriate ways, mainly through the agency of the family and school. (Allwood 77-8)

After the development of femininity, it also helps to remove the deeper understanding of masculinity. Allwood argues that the difference of principle between masculinity

and femininity lies in the specific context in which ideology is examined. “Men have constantly been constructed as object of study that is not only gendered, but gendered identity exists only within the power relation between the sexes” (Allwood 92-3). In this respect method of examining male sex role has also established to critical assumption about male behavior that power in masculinity is maintained and reproduced.

Based on the opinion of Allwood, it becomes evident that the manner in which masculinity has been developed and conceptualized is predicated upon a social construction and understanding of gender and sex roles, later the theory was made more complex and powerful to distinguish between sex role of men and women. It means that it is socially constructed.

This research examines the development process of masculinity theory in the present context, the reality of masculinity as a political reality has saved evolution. According to Leach, “. . . like femininity, masculinity operates politically at different levels. At one level, it is a form of identity, a means of self-realization that structures personal attitudes and behavior, at another distinct but related level” (36). Leach argues that masculinity becomes a cultural ideology with appropriate role that a male must fulfill.

Although Leach views masculinity as a set, it is culturally and socially constructed, and the variable he does that the state is not natural. Leach further says, “Unlike the biological state of maleness, masculinity is a gender construction socially and politically. It is the cultural interpretation of maleness learnt through participation in society and its institution” (36). Male is expected to identify with the social institutions that constructs masculinity and react in a manner that is commendable with what these institutions view as acceptable behavior. Thus masculinity is an

evolving process that requires the individual to be intimidated linked to social and cultural discourse

Masculinity is predicated on the individual's willingness to accept the rule of behaviors-i.e. to exhibit male qualities. "Researchers argue that the decision to embrace masculinity has a clear psychological ramification for the individual" (Choi 49). Specifically, Choi investigated SCA role group's difference between four groups of undergraduate students; androgynous, masculinity, feminine and undifferentiated. Individual that embraces masculine ideology and identifies them as masculine exhibits greater degree of self-efficacy. "This cognitive aspect of masculinity seems to resemble self- efficacy in that self-efficiency is a cognitive assessment of one's prospective performance" (Choi 51).

Masculinity in modern society has indicated that this process can have a negative impact on the individual as well. A recent survey on men's perception of masculinity in modern society demonstrates that as the role of men begins to change, many males are experiencing ambiguity about their role and behaviors. In particular, nearly four out of ten men believe their role in society is becoming less dominant. For many the world is moving through an era of transition in that definition of masculinity- what it means to be men. New role models have not replaced new one.

Chapter: III

Enforcement of Masculinity in Rabi Thapa's *Nothing to Declare*

This research examines the issues of masculinity in Rabi Thapa's *Nothing to Declare* telling the stories of the middle class youths of the Kathmandu valley. The collection can be read from the view point of masculinity as male perspectives get more emphasis. The masculinity of the contemporary middle class youth seems to be constructed at a middle space between tradition and modernity throughout whole collection.

Nothing to Declare contains the characteristics of masculinity in all the stories. The stories and the characters which are presented in the collection enforce the masculine role. Though the stories revolve around the middle class youth in and around Kathmandu, it highlights the masculine values of Nepalese society. In the story "Initiation" Ashok who is ten years old is enforced to have Initiation ceremony. In Hindu culture it is believed that after the initiation ceremony a boy is supposed to become a man. A man is taken as bold, strong, courageous, strong sensitive and well cultured. These basic characteristic of masculinity are very vividly presented in this story. Enforcement to have Initiation ceremony is the outcome of the culture that we follow. These lines of Thapa in the first story of the collection reflect the culture to enforce masculine role in Ashok. Thapa writes, "I have so many things to worry about and all you can do is whine. It's a big day for you- you're going to be a man once your 'Bratabandha' is done. Why should a real man be ashamed of wearing a loincloth like his father and his father before him?" (1). These lines indicate the social construction of masculinity and how it is enforced to have this trait by the society.

In Hindu culture it is believed that to become a real man one should go from the way of Brathabanda (Initiation). During this period one should wear special

cloths. This ceremony is also taken as a stage to stand the stage of manhood. One becomes a real man when he had initiation ceremony. Society accepts people as men when one is bounded with Janai, (Initiation thread) one is bounded with the duty of masculine role afterwards. In the same story Thapa further writes:

As he followed the priest's instructions, he began to feel less self-conscious. Many of his relatives had drifted off into the house, where they were probably playing cards. His cousin had disappeared too. Ashok hoped they weren't messing around with the Lego collection his father had brought back from England. The thought irritated him, but soon he started feeling drowsy. The priest, ever busy, suddenly broke off his incantations and blessed Ashok. (3)

In this ceremony, masculinity is being enforced in the very character Ashok. Here the priest is instructing to follow something that is guided by the religion. If it is carefully observed the behavior of the characters, he looks innocent about all these instruction of the priest. He is irritated with all these activities. His relatives in his initiation ceremony reflect the social norms and values to look a boy as masculine. Blessing of the priest in this ceremony reflects the blessing of maturity and to become a successful man. This ceremony is taken as to make a boy strong, bold, courageous and matured. Michael S. Kimmel, one of the leading scholars on this notion views masculinity as a constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationship with ourselves, with each other and with our world. In this sense he writes:

Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed.

Manhood does not bubble up to consciousness from our biological

makeup; it is created in culture. Manhood means different things at different times to different people. We come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of 'others' - racial minorities, sexual minorities, and, above all, women. (266-67)

It is clearly known that masculinity is the construction of the society and socially constructed masculinity is different from society to society. Masculine trait is not always static, nor it is timeless, it is a historical appearance. It also varies from location to location and time to time. Masculinity is not demonstrated from our inner spirit. It is also not originated from the consciousness of our biological creation. It is socially constructed and culturally enforced in a man. The story "Initiation" shows how Hindu culture creates and enforces masculinity in its members. In this sense the story can be read from the point of view of masculinity.

The second story entitled "Angels" presents the scenes of a boarding school for boys where masculine roles like homophobia, homosexuality, heterosexuality, hegemony and bulliness are presented very vividly. The roles that the boys perform in the hostel are the concern of focus for the presentation of masculine role. Boys perform and present different versions of masculinity in social and cultural situation such as school. It offers boys appropriate ways of constructing masculinity. Many scholars have focused their researches on adolescent boys in secondary school and role of schooling in the formation of masculinities for man. Jon Swain, one of the leading scholars writes, "School processes and the meanings and practices found within the school setting contribute to and help form, young boys' masculinities" (213). The entire plot of the story and its main character Dhiraj carries the characteristics of masculinity. At the very beginning of the story Dhiraj is presented

as a small hostel student and is subordinated by bigger student and his peer group. To avoid subordination from the bigger student one or two small boys are let to dwell with the boys from class ten as their angels. In many occasions the angels are regarded as their girl friends and are utilized to fulfill their sexual desire by bigger boys. Dhiraj himself has to face such events in many occasions. To highlight the scenario Thapa writes, “For some their angels were trainee girlfriends, in all innocence. They’d go to see their angels, take them presents, and tell them how much they loved them. It was no surprise that the cutest kids were noticed first of all” (13). Boy’s hostel itself is taken as the symbol of masculine society where masculine attitudes are exercised. Among the boys in the hostel they construct natural as well as social behavior regarding masculinity. Playing cards, bullying on juniors, watching porn films, homosexuality etc. can be taken as the natural as well as social behavior of masculinity. Social situations such as school offer boys an appropriate ways of constructing masculinity. Swain puts, “School plays a relatively more prominent role in the construction of identity for boys in primary and early secondary schooling” (213). These lines of the story further help us to understand the enforcement of masculinity among the characters of this story entitled “Angles”. In this story Thapa puts:

They were showing *Lassiter*, a convoluted British thriller a ten year old could hardly be expected to follow. But in between the rapid-fire English and night scenes in which a moustachioed, black-clad jewel-thief broke into the buildings, Dhiraj finds himself watching with rather more interest. There on a big screen at the back of the hall, *Lassiter* was having a drink with a beautiful, curly-haired brunette. They talked a while with mysterious smile; then they moved close and

kissed. This was exciting enough. He stared open mouthed as the women stripped Lassiter of his shirt and pushed him to the floor. She then dragged his trousers off roughly. The man seemed drugged; he did nothing to resist. But what happened next was most extraordinary of all. (14)

These lines indicate the fact that the very boy Dhiraj, who is ten years old is in the cinema house. He is looking English film with his senior mates but the interesting fact is that he is looking at the film more interestingly than others. Having drink with the girls, kissing with each other and having sex are the extraordinary scenes in the movie, which really touch Dhiraj. In these lines the heroin seems more emotional then the hero. This scene is more interesting to the character, Dhiraj. In such age and his interest on such movies can be taken as the growing characteristics of masculinity. The boarding school for boys has created social environment like watching porn movies, talking about sexuality and love affairs, gender differences and bullying on other peer group. Society always enforces the boys to show their masculine behaviors, which is reflected in this story through boys' boarding school hostel society. Swain further adds:

Schooling not only reproduces but also produces gender identities, although not always in ways that are either straightforward or transparent. Some writers also describe schools as a 'masculinity factory' (Heward 39), or as 'masculinity making devices' (Connell 29; Haywood and Mac an Ghail 59) where boys learn that there are a number of different, and competing ways of being a boy and that some of these are more cherished and prestigious, and therefore more powerful than others. (214)

These lines prove that school plays directly or indirectly a vital role for creating environment for the construction of masculine role in adolescent boys. It also enforces boys to learn the gender identity, which creates distinction between men and women, their role in the society and their power and authority over women. The boys form their peer group in school and share their feelings and ideas with each other. They get proper environment to express their concerns on various matters like male and female, love and sex, responsibility and authority. Schools also provide them sex education which helps them to build clear concept between male and female and their role in the social life. For all these reasons schools are described as masculinity factory or masculinity making devices where boys learn a number of different and competing ways of being a boy.

Similarly, in the same story, other characters of the same age involve themselves in ridiculous activities rather than their studies. They are more interested in observing the sexual activities between Gurung sir and Khadka miss. To show such activities Rabi Thapa in the same story “Angles” writes:

And of course the boys had loved gossiping about Khadka miss and the sport teacher, Gurung. Khadka miss was unmarried-it was no surprise, the boys smirked, she was so ugly, she had no breast at all. But then someone had seen her with Gurung in the staff room, late one evening last year. The eyewitness- peering through the broken slate of a window- had seen Khadka pressed against Gurung, whose hands were scrabbling at her front. Probably looking for her breasts, the boy had laughed. She had broken away suddenly looking around confusedly. (18)

Some of the most important offerings to the understanding of masculinity in schools have come from a series of ethnographic studies of boy's own cultures and their interpersonal relations at the micro level. The boys at school construct their own cultures and interpersonal relations. They form their own peer groups and exercise the masculine attributes among themselves. They gossip on the issues of love, sex, gender identity, power relations and domination among their group. They exhibit their curiosity when they see events like kiss and sex with great interest. In the very story "Angel" the boys see an strange event in the staff room in which the sport teacher Gurung and Khadka miss are busy with their love affair. The eye witness sees it through the broken slate of a window. The eye-witness sees Khadka miss pressed against Gurung sir and are kissing each other. Gurung sir is busy scrabbling her breasts with his both hands and they observe this scheme with keen interest. The curiosity to observe such things is a symbol of masculinity in our society. By the growing age of the boys they have to show their natural male activities; here in the story the boys have seen the love affair between Gurung sir and Khadka miss. As a result of the masculine nature of boys to observe and gossip at other's activities, they have shown their keen interests on such activities. Thus the social setting, the school has provided the ground to create their own male cultures and interpersonal relations. On this issue Swain further comments:

The boy's peer group is one of the most important features of school as a social setting, for peer group cultures are also agents in making of the masculinities; they have a fundamental influence on the construction of masculine identities, and there are constant pressures on individuals to perform and behave to the expected group norms. (217)

The story talks about Dhiraj, a boy held in equal disdain by his seniors and peers in the boarding school and his growing of age to the beginning phase of masculinity. By exploring the theme of boys having sex with boys and bonds that generates it or is generated from it, Thapa successfully manages to outline a creed, the creed of masculinity. The very character of the story, Dhiraj is now grown up boy and is entering to the beginning phase of masculinity. In the boy's school and hostel society he is beginning to construct masculine attributes. He has to admit to making something of being a senior boy. He is expected to make sure things are okay in the house. Help line up the boys before meals, make sure the dorms are clean, and keep the noise down during study time and after lights out. All these traits of superiority have given him the excuse to spend time with the younger boys. As a result of which he has fallen into the habit of homosexuality with the junior boys. One night Dhiraj is writing his dairy about the activities of the boys who were suspended from the school. As he is writing the activities of their guilt, he suddenly drops his pen down and goes to one of the dormitory where the small boys are sleeping. He approaches one of the beds where the cutest boy is sleeping. Making sure of everything he begins to have sex with his angel. In the story Thapa writes:

He squatted next to bed and extended a hand tracing the contour of the boy's body an inch above the blanket. His hand pushed above the boys hips, dropped gently down and moved over the buttocks. Nothing. His breath came harder. With his other hand, he reached into his trousers. As he caressed the boy's body he leaned into the blanket gasping. Then he buttoned himself up rapidly and checked to see if the boy was still sleeping. (21-2)

The boarding school for boys has created the masculine like environment in which the boys can talk and act freely. The activities like watching porn films, seeing the live love affairs between a man and a woman, talking about girls, love and sex in the male only environment have constructed the masculine behaviors and attitudes among the boys in the hostel. The masculine environment has generated a lot of concerns and curiosity for trying new things among the boys. Consequently, homosexual environment has been constructed in the school society. The boys involve in sexual intercourse with the junior boys which can also be understood as the male practice of growing masculinity in the boys. They choose one of the boys as their sex partner and attract them by giving presents and chocolates not to let the things out. In the lines cited above from the story the very character, Dhiral also develops the same characteristics and has anus sex with a junior boy in the dormitory. This reflects the growing nature of masculinity in the character, Dhiraj. Roger Lancaster defines:

Homosexuality means two men engaging in (what we would call) intercourse. That is, a penis in another man's mouth, or anus, or hand, or stationed at some other strategic location on the body; at any rate, two male bodies engaged in some activity defined by one or both as pleasurable in a carnal sense. (56)

Sexuality is also regarded as influencing characteristics of masculinity. Men's desire for sex can be fulfilled either by heterosexually or homosexually. Having sex with the girls or female bodies is known as heterosexuality whereas homosexuality means sexual intercourse with the male body. It can be performed by the insertion of penis in the mouth, anus, hand or it is stationed at other locations of the male body. Homosexuality is defined as pleasurable activity by one or both participant and it is practiced by the minority of male society. In the present story "Angel" the male

characters involve in such sexual activity. Hence, this story can be read from the perspective of masculinity.

The third story in the collection “No Smoke Without Fire” contains the story of Archana and Sachin, brother and sister, very close like friends. Especially in this story Thapa has tried to shape the story through the especial character of masculine in both male as well as female characters. The social construction of male allows men to drink and to smoke but women are not allowed. If female pretend to take smoke and have drinks, female masculinity can be seen on them. Here, the writer has tried to show the male behavior in Archana, who takes cigarette with her brother. Sachin takes cigarette, that is his natural gender role that he has to follow up but taking cigarette by a girl is the enforcement of masculinity in the story. The story “No Smoke Without Fire” illustrates the fact that both the characters have masculine traits. Thapa writes:

Sachin eyes her craftily. ‘Are you sure you want to smoke? You might go crazy again, like last time with my friends. That was embarrassing.’

‘Uff, Sachin-da, you know that was because of that jhoor rum you brought me before. And those stupid guys were not even your friend, were they, so what difference does it make to you?’

‘Friends ta they are not. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have any problems getting this, would I? la, let’s smoke it. This waiting, waiting has tired me out already!’ (25)

Having drinks and smoke with her brother, Archana’s behavior seems masculine in the above lines. Here, she is having smoke with her own brother, Sachin. It has also been reflected through their previous story that she had already been engaged in drinking and smoking with her brother’s friends which, a common girls can not dare

to do. So masculinity is seen in her strange and men like activities. Therefore the writer has tried to shape her character through the male gender role in the society, which the work itself is the symbol of masculinity in the story. Judith Halberstam, one of the leading scholars on masculinity studies, argues that masculinity can exist in both man and female bodies. In this issue she writes, “Female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing. But what we understand as heroic masculinity has been produced by and across both male and female bodies” (355). To make the concept of the female masculinity even clearer Halberstam further writes:

Sometimes female masculinity coincides with the excesses of male supremacy, and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social rebellion; often female masculinity is a sign of sexual alterity, but occasionally it makes heterosexual variation; sometimes female masculinity makes the place of pathology, and every now and then it represents the hateful alternative to what are considered the histrionics of conventional femininities. (360)

Archana’s behaviors of drinking and smoking with boys have occupied the same space as her brother, Sachin and his friends as well. Her behaviors are also collected and arranged in a systemic form to represent rebellious nature against the social norms and values. Archana’s behaviors are also read from the point of view of sexual otherness and they represent the hateful alternative to the emotional behavior of feminist nature. Hence, the lines by Halberstam quoted above justify that the story can be read from the view point of masculinity.

Further, when Archana and Sachin’s parents know that both of them smoke, their father scolds them. Sachin realizes and says that he himself has smoked,

Archana has not. It means to indicate that women are not allowed to have drink and smoke in the society. Female, having male characters are not allowed in the society.

To show how society saves men to have masculine role in Ravi Thapa further puts:

Archana shakes her head quickly and Sachin cuts in. ‘She didn’t smoke.’

His father glowers at him. ‘Hm! Who said you could smoke? How old are you, Seventeen? You idiot!’ But suddenly their mother protests:

‘Raja, come on, leave it now. He did something stupid and he was punished for it, can’t you see?’ . . . And backs her husband. ‘You should get some sleep. You have an early meeting tomorrow. Maybe if you didn’t smoke, your son would not want to try either.’ She gives him a hard look. (29)

Sachin, the main character of the story is found smoking with his sister. His father scolds him but his mother is resisting because Sachin’s father also smokes. Sachin is trying to show masculine attitude by smoking and his sister is also following the same which the society does not like. Smoking is taken as masculine attitude in Nepalese society. No action against Sachin by his parents can be taken as silent permission. But Archana’s masculine traits are blatantly ignored in the culture dominated by male masculinity. In this sense Halberstam further writes, “Female masculinity has been blatantly ignored both in the culture at large and within academic studies of masculinity” (356).

Thapa’s fourth story “Desire” in the collection starts with rough starting, which gives the glimpse of enforcement of manliness in male character, Subodh. His behavior seems rough but it is natural that boys get attracted towards girls. Actually, it is the narration of the very characters Shreya and Subodh, the college friends. The

opening of the story shows the behavior of the protagonist of the whole story. The following extract explains the situation:

He wondered what it would be like to run his hands through her hair, to reach in and touch her skin. He could easily do it; when Shreya leaned back the ends of her long black tresses brushed against the edge of his desk, and sometimes when he was sure one was looking, he casually stroked strand with his fingertips. A small satisfaction. So also the visual tracing of the lines of her bra through the light cotton of her kurta. Look, don't touch. But on the rare occasions she said anything to him- 'Chhya always reading books, this Subodh,' with practice roll of the eyes- he never knew what to say and just- smiled. (31)

It is natural fact that the boys always get attracted towards girls and vice versa. In this story Shreya and Subodh are flirting each other which are common in the teenagers. Subodh is touching Shreya and trying to take sexual satisfaction. It is biological traits of every people that they get attracted to opposite sex. As Subodh is reading books when he is with Shreya, she wants more flirting from her boyfriend. But at that very moment as well Subodh is intentionally trying to seek her favor. Here in these lines, Subodh feels satisfaction touching Shreyas's hair, sometimes he touches her skin and feels more comfort. Observing the inner part of the girl and taking fun is another main characteristic of Subodh, which in most of the boys is also seen. So it can be said that it is natural but the writer has intentionally started the story with these lines to enforce the masculine role in its characters. And the writer is successful to give the shape of masculine role to its characters. Jon Swain, a well known scholar on the issue of masculinities in education writes:

As boys get older, more are able to take the risks of crossing the divide, although many are still wary of being seen spending too much time with girls. Boys also begin to look to have physical relationships with girls although few boys actually have a girlfriend, and it is unusual for boys to want girlfriend as “friends.” (223)

Recently, there have been a growing number of studies considering the heterosexuality between boyfriend and girlfriend particularly at the upper end of the secondary school and the college level. The boys of the teenage group are able gain a significant level of status by having a girlfriend. Having a girlfriend is a common occurrence in boys of the teenage group. It creates an acceptable and assumptive status that emanates from the need to enforce dominant versions of heterosexual masculinity. As boys grow older they form the clear conception of the divide between male and female even though they spend much time with the girls. Boys begin to think of having physical relationship like kiss, body touch, embracement and sex. In spite of having a proper friend, they begin to grow sexual desire and have a girlfriend to satisfy it. Girlfriends are not regard as friends instead; they are regarded as a means of fulfilling physical relationship only. In the story Subodh desires for the same heterosexual relationship while being with his girlfriend, Shreya. For this reason too, the story can be read from the prespective of masculinity.

The entire story “Desire” is concerned with the desire of modern young generation to go abroad. It also indicates the attraction of young generation towards the foreign culture and freedom and weariness of the restriction of Nepalese traditional values, which is reflected in the following lines:

He imagined an America in which all the Kuiries danced to Hindi songs. ‘Even their college system is so liberal, you understand,’ Chitra

had observed the other day. 'Leeberal arts.' He said this with relish.

'They only have five hours a week. Machickne, we have five hours a day!' (34)

These lines illustrate the fact that Nepalese young generation wants to be liberal in everything. The vulgar words in the mouth of the characters can be taken as the enforcement of masculine role in the character. These words also indicate the fact that the writer has included these sorts of words to reflect the masculine power in his characters. By using loud voice and vulgar words a man wants to constrain his identity. In this sense one of the scholar, Scott Fabius Kiesling writes, "Each time he speaks, then the man must produce an utterance (and posture, gaze, etc.) that satisfies these constraints as far as possible. At the same time, he must make the utterance coherent within each current speech situation" (113-14).

Further in this story, we find a frustrating exploration of Nepal's rigid social structure; how a wealthy employee's son is attracted to a domestic servant. In this story Subodh is presented as an educated son of a wealthy employee with a reputable social status. As cited above in this issue, a masculine man always sees girls for fulfilling sexual desire; he gets attracted towards Kamala, a domestic servant. Subodh has drunk beers while returning home from college one evening and sees Kamala alone at home who has just freshen herself from a shower and rapped in a thin red cloth knotted at the bosom. Kamala walks in to Subodh and stops a few feet away feeling shy of him. To point out the scene what happens next Thapa writes, "Subodh found himself staring at her full in the body, this young woman he had never truly seen before. Her body was tightly outlined by the cloth; the curve of her hips and the swell of her breasts" (37-8). Subodh remembers his parents were away to dinner and

thinks of utilizing the opportunity with Kamala. These lines by Thapa further illustrate:

His desire rose to meet her and he clutched at her warm body, discovering the unimaginable soft yield of her breasts, with nipple as hard as he was. He stood up, the chair grating, across the floor, and pulled her to the table. Not knowing what he was doing- how could he? -he kissed her on the mouth, and aping the movies he had seen, impulsively thrust his tongue into her mouth. She closed her eyes and kissed him back, her arms on the small of his back, her body pressed against his. (40)

The very character Subodh's inner masculinity rises when he sees Kamala alone in his home. Subodh seems powerful and aggressive in his drinks whereas Kamala seems soft, weak, tender and so sexy in her light blue night dress. Subodh's phallus rises and it is his phallus which forces him to get attracted to Kamala. Phallus creates seemingly ineluctable bond between male sexuality and power. "This symbol of the phallus as power, grasped by boy and girl child a like, cannot be equated with the lived experience of male sexual domination" (Segal102). Subodh's natural masculinity is activated by the power of phallus and it encourages him to grab the opportunity with Kamala. He clutches her and feels that her body is also warm. He discovers the soft yields of her breasts with hard nipples, which are challenging his maleness and dominant power, act as the natural tonic to raise his phallus and drive the masculine role inside him. In these lines he is described as hard and sturdy by comparing with the hard nipples of the soft breasts. This also indicates the facts how masculinity is enforced in the story collection. He is unaware what he is doing but he

discovers the unimaginable activities within himself, which ultimately is the nature of masculine role. In this context Lyme Segal further adds:

It seems more plausible to assume that the phallus as symbol condenses the multiple significance of the whole configuration of male dominance, with its diverse social practices at once conferring power and authority on 'men,' and giving most actual men some real power over the lives of others- at the very least within domestic life. (104)

The author has very successfully and artistically enforced the very masculine characters in this story too. The young Subodh's natural masculinity rises up in this situation when he feels the soft yield of Kamala's breast. Furthermore, playing with the soft and secret body parts to make the women surrender for having sex with them and seducing women acts as an achievement for a 'real man'. Man regards a woman full of youthfulness as a challenge to his masculinity and his phallus rises to dominate her. Phallus is regarded as a symbol of male domination which grants power and authority on man over women. Phallus is also regarded as a symbol of masculine characteristics which is activated in Subodh by Kamala's young and attractive body. It is imposed upon her for the configuration of male dominance over woman.

The title story "Nothing to Declare" contains the subject matter related with the experience of a young boy Bikram, who has just left home land and shifted in new land that is England. Here, Raghav who is already in England is the best friend of Bikram. They talk about smoking ganja (marijuana), drinks, seducing girls, visiting discos, earning money, missing homeland, which are the frequent activities of these youngster. Thapa has also successfully presented the masculine behavior in this story. To observe the male behavior of these characters Thapa writes:

‘Well, they were just waiting a guy to pick them up. When one started dancing with this hapsi I just steered the other girl away, getting a little closer and then it was easy, I just got her in a corner and kissed her.’

‘And then?’

‘Then she took me in her room ni- she was a student at a university in Windsor- all night dey danadan, bro!’ He snapped the finger of his right hand and slammed the palm down onto his clenched left hand several times by way of explanation. (52)

This story is a good example to observe the enforcement of masculine attribute through its character. Gaurav, one of the male characters of this story relates his previous experience to Bikram in the bar. He says Bikram that he, along with his friends had gone to the same bar previously. He got a chance to get a university girl, took her to the corner, kissed her and then took her to her room and had sex all throughout the night (all night dey danadan). Winning girls, making love with them and have optimum sexual intercourse with them are the masculine traits of a man, which are very powerfully enforced in this story. In this context on the same issue Segal further writes:

The ubiquity of the discourses and imagery of ‘conquest/submission,’ ‘activity/ passivity,’ ‘masculinity/ femininity’ constructing heterosexual intercourse as the spectacular moment of male domination and female submission, is inescapable: ‘The man “mounts” and penetrates; the women spreads her legs and “submits”; and these postures seem to ratify again and again, the ancient authority of men over women.’ (103)

Male sexuality is considered as a conquering power over the female world. The new scientific study of sex regards male sexuality as an overpowering impulse which demands fulfillment with all conquering force. The power of male sexuality has been emphasized everywhere and every time. Today, popular magazines, means of advertisements, hard and soft copy pornography, are all flooded with the same conquering image of masculinity as an unquenchable sexual appetite. The phallic power of maleness has also been dramatically and metaphorically expressed in the western literary canon. The discourse of masculinity assumes heterosexual intercourse as a magnificent moment of male domination and female submission. Similarly, this relation of domination of male and submission of woman is an inescapable moment in heterosexual intercourse. While constructing a heterosexual relationship, man gets upon woman, enters his phallus into her. The woman on her part, spreads her legs apart, gives way to the phallus into her and accepts his domination. Such posture goes on and on until the man lays complete domination and the woman gets in everything. The man conquers, the woman submits; the man gets upon actively, the woman lies down passively; the man enforces masculinity, the woman assumes femininity. These are the ancient authority of man over woman. Having sex with the university girl the whole night Gaurav lays a complete domination over her and the girl submits everything. In this respect the story can be read from the perspective of masculinity.

Further in the same title story the male characters exhibit their masculine characteristics to overcome and lay domination over the young women in the disco bar for the fulfillment of their sexual desire. The boys try their best to attract the girl's attention towards them and get one for that night. These lines in the title story reflect the male activities of the characters. Thapa writes:

They made their way up to the girls, and Gaurav nodded to them and mouthed a hello. But they didn't even smile back. Unfazed, Gaurav started dancing next to the blonde with the big tits, so Bikram did the same with the Brunette, grinning awkwardly. The girls continued dancing as if the boys weren't there. Bikram tried to catch the brunette's eye, but she was looking at nothing at particular, and seemed bored, her body jerking mechanically to the beat. (56)

These lines by Thapa from the title story indicate how boys engage themselves to pass their time in the foreign countries. They visit the discos and bar, have drinks and smoke, try for the girls, have dance with them, and try to win their hearts to make love. Both Gaurav and Bikram get attracted to the blonde and brunette, try to get their attention but the girls do not pay any attention to them. These lines also indicate that the boys are performing their masculine power upon the girls by getting attracted to have sexual intercourse with them. Freedom of sexuality in the western society where young people can fulfill their desire is also indicated in these lines. Going abroad for study, earning money for their livelihood, visiting discos and bar for pleasure, drink and smoke, falling for girls, winning their hearts, have sex with them are the masculine traits which are presented vividly in the story. In this sense Segal further writes:

It is clear calling up images of male sexual performance serves to consolidate and confirm masculinity, and to exclude and belittle women. Sociologist like Gagnon and Simon, or therapist like Ethel Specter, convincingly argue that the need to reassert and confirm masculine gender identity lies behind the obsessive force propelling

men into sexual engagement, or at the least, into pornographic thoughts of sexual engagement. (105)

Sex has become the most crucial tool for men to get that coveted social masculine power. How and with whom they can or cannot form sexual bonds has been rigidly laid down. The boys in Europe look for the places where they can perform sexual intercourse so that they can strengthen and confirm in the society that they are masculine. They go to the discos, look for the girls, buy drinks for them, try to win their hearts by making love with them and having sex with them to confirm that they are also masculine in the society. Sometimes they get very good opportunity with the girls but on other times they are despaired by the girls. Whenever they are despaired, they feel that their masculinity is questioned and threatened. They are very deeply worried and feel shame before other male peer about their inability to perform their masculine power. "An important man always feels that his masculinity, and not his sexuality, is threatened" (Segal 105). Hence, the story can be analysed from the point of view masculinity.

The sixteen stories compiled in the collection are very passionate, meditative and at times dissatisfied. Masculine attitude plays a crucial role in the activities of the male characters, the central figures of the stories. Their constant need to prove their masculinity leads them to the activities they are involved in. 'Girls', 'money', 'success' and 'compulsion of being a bread winner act as the markers of masculinity and thus the acts of the characters are the outcome of their constant pressures on the male characters.

Chapter IV

Conclusion: Masculine attitude in Thapa's *Nothing to Declare*

The core finding of this thesis is to show how masculinity is enforced by the society to specific gender. According to biological determination of sex role, their physical and mental activities are shaped through social code and conduct set by the society. The primary text of this research *Nothing to Declare* is trying to show social attitude towards boys and girls. As this story collection centers round the experience of Nepalese middle class youths in and round the capital, they follow a loose chronological progression, starting with "Initiation" in which a young boy is deeply embarrassed by the rituals of an initiation ceremony to moving through the boarding school experience in "Angels", from college life in "Desire" to moving abroad and running in "Nothing to Declare" and exploring an arranged marriage in "Arranged Marriage". It is a series of characters in transition against the backdrop of the city and the country in transition. It is about the aspiration, their revelation the writer explains.

This also proves that there is masculine attitude in Thapa's *Nothing to Declare*. Almost all the stories of the text include male characters. Another important thing in the story is that the characters behavior is masculine and they involve in the same attitude of action in almost all the stories.

From the stories of everyday life, Thapa has focused the more serious issue in the story as well. In "Home for Dashain" in which a policeman returns home, is slaughtered by the rebels. Similarly the time of Maoist insurgency and civil war in Nepal is also shown in the stories but they are looked from the lenses of masculinity and are presented from the same manner.

The masculinity of contemporary middle-class seems to be constructed at a middle space between tradition and modernity, by the new modes of consumption.

The political instability prevalent in the country and the highlighting of foreign employment justifies the desires of modern middle class youths to go to foreign locations like the UK or US and settle down there. Economic and social stability are the traits of masculinity that the characters in Thapa's stories try to achieve. Thapa's collection begins with "Initiation" a story describing the Bratabandha ceremony of a middle class boy, Ashok. Traditionally the ceremony signifies rite of passage for Hindu males; after the ceremony the boy is supposed to become a man. Within the social imaginary of contemporary middle classes, however, what transforms a boy into a man is a passage to America or other centers of western modernity in the story "Nothing to Declare". Becoming successful is another compulsion for the males. Nepalese youths, like the protagonist of "Nothing to Declare" find meaning in going abroad and working in foreign land away from the homeland. The reason for youths leaving the homeland gets clarified in story like "Home for Dashain"

At the same time other stories that are included in the collection also try to enforce the masculine role for the male character. It is society that is creating the gap between male and female. Rabi Thapa is also trying to give shape to all the characters in the stories though there are some female characters who are trying to subvert the masculine character by smoking cigarette. But they are being questioned by other male characters. Females get the secondary or supporting roles for the construction of masculinity with sexual arousal with their body parts in the central male characters. This again highlights the priority of masculine nature. Females act as the symbols to boost about the male achievements. Providing secure feeling to the females too ensures the male traits of male characters in the stories.

The masculinity of the modern-day middle class youth seems to be highlighted throughout the collection by means of male characters and their dominant roles they

play to fulfill their necessities to be a man. The male characters highlight the necessity of being male in front of the judgmental eyes of the modern Nepalese masculine criteria. Thapa is successful in showing the ways society and masculine expectations compel individuals to compulsorily become courageous, virile and successful. Male's compulsion of being a 'Sturdy Oak', 'a Big Wheel', 'Give 'em Hell' and 'No Sissy Stuff' get highlighted in the acts of males in the stories. The concept of masculinity gets strengthened in the acts, language and attitude of Rabi Thapa's *Nothing to Declare*.

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