

**PORTRAYING THE QUEER IN SELECTED TEXTS OF SHYAM
SELVADURAI**

Elizabeth Lalchhandami

Supervisor

Prof. Margaret L. Pachuau

Submitted

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of the Degree of Master of
Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**

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DECLARATION

Mizoram University

October, 2018.

I, Elizabeth Lalchhandami, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

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MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that “Portraying the Queer in Selected Texts of Shyam Selvadurai” written by Elizabeth Lalchhandami has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigations. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other university for any research degree.

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(ELIZABETH LALCHHANDAMI)

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Chapter I

Introduction: Situating Shyam Selvadurai in the Queer Paradigm

Shyam Selvadurai was born on 12 February 1965, in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He spent his entire childhood in Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada with his family when he turned nineteen. Selvadurai and his family left Sri Lanka after the 1983 riots. They arrived in Toronto as immigrants in the year 1984. In 1989, he received Bachelor of Fine Arts, Honours, in Theatre at York University, Toronto, Canada. In the year 2010, he studied Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at University of British Columbia, Vancouver. At present, he lives in Toronto with his partner Andrew Champion. He is of mixed heritage, born of a Tamil mother and a Sinhalese father. As written in an article about him, “Selvadurai’s skill lies in his ability to portray a world threatened by various types of intolerance yet still possessed of beauty, humour and humanity” (Chafe). Sexuality, tension between the Tamils and Sinhalese, discrimination of race, and an unrelenting political violence in Sri Lanka are the major themes that were taken up in all his writings. Selvadurai has achieved freedom in his writings in Canada, which he might not have been able to attain had he lived in Sri Lanka where homosexuality is illegal. Even after he migrated to Canada, the settings of his novels were mostly located in Sri Lanka.

The theme of gay liberation in his writings was drawn principally from the experiences he had had in Canada. He says, “Homosexuality is illegal in Sri Lanka and the very real threat of physical violence and intimidation might have stopped me from exploring this theme had I lived there (being not of a particularly brave disposition)” (Selvadurai “Story” 2). By delving intensely into the selected texts of Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013), this dissertation attempts to explore the existence of queer within the institutions as well as how the concept of queer is entirely placed under the power paradigm. These selected novels will situate itself on the various aspects of sexuality, in particular, that of the queer. Apart from these three novels, Selvadurai also wrote a novel named *Swimming in the*

Monsoon Sea (2005). This particular novel also has Sri Lanka as its setting like most of his other novels. This novel was set during the season of monsoons in 1980 and it was about a fourteen-year-old boy Amrith. Amrith's cousin and uncle, whom Amrith never knew earlier in his life, arrived from Canada. Amrith started to fall in love with his Canadian cousin and ended up discovering the truth about his true self.

Selvadurai also serves as a Project Director in 'Write to Reconcile.' 'Write to Reconcile' is a creative writing project in English and it is a project undertaken by 'The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka.' It was inaugurated by Selvadurai in the year 2012. 'Write to Reconcile' is a project that aims to bring together all the emerging Sri Lankan or dual citizens writers as well as interested teachers. This is done to pave the way for them to participate in creative writing principally on issues of conflicts, anguish, and reconciliation. The participants' work *Write to Reconcile: An Anthology* was launched in the year 2013.

Selvadurai also edited a collection of short stories, *Story-Wallah!* (2004), and this collection of short stories include the works of many other prominent writers. This particular edited text of Selvadurai would help to examine aspects related to how Selvadurai as a writer protested against the demand of fixed identity and his outcome for the construction of the self in his novels.

Selvadurai writes:

For, in terms of being a writer, my writing creativity comes not from "Sri Lankan" or "Canadian" but precisely from the space between, that marvellous open space represented by the hyphen, in which the two parts of my identity jostle and rub up against each other like tectonic plates, pushing upwards the eruption that is my work (Selvadurai "Story" 1).

Selvadurai grew up in a country where there was no freedom concerning homosexuality, where there was an unrelenting political violence and discrimination of race between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. This eventually forced Selvadurai and his family to later migrate to Canada and it also influenced him to bring out his writings in order to protest against the conflicts. The focus on gay identity has had a huge impact in all his novels. Though Selvadurai had already settled in Canada when he started writing, the impact of his experiences in Sri Lanka has never come to an end. The social contexts in which these novels were written have a lot to do with the environment that Selvadurai himself faces in life. Particularly with his first novel *Funny Boy*, the novel's narratives, mainly "the family home and the school" portrayed in the text highlights "how these everyday geographies regulate and normalise carnal desire in a society which still operates anti-homosexual legislation" (Jazeel 231). In his interview with *Forbes India* on a topic "An Exploration of Greys with Author Shyam Selvadurai," he said that it was by his seeing of "other people as also complicated human beings" that constantly touches the reality of life in all his writings. Selvadurai mentioned that he did not practically experience what was inside of him and anything of his being gay while growing up. By bringing out his first novel *Funny Boy*, he says, "I wanted to break that silence with *Funny Boy*. I wanted some young queer person to read the book and feel that he or she is not alone in the world" (Nair).

There are many parallels that are to be found in Selvadurai with his fictions. Being grown up in a place where there was an unending conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, being a gay and of mixed heritage, he shared some similar traits with his characters but did not share many of the problems that the characters passed through in his novels.

In his interview with Minoli Salgado on a topic “Autobiographies of Time and Place,” Selvadurai says,

I think of my contemporary novels as autobiographies of time and place, of period detail and feeling, but they are not autobiographies of plot and character. So the basement bedroom where Shivan lives in Scarborough is an exact replica of the bedroom I had in Scarborough, down to the pock-marked, cigarette-stubbed chairs, but I am not Shivan (Salgado 51).

Drawing his works as the production of “autobiographies of time and place,” Selvadurai tends to build his realist impulse in order to prove to the world as to how the reality of time and place could be the very formation of a fiction. The art of merging the factual world with the fictional world is what persistently drives him in his writing. His being a writer comes from the “space between” where he could view both the worlds. The “double-visioness” or “biculturalism” is what led Selvadurai to achieve his creativity. The “hyphen” that represents the “space between” is what unremittingly drives him to see both the worlds of Sri Lanka and Canada, which thus led him to write about the novels that he considered as “Canadian novels set exclusively in Sri Lanka” (2). While talking about his personal issues, Selvadurai also mentioned that his being gay constrained him to accomplish the identity of being a Sri Lankan since it was very clear to him that “the pure sense of being Sri Lankan was based on rigid heterosexual and gender roles” (Selvadurai “Story” 4).

Selvadurai discovered that everything in the natural world has had its division according to the law set exclusively by the institution. In the novel *Funny Boy*, the readers were introduced to a detailed construction of the grandparents’ home in which the territory was divided into two.

This division was shown visibly by the division of the concept of a 'boys' world' and 'girls' world' in which there was also a distinction between the 'boys' game' and the 'girls' game'. The protagonist of the novel Arjie, a seven year old boy desires to dress up in a sari in order to play the game "bride-bride" with his girl cousins instead of playing cricket with the boys because this was the flash when he achieved his "ultimate moment of joy" (4). This novel shows the struggle of a young boy against the domineering families and the institution of the society. Through this novel, Selvadurai depicts how futile the law set by the institution is. This is shown perceptibly when Arjie's mother has no definite answer as to why his son could no longer join the 'girls' group.' All the reasons that she could give to her son for this matter was, "Because the sky is so high and pigs can't fly . . ." (Selvadurai "Funny" 19). There is no explicit reason why Arjie could not play within the 'girls' world' as much as there is no precise reason why this demarcation has been created between the two worlds. A wide gender gap and difference in this novel highlights how society has been moulded to function in a particular manner. Similarly in all his writings, Selvadurai emphasises upon his own desire to go beyond the rules set by the institution. This is straightforwardly made visible by his characters that have the yearning to go beyond the rules of the institution. This especially with Arjie was the true situation of not belonging to any of the worlds that were set within the society.

As Selvadurai writes,

I glanced at the sari lying on the rock where I had thrown it and I knew that I would never enter the girls' world again. . . . The future spend-the-days were no longer to be enjoyed, no longer to be looked forward to. And then there would be the loneliness. I would be caught between the boys' and the girls' worlds, not belonging or wanted in either (Selvadurai "Funny" 39).

Selvadurai's characters disclose the state of not being able to belong to the world firmly set within the society as well as the feeling of loneliness that one has to undergo in not being able to fit within the order of the institutions. He constantly protests against the institution that rule with power to segregate a person like him. According to him, the act of disapproval is what one should protest and that the right action to take for this matter is to come out from it. He says,

I think people struggle to make the decision about whether to come out to their families or not. But, whether you do or not, you should come out and live your life. You have only one life, and it sometimes goes faster than you think. . . . Survival is not dependent on your conformity (Bailey).

Selvadurai's works reveal that the category 'homosexual' has an unbounded space of freedom as much as the category 'heterosexual' has had and it has paved the possibility to attain a sense of egalitarianism for these created worlds. From this issue, he challenges the fixity that is deemed to be placed between the two worlds and tries to break the gender demarcation placed between the 'boys' world' and the 'girls' world.' Therefore, this study attempts to explore how the selected novels of Selvadurai emphasize upon the anguish faced by people who were broadly placed under the queer ambit and how culture and tradition are the predominant causes of these problems. As Selvadurai himself has said regarding his first novel *Funny Boy*, "It's not a memoir or strictly auto-biographical, but it certainly has elements of my life" (Yelaja).

Politics on gender or sexuality are only a vague notion as one could never really place a separation between male identity and female identity in order to distinguish homosexual and heterosexual. "Sexual orientation label" does not really lead one to distinguish the real sexual life of the other. Morland and Willox have denoted, "In fact, a sexual orientation label tells you

nothing about her or his sex life, for God's sake. There are lots of 'heterosexual' men who have plenty of anonymous sex with other men" (Morland and Willox 25). This depicts how the marking of queer theory shifted outside the continuum of sexual and gender demarcation in which a given identity in an individual is fluid and could never be fixed for all times. There is always an involvement of the "multiple processes of identification *with*" as well as "identification *as against*" (Sedgwick "Epistemology" 61). This is what traces the condition of Selvadurai himself and his characters in the novels while dealing with aspects of their identity. The word 'funny' no longer implies its formal meaning when Arjie heard it from his father after he was being caught playing within the 'girls' world.' Thus, Arjie says, "The word "funny" as I understood it meant either humorous or strange, as in the expression, "that's funny." Neither of these fitted the sense in which my father had used the word, for there had been a hint of disgust in his tone" (Selvadurai "Funny" 17). After he discovered the conflicts between the two worlds, Arjie has to locate himself within the 'boys' world' and could not be a part of both the worlds as this could be regarded as an incongruity of social constructions that had been maintained forcefully within the society.

Homosexual and heterosexual are two different terms that complete one another in which both have a singular connotation. They are never treated equally and are not equivalent halves. Homosexuality is regarded as second-rate when put adjacent to heterosexuality. As Foucault stated, "We, on the other hand, are in a society of "sex," or rather a society "with a sexuality": the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species . . ." (Foucault "History" 147). The idea of sexuality from the past has its subject connected with the idea of morality. There is an unending query on the issue of sexuality as its exploration depends on the western notion of 'sin' and 'virtue', 'good' and 'evil',

and even 'holy' and 'unholy'. These distinctions were made for the expansion and promotion of a heteronormative world. Earlier, both heterosexual and homosexual were explained and portrayed as a similar category having a parallel definition. At first, even heterosexuality was not defined as something good and was neither connected to what could be deemed as 'normal' as it has been regarded in the present generation. Instead, the word was linked with "perversion." In "The Invention of Heterosexuality: *The Debut of the Heterosexual*," Jonathan Ned Katz writes,

Yet, from the standpoint of those who lived, loved, and lusted in the past, those same acts and emotions may not have referred in any essential way to the same combination of sex and gender difference and eroticism that we call heterosexuality. Ways of ordering the sexes, genders, and sexualities have varied radically. . . . The word *heterosexual*, I propose, itself signifies one timebound historical form – one historically specific way of organizing the sexes and their pleasures (Katz 24).

The law functions to extend a solid frame, to maintain "rigid boundaries of sexual orientation" (Morland and Willox 23) in which homosexuality is regarded as 'negative' sexual behaviour while heterosexuality is considered as 'positive' behaviour. According to Diana Fuss, the "negative interiorization" of homosexuality does not only involve revealing the "homosexual's abjected insides," but the concept of turning homosexual itself as the abject, "as the contaminated and expurgated insides of the heterosexual subject" (Fuss "Introduction" 3). This study therefore attempts to analyse homosexuality as an aspect that functions not only as an element for the survival of heterosexuality, but also as a 'negative' component within the structure of binary opposition as reflected in the work of Selvadurai.

Selvadurai's works reveal the continuance of aspects that are related to queer in which queer theory has had its inception from the early 1990s. The notion of queer comes under the postmodern convention. The whole question of queer arises due to the conventional concept. The term homosexual and heterosexual, queer or straight, are all defined in order to intersect the binary construction. One is regarded queer because one is labelled according to the sex act that is firmly based on sexual identity while there is no elucidation for this issue till present. It is wholly ambiguous in which definition one always requires definition two and vice versa. William B. Turner writes in his book *A Genealogy of Queer Theory*(2000),

“Queer” indicates a failure to fit not only categories of sexual identity but also categories of gender identity. The conditions of possibility for queer theory involve not only resistance to prevailing definitions of sexual identity but – equally and antecedently – resistance to prevailing definitions of gender identity as well (Turner “Introduction” 11).

Studies on identity have focused principally on the dichotomous, in order to separate as well as categorise individuals. These are altogether fluid and have nothing to do with the reality of sexual activity. The need to fit within these identities relates to the whole concept of power where one is forced to take one's own dissimilarity as female or male, homosexual or heterosexual, queer or straight that are to be accepted accordingly. Sex has been identified with gender demarcation in order to file what is 'normal' or 'abnormal' sex including its 'normal' or 'abnormal' sex act throughout history. The very idea of tagging someone as 'queer' relates to the whole concept of incrimination. The charge of an individual as 'homosexual' already led one to be completely victimized. Thus, queer theory seeks towards not only the labelling of sexual and gender identity, but the judgement behind this categorisation that is based solely on sexuality.

Turner writes,

The goal of queer theory is to investigate the historical circumstances by which “sexuality” – especially the charge of “homosexuality” – can automatically render subjects the somewhat pitiable victims of a determinism that “heterosexual” subjects supposedly remain free of (Turner 38).

From this statement, it is apparent that queer theory is not only about the representation of homosexuality. It also portrays the contestations of categories made within the ambit of gender as well as sexuality. Being regarded to be outside gender identity stratification, queer was then considered to be related to the lifestyles that had been shared by a particular group of people. “But simultaneously, we recall, ‘queer’ began as a strategy that linked disparate groups with exceedingly different lives and sexual practices” (Morland and Willox 3). Queer theory came into existence in order to uplift groups of people who were deemed to be idiosyncratic. Therefore, the focal intention of queer theory is to break the wide distinction that was there from the past. In order to acquire a deeper understanding of this issue, a working conference was held at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in February 1990 on theorising gay and lesbian sexualities. Sexuality and its categorisation became such an important facet that has been persistently put into question. The intense investigation of sexual categorisations on the studies of queer theory brought out how these categorisations have become a quandary of human life.

In the essay, “De Lauretis Teresa Queer Theory Lesbian and Gay Sexualities Introduction,” Teresa stated,

In a sense, the term “Queer Theory” was arrived at in the effort to avoid all of these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to both transgress and transcend them - or at the very least problematize them (Teresa “Introduction” v).

Since the problem lies not only with the existence of sexuality itself, the study attempts to focus upon how the categorisations of sexuality exist with the constitution of the humans mechanically. Being one of the queer writers in the present generation, Selvadurai attains an ingenious capability to portray the contestations of the categorisations of sexuality that is ubiquitous within the political, social, religion, and other human institutions. By tracing the history of Sri Lanka, Selvadurai has an inventive style to blend history with the sensibility of the modern world. This is revealed patently especially in his novel *Cinnamon Gardens*. As two intertwined stories are told in this novel, the novel persistently shifts from one story to the other. Daniel Rietz wrote in *The New York Times*, published in July 25, 1999:

Both stories play themselves out in the politically heady days before caste-conscious Ceylon became Sri Lanka, when the homosexuality of a man of polite society was considered a "regrettably irreversible" disposition, and a woman who showed a sensual spirit and even a hint of freewheelingness (particularly on a bicycle) was considered "fast" (Rietz).

The concept of considering homosexuality as a “regrettably irreversible disposition” was already resolutely fixed within the human institution. From the protagonist of this novel,

Selvadurai draws the concept of homosexuality that has been constituted from the past. The desire or passion was disregarded exclusively within the society, and the people were blinded to see the other side of homosexuality. This is also the reason why Balendran who never really got over with Richard had no desire to go back to his past life in order to start a relationship with Richard again. For a person like Balendran, “the possibility of bad sex is aversive enough” that his life has been “strongly marked by its avoidance . . .” (Sedgwick “Epistemology” 25). The cataloguing of some sex acts as “bad sex” is firmly fixed not only with the people who are deemed to be heterosexual, but also with those who are deemed to be homosexual. The story of Balendran in this novel also draws parallel line with Selvadurai himself. Selvadurai also mentioned earlier that he not being a “particularly brave disposition” might not be able to explore this theme of homosexuality because of the violence and threat imposed by the law if he had lived in Sri Lanka (Selvadurai “Story” 21).

Homosexuality is still illegal in Sri Lanka till the present time of study. According to Section 365 and 365A of the current Penal Code in Sri Lanka, homosexuality is not legitimised and one who acts against this law is bound to be punished. This is the conclusion that has been made for the violence and threat of homosexuality in Sri Lanka. Under the section “Of Unnatural Offences and Grave Sexual Abuse,” written in *Penal Code: An Ordinance to Provide a General Penal Code for Ceylon* (1885), Section 365 says, “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment. . . .” Section 365A also says, “. . . any act of gross indecency with another person, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall be punished with imprisonment. . . .” What Selvadurai so vehemently seemed to protest against these sections is the aspect of homosexuality being regarded as “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” as well as “any act of gross

indecenty.” Selvadurai’s concerns in his first novel *Funny Boy* echo queer theory, particularly in terms of an individual sexual discovery. After sharing his first kiss with Shehan, Arjie discovered something natural that both of them had. He says, “I now knew that the kiss was somehow connected to what we had in common, and Shehan had known this all along” (Selvadurai “Funny” 256). This novel richly underlines the natural desire that a boy had had in him even before realising the prospect of life that was based exclusively with the law set by the human institutions. The law divides what is of the nature and what is not of the nature while there is no genuine evidence that homosexuality is against “the order of nature.” Homosexuality also happens in animals. As written in *ScienceDaily*, June 17, 2009, “Same-sex behavior is a nearly universal phenomenon in the animal kingdom, common across species, from worms to frogs to birds, concludes a new review of existing research.”

The laws that were taken up in order to criminalise homosexual conducts were principally rooted in British colonialism. It was predominantly the British who strongly imposed such laws to its colonized countries. The countries that had had an experience of the British colonial rule are mostly unable to decriminalise the laws set against the conduct of homosexual till today. This is also the case with Sri Lanka. An article entitled “British Colonialism and the Criminalization of Homosexuality” denotes, “The claim is that not only did the British bring such laws to their colonies, but also they ‘poisoned’ the prospects for liberalization and the repeal of those laws” (Han and Mahoney 269). Bringing out his novel *Cinnamon Gardens*, Selvadurai shows how British colonial rule was extremely responsible for post-colonial building on gender and sexuality. He highlights how the world has been moulded by power and authority of the capable ones. The story setting reveals the ruthless powerful upper class of Colombo’s wealthy suburbs from a particular people like Balendran’s father, Mudaliyar Navaratnam.

Mudaliyar was a figure of such powerful man in Cinnamon Gardens and his “birthday was one of the grandest, most looked forward to social occasions of Cinnamon Gardens” (24). He joined the British Government earlier in his life by helping them in carrying out the colonial policy. This made Mudaliyar Navaratnam achieve a great advantage in dealing with his son’s relationship with Richard. As Richard says, ““Our lives are so fragile. One word to the law can shatter our lives into a thousand pieces. The old man saw his advantage and he broke me down”” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 141). Deborah Hunn also stated, “As the Sri Lankan critic Prakrti has noted, Selvadurai's particular gift is to understand how such factors as ethnic tensions and the legacy of British colonial rule are interweaved with dominant ideologies of sexuality and gender” (Hunn 1). Colonialism had taught people about sexual orientations.

In *The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction* (1990), Foucault discusses on the “repressive hypothesis.” Being powerfully dominated by the “Victorian regime,” it was difficult for one to move out of the control. Though there was a kind of liberation and freedom by the seventeenth century, it did not sustain long. Foucault writes, “But twilight soon fell upon this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home” (3). From this moment frontwards, sex was considered to be a pure taboo and it has to be repressed. Sexuality has its attachment with transgression and was made to be concealed from the outside world. The act of coming out from this repression is regarded to be a kind of act that could upset the “established law” (Foucault “History” 6). The discussion on the subject of sexuality has come out with a new discovery that is related to languages and institutions. “By 1800 a new technical apparatus, consisting of secular and scientific institutions and languages, began to orchestrate the discussion of sexuality” (Rediker 638). The expansion of languages and institutions increases the repression of sexuality

as well as the invention of new languages on sexuality. There has always been a standard set to be followed through the dynamic implementation of languages and institutions. Religion as an institution has played a huge role in demoralizing homosexuality. This includes other religions and not merely the Christian religion. In an article entitled, “Why does Gay Sex Scare Modern Muslims? It didn’t in the Golden Age” published on the *Daily Beast* in April 13, 2016, it is written,

It is true that many early Muslim scholars condemned homosexuality, and cited scripture to justify their position. But the themes of love and sexuality have been debated and discussed by Muslim theologians and artists for centuries. The word “homosexuality” is not even used in the Quran. In fact, it did not exist in the Arabic language. The modern Muslim conclusion that homosexuality is “unnatural” is therefore not based on anything in scripture (Nawaz).

The law debates upon itself. Illegalization of homosexuality in Sri Lanka with its entailed regulations written in Section 365 and 365A of the current Penal Code discriminate what is deemed to be ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ sexual intercourse. Though this section stands to intimidate people practicing ‘unnatural’ sexual intercourse, there are other sections that accords the people a sense of right in order to attain their freedom. The interference of the state by prohibiting sexual acts that are practiced by every individual, irrespective of their lifestyles and instinctive desires confirms the involvement of the state with private relationships. This coherently is the violation of the law under Article 14 (1) (c) and (e) in which individuals are free to associate with one another and are also free to practice their own beliefs. In *The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka* (2015) published by the Parliament Secretariat, it is written, “(c) the freedom of association; (e) the freedom, either by himself or in

association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching.” Since Article 14 (1) (c) was meant for the freedom of association to every individual, the petition in order to repeal Section 365A of the Penal Code was submitted to the Government of Sri Lanka after reaching its goal of 2500 signatures. The appeal was posted in January 20, 2017 under the title “Repeal Colonial Era Laws that Entrench Discrimination and Perpetuate Violence.”

Selvadurai was known to be the first Sri Lankan writer who came out to address the issues of LGBT rights in Sri Lanka. Widely known as the most talented and challenging contemporary writer Selvadurai’s novels are often about the self discovery that has serious reconsiderations of what it means to be gay, what it means to be viewed differently from the mainstream and what it means to be judged based on gender and sexual identity exclusively. In all three novels of Selvadurai selected for the study, the queer protagonists were bound closely with their families and were not ready to step out from the bond that they have had with their families. This led the protagonists to endure anxieties as they cannot discard their relationships with their families entirely. It is not viable for these people to think and act outside the family since their lives were completely defined by their families.

The family strictly set the norms and rules that are to be followed. Even in the case of Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens*, he broke off from the relationship that he shared with Richard because he was too frightened to go against his father who rules over the entire family. He still has a desire for Richard even after he married to Sonia and “wondered if Richard was in fact the only person who really knew him, truly understood his nature, for he was hidden to the people around whom he’d woven the fabric of his life” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 167, 168). Balendran has to stay inside the closet because he was not brave enough to come out. It was altogether the

feature of the family life that did not authorize him to step out with what and who he was. In an article “The Queer Outsider: Family and Sexuality in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*,” Kaustav Bakshi writes,

To date, in South Asia, the family is ‘the only form of social security and old-age insurance available to most people’ (Vanita and Kidwai 226). While the family’s function as an emotional asylum is irrefutable, it is equally indubitable that its overwhelming pre-eminence lies in the fact that its primary function is procreation and legitimate transmission and inheritance of wealth. In this sense, the family remains largely indispensable even to homosexually inclined people, and it is difficult to think beyond the family (Bakshi, sec. I).

Like most of immigrant writers, Selvadurai attained his writing creativity from the process of being an immigrant. The mind prolongs to incline the place that had been left. As written in the magazine *Quill & Quire*, published in April 1988, Selvadurai himself says, “‘Like a lot of immigrant writers I find that a homeward pull inhabits my creative mind, that it is the capturing of the world I left behind that haunts my imagination ’” (Smith). Selvadurai concerns in his second novel *Cinnamon Gardens* echo the early world of Sri Lanka as the novel is set in the 1920s. He captured the world that he never really knew and composed the narrative of the world that he had never really been to it before. Selvadurai went back to Sri Lanka and spent more time in the archives in Colombo around the time of the publication of his first novel *Funny Boy*. It was from this visit that he became deeply fascinated with the history of Sri Lanka, particularly with the period of the late ’20s. With this novel, Selvadurai attacked the upper-middle class Sri Lankan and it was them that he addressed in his novel. While working on the second draft of *Cinnamon Gardens*, Selvadurai and his partner Andrew went to live in Colombo

and it was because of this stay in Sri Lanka that Selvadurai came to understand what it meant to actually live in Sri Lanka. He experienced what it meant to be treated as gay within the Sri Lankan community. He experienced the courage that somebody like his protagonist Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* had to pass through in order to live there. He also realised that it was not easy to understand how much courage one had to imbibe in order to come out with one's own true desire and passion. He says,

“I think *Cinnamon Gardens* is about personal courage and liberation. But I couldn't really understand that courage until I was in Sri Lanka with my partner, trying to live as a gay couple in a society like that. The enormous cost, the enormous energy, the day-to-day fear, the problems – and the joys. I think I may have intellectualized all that before, but to live it... I think that's what made my characters come alive” (Smith).

Like all his other novels, Selvadurai's novel *The Hungry Ghosts* also conveys what it means to be gay in Sri Lanka. After discovering his true passion and desire, the protagonist Shivan Rassiah instantly realized his “life would be miserable” (56). This was the moment when the thought of sexual liberty started to take place in the mind of Shivan. He even raised a question of “sexual freedom” by asking himself, “If America offered such opportunity for sex with women, did it not offer similar opportunity for people like me?” (56, 57). The relationship between Shivan and Mili required a safeguard in a country like Sri Lanka. As like Selvadurai and his partner experienced after living in Sri Lanka as a gay couple, the relationship between Shivan and Mili is of enormous cost with the day-to-day fear and problems. The law is always there to examine. This was made clear when Sriyani said to Shivan, “You know there is still a law here, nah? Ten years in jail, not just for getting caught in the act, but for actually being so inclined” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 215).

The law has always been there to examine and if one is found being found too inclined to what could be counted as against “the order of nature,” one is easily bound to be punished. One does not simply live in a society; one is also bound to live under the law of the society. The law has its prohibition of sex according to its power while there is no precise reason for this act of prohibition. As Foucault states, “To deal with sex, power employs nothing more than a law of prohibition” (Foucault “History” 84). Since it is the power that rules with its law of prohibition, the protagonists in Selvadurai’s novels including Selvadurai himself have to break all these rules. As stated in *Queer Theory* (2005), “Like Robert Frost’s famous definition of free verse as ‘playing tennis with the net down’, what used to be called ‘free love’ (extramarital, nonmonogamous, ambisexual) needs rules to break” (Morland and Willox 64).

Selvadurai’s heroes constantly explored their true selves. All his novels so far are thus a significant example of gay fiction. From his first novel itself, the most apparent example of his attempt at deconstructing binary oppositions could be seen. Selvadurai attempts to break not just the opposition of the ‘boys’ world’ and the ‘girls’ world,’ or that of the homosexual and the heterosexual, but also the opposition of reality and fiction within the novel itself. The harsh reality that Arjie encountered in life has constantly shifted from the world of reality to the world of fiction in *Funny Boy*. Arjie was unable to connect himself with the death of Daryl Uncle. He instead made the connection of the reality of Daryl Uncle’s death with his life through the book. He says, “Finally, I fell asleep and dreamt of *Little women*. This time I was Jo and I was nursing Amma, who was Beth. Then Beth died and I awoke to find myself crying as, for the first time, the understanding that Daryl Uncle was dead came to me” (Selvadurai “Funny” 138, 139). The world of fiction denotes the world of reality in the life of Arjie. The two are connected and could never be separated.

The macro-power of the state presents how the individual is powerless in front of the powerful state. Within a powerful state, the existence of a powerless individual is visibly portrayed. Bringing out his novel *Funny Boy*, Selvadurai presented a journal describing the riots that occurred in 1983 Sri Lanka. By tracing the experiences of the oppressed groups within a powerful patriarchal society, he describes how opposition hindered the freedom of individual liberty unanimously. In “Tamil and Queer: Political and Sexual Marginalization in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*,” Anna Branach-Kallas writes,

While the novel highlights the individual’s vulnerability in a totalitarian regime, it also illustrates ambivalent strategies of resistance against the norm as imposed by the discourses of family and homosexuality. By presenting various forms of oppression and opposition to it, Selvadurai draws our attention to the similar position of women and gay men in the patriarchal society (Kallas 47).

Being a gay and an immigrant in Canada, Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts* has to conform himself with an identity that has been set by the institution. His meeting with Ronald and his affirmation of his being gay led him to experience the feeling of weirdness for he had to prove himself with the outside world in order to seek confirmation from it. According to Ronald, this was the stage of “coming out” (98). The relationship that he shared with Ronald continued to frighten Shivan while this relationship was absolutely normal for Ronald. Ronald thus says, “It’s okay to be frightened, to even be repulsed by what you have done. But you need to recognize that they are your feelings and not transfer them to me” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 105).

Thus, the idea of “coming out” and the fear that Shivan encountered during the process of coming out draws a parallel line with the writing of Shane Phelan stated in *Queer Theory*,

“Shane Phelan, writing in the *Signs* special issue on lesbianism, joins others in critiquing the prominence of the ‘coming out’ process for lesbian identity, asserting that the language of ‘coming out’ implies ‘a process of discovery or admission rather than one of construction or choice’ (1993:773) . . .” (Morland and Willox 20).

Since gender has already been constructed firmly with different set of terms, it has always been these terms that serves as the representation. Language plays a fundamental role in order for these representations to stand out within the political and cultural framework. In order for an individual to get represented within the constructed institution, there is a need to qualify at the outset that would be extended accordingly. The individual is no longer just an individual, but a subject which is the production of the system. No system operates without power and it is this system of power that leads to the production of the subjects. Power regulates its subjects by representing them with identities that again paves way for the subject to render to its term accordingly. The term “queer” stand out to denote individual identity as well as common identity. So long as identity is constantly fixed with gender, it has always been identity based on gender that stands out to represent. The representation of the subject depends on the system of identity based upon gender which in fact is altogether the production of political, social, religion and cultural construction. The term ‘queer’ has become a term of collective contestation, troublesome term that divides and creates problem as well as anxiety to those who are subjected to it.

Judith Butler stated,

The term “queer” emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity. The term “queer” has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation. “Queer” derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult (Butler “Critically” 18).

Immensely influenced by how gender has always been performed within the heteronormative system of cultural and political world, Selvadurai attempts to highlight this constructed system and its uncertainty. In *Funny Boy*, Tanuja who was the cousin of Arjie tried persuading the girls to accept the wide gap that has been set between the ‘girls’ world’ and the ‘boys’ world.’ She opposes a male being a bride in the game and even resists Arjie’s playing within the ‘girls’ world.’ She says, ““A bride is a girl, not a boy”. . . . “A boy cannot be the bride”” (Selvadurai “Funny”11). The game “bride-bride” that Arjie was obsessed with shows his desire and creative ability to dress better than all the other girls, within the ‘girls’ world.’ This clearly highlights the truthfulness of how gender is nothing but a game played by all the performers. As stated in *Queer Theory*,

. . . it was all a game anyway, all about words and images, all about mimicry and imitation, all a cacophony of signs leading back to nowhere. To have a politics around gender was silly, they were told, because gender was just a performance anyway, a costume one put on and, in drag performance, wore backward. And everyone knew boys were better at dressing up (Morland and Willox 13).

Selvadurai's novels always depict the relationship between the inner world and the outer world, the personal and the politics in order to illustrate how they reflect upon one another. The intertwining of these two worlds enabled him to disclose the notion of heterosexism, racism, violence, hatred and conflicts within a society. By creating an environment where the characters in his novels had undergone a process of self-transformation, Selvadurai generated aspects on how identity politics were equated with the politics of people's lifestyle. Selvadurai did not openly reveal neither did he mention about homosexuality being forbidden in Sri Lanka with its entailed regulations written in Section 365 and 365A of the current Penal Code. Rather, he illustrated the reasons behind this policy and the violence behind the political and cultural norms within the society. By bringing out his characters as victims of cultural and political norms, Selvadurai also highlights how one is bound by one's own culture and tradition. Through his gay protagonists, he succeeded in questioning notions related to what is 'normal.' By expressing themselves beyond identities given to them, these characters became the mouthpiece to question the binaries that are built and extended within the society. It is by his writing that he achieves freedom to challenge the cemented identities based entirely on the standard of heterosexuality. Homosexuality itself is problematic as well as traumatic within the paradigm of heterosexuality. The constant manipulation of homosexuality based on the difference of gender identity has happened in order to expand an authoritative legitimisation of heterosexuality.

By portraying his protagonists as being not able to adhere with the social norms and by presenting a homophobic world in his novels, Selvadurai undermines as well as subverts cemented identities based exclusively for the propagation of heterosexuality. This is because Selvadurai shared the same social and cultural experiences that the characters passed through in his novels. Concerning his novels, Selvadurai also says that "much of the atmospheric and

cultural texture come from his own life” (Quill). His protagonists were mocked in terms of how they lived out their lives, principally based on their sexuality. In all the selected three novels of Selvadurai, the protagonists were mocked and made fun of because of their sexuality. Arjie in *Funny Boy* was unpleasantly laughed at by almost all his adult family members as he was considered to be “funny,” Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* was mocked cruelly by Pikkiam because of “his thin, awkward body and smirk” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 233), and Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts* was mocked and humiliated by one of his grandmother’s tenants in Pettah. This man looked his physical appearance and told Shivan that he has “beautiful face like a girl’s” and “soft hands like a girl’s” and that he would also “fuck” him for the rent (Selvadurai “Hungry” 181). Still not being able to be satisfied with what he had already said to Shivan, the man continued to mock Shivan by calling him “ponnaya” in order to be heard by the entire street. As Shivan drove away from the place, he couldn’t erase the particular word “ponnaya” from his mind and thus said within himself, “Ponnaya” was used frequently as an insult and I did not think the man thought I was actually gay. He had just wanted to emasculate me (Selvadurai “Hungry” 182).

Selvadurai’s protagonists were mocked and humiliated in the society so as to construct power that has always been fixed with sexuality. According to Foucault, the relation between power and sex is never free from “*the negative relation*” (Foucault “History” 83). Since these characters were positioned defenceless based on a stipulated sexual boundaries in the society, they did not have possibility to stand against their beings ill-treated by the people around them. Just like the case of Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts*, Shivan knew that the humiliation was done by that man in knowing that he would be able to emasculate Shivan. Shivan was filled with anger even after reaching his home, but he knew that “he was impotent against him” (Selvadurai

“Hungry” 182). Shivan became powerless even in front of his grandmother’s tenant since the society itself has judged him and placed him in that powerless position. Foucault writes,

Power is essentially what dictates its law to sex. Which means first of all that sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden. Secondly, power prescribes an “order” for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility: sex is to be deciphered on the basis of its relation to the law . . . power’s hold on sex is maintained through language . . . It speaks, and that is the rule (Foucault “History” 83).

Sex is a natural element that has its impact upon the natural reality of the natural life of every living creature. Any other relating to this subject is simply a qualification made by the functioning of power paradigm in one’s own culture, tradition, religion, society, and many other factors. Marriage as one compartment of the sexual characteristics is also completely a constructed ideology. One could have the satisfaction of one’s own natural reality that involves sexual activity even outside the accepted institution. Outside or inside the accepted institution, homosexual or heterosexual, queer or straight, male or female, all have their own natural sexual practices that are composed with natural reality. “*The Sexual Continuum* was cited to suggest that ‘each of us to some degree is both heterosexual and homosexual, and therefore bisexual’ . . . ‘The only abnormal sex act is the one you can’t do’” (Morland and Willox 56).

Sexuality continues to expand with a demarcation that has been set by the institution. The whole concept of censorship, rejection, exclusion, and concealment has been examined with the notion of sexuality. Once there is a coherent set of norms, rules and conducts that are to be followed, there is a system that constitutes one’s own knowledge accordingly. Technology and

advancement have changed their means of emergence in modern world, but the source is nevertheless the same. There is a replacement made with the progression of society where “the priest has been replaced by the psychiatrist, teacher and doctor . . .” (Rediker 639). There is a change made, yet all still function in order to regulate sexual practices in the society.

Derrida analyzes how the aforementioned aspects fit into binary opposition, and how this binary opposition corresponds to one another. This is a paradigm that proceeds with distinction in order to locate how the heterosexual is distinct from the homosexual or how the homosexual is dissimilar from the heterosexual. In actuality, the two depend upon one another for “difference depends upon identity as much as identity depends upon difference” (Balkin 748). From the reading of Nuyen’s essay, “Derrida’s Deconstruction: Wholeness and Differance,” it must be noted that totality is only the fullness combined with all the parts included and excluded. Nuyen therefore stated, “Furthermore, to restrict oneself in any way whatsoever to any one part to the exclusion of others is to fail to realize that the very existence of the chosen part depends on those that have been excluded” (Nuyen 30).

Concerning the term “differance,” Derrida says, “*Differance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*. In it, however, we shall see the juncture – rather than the summation – of what has been most decisively inscribed in the thought of what is conveniently called our “epoch” . . .” (Rivkin and Ryan 385). Therefore, in coming out with this term, Derrida finds way to observe how the notion of difference plays in the function of language as well as in thought. There is always an “inaudible” part that operates between “two phonemes,” and it is this “inaudible” that constantly presented what had been said out as well as what had not been said out. When words are joined together in order to create meanings, it is not the word that functions independently. It is rather

the differences that play role in the operation of language and speech, and “these differences are themselves *effects*” (Rivkin and Ryan 393).

Richard Jenkins states, “Similarity and differences being irretrievably entangled in each other. . . . Difference is no less socially constructed than similarity . . .” (Jenkins “Social” 157). There is always a social construction that functions behind all these identities. The traditional and conventional concepts have continued to repress identity by placing the system of its construction under the power paradigm. This has led to the questioning of the whole identity structure by bringing in the concept of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ or queer and straight. There is an assumption easily made with this binary opposition in which queer has been regarded inferior, wrong, or even ‘abnormal.’ The judgment of queer being an ‘inferior’ has already been constituted deeply within the entire conclusion created by the institution. “Sexual identity was thus polarized around a central opposition rigidly defined by the binary play of sameness and difference in the sexes of the sexual partners; people belonged henceforward to one or the other of two exclusive categories [. . ..]” (Sedgwick “Epistemology” 158).

In *Funny Boy*, Arjie was transferred to a new school called “Queen Victoria Academy.” Arjie’s father transferred Arjie to a new school in order to force him “to become a man” (162). Arjie was scrutinized in such a way that there was something “wrong” in him. His attachment to the ‘girls’ game,’ his delight with his mother’s sari, jewellery, and make-up were all considered as something “wrong.” The arrival of Jegan in Arjie’s family later in the novel and his attitude concerning Arjie confirms that there was nothing really “wrong” in the development of Arjie. Jegan says, “I don’t think there’s anything wrong with him” (Selvadurai “Funny” 166). Selvadurai challenges the mainstream notion of sexuality and attempts to deconstruct the fence that has been placed between female-stream and male-stream. The obstruction between ‘girls’

world' and 'boys' world' that constantly impinged Arjie to accept the demarcation between the two worlds from his early childhood was caused by the pressures from his family. Family, as a shared tradition dutifully functions according to the rules set by the institution. As Katz says, "Without realizing it, usually, we are all deeply embedded in a living, institutionalized heterosexual/homosexual distinction" (Katz 25).

Selvadurai succeeded in illustrating heterosexual bifurcation which is completely the heterosexual monopoly. By presenting the deployment of an innocent boy who was not able to fit within the heterosexual world, the protagonist was forced to find his own world in order for him to fit unrestricted. Both the worlds of the homosexuals and the heterosexuals are tainted with each other, in which the world of the heterosexuals stands as the domineering factor. Selvadurai shows us how these stereotypes construct themselves while they are never a wholesome or untainted truth. It is not only just the term or the word 'homosexual' that abides alone with the term 'homosexual,' but also the term 'heterosexual.' The differences that plays role between the terms 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' "are themselves effects" (Rivkin and Ryan 393) as stated by Derrida in which heterosexual claims positivity in making its emergence with the term 'homosexual' as homosexual is always deemed to be 'negative.' In an article, "Naturalizing 'Queerness': A Study of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*," Prateek writes, "Selvadurai not only manages to challenge the stereotype of homosexuality in the course of the novel, but also succeeds in sending the message home that stereotypes take us far away from the truth" (Prateek 162).

In reading the dedication of the novel that the author had made at the beginning of the novel *Funny Boy*, there is an apparent justification of the life of Selvadurai with his fiction. It is written,

“To my parents,

Christine and David Selvadurai,

for believing that pigs can fly”

Earlier in the novel, it was mentioned that “pigs can’t fly” (Selvadurai “Funny” 19). This sentence “*for believing that pigs can fly*” highlights the fact that unlike Arjie’s family in the novel, Selvadurai is supported by his family just as he is. In his interview with Ameen Merchant on a topic “Pappadums at the Sky Dome – Ameen Merchant speaks with Shyam Selvadurai,” Selvadurai was asked whether it was traumatic for him to come out, he answered the question by saying,

Not really. I have a very supportive family. But it is so much easier to be gay and out nowadays. There are so many young people, just eighteen or nineteen, who are out to the world and have no problems with their identity. At least, that is what I see in Toronto and other cities in Canada (Merchant).

By exploring the bigger world, Selvadurai also achieves liberty in his writing since he already experienced that there is a great “diversity in Canadian writing today.” Selvadurai never wants to get fixed with just one community as well as a particular identity. Regarding his being an immigrant in Canada, Selvadurai says, “Yes, there is nostalgia. But there is no sense of loss. . . . I really don’t miss Sri Lanka in that way. And even in Canada, I am not really a part of the Sri

Lankan community. . . .” Selvadurai does not mingle only with the “segments of the gay community in Toronto,” but also blends with the “progressive people in Sri Lanka, both gay and straight” (Merchant).

Selvadurai’s heroes are mostly insightful people, who are often troubled with their surroundings, who are exploring their true selves within a shared family beliefs and traditions. They have to cross boundaries in order to come out with their true selves. It is their own passion and desire that constantly leads these characters to go beyond what is common or regular within a society. The antagonists in his works are all driven by the fervour of power and authority. They are usually self-centred and assumed their beliefs to be absolutely correct even if their beliefs did not have a clear definition or answer for it. For instance, Shivan’s grandmother in *The Hungry Ghosts* is the one who rule with forceful power in the entire family. She vehemently stopped the relationship of Shivan and Mili by even causing the death of Mili. She also said to her grandson Shivan, ““Ah, Puthey, nothing bad will come to that boy. I just wanted him given a good scare, to stop him corrupting me”” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 233). These characters did not seek anything other than their own concerns and were persistently stick with the law and order in the society. They are really corrupted inside and had a habit of hiding their own mistakes while judging others. Like the grandmother in *The Hungry Ghosts*, like Balendran’s father Mudaliyar Navaratnam in *Cinnamon Gardens*, and like Arjie’s father, the principal, and even most of the adult family members in *Funny Boy*, none of these characters ever really cared for the interest and happiness of others. Instead, they only cared for their own interest and fulfilled their own pleasure and satisfaction. They take their own personal advantages as being a part of the family and also as being the head of the family.

Though Selvadurai mentioned that many of his characters are beyond him, he also mentioned as to how he shared many similar traits with them. It is his venturing out to the bigger world that helped him to come out with certain characters in his fiction. On a topic “Shyam Selvadurai on Childhood Memory, Buddha and Answering your own Questions,” Kate Pullinger asks Selvadurai, as to the relationship that his writings have had upon his own childhood in terms of where he grew up and whether he was a happy child or not, Selvadurai answers:

My work is greatly influenced by my childhood, particularly the period details of that time, the world we grew up in where the ethnic tensions between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils got worse and worse. Then there was the pain and horror of realizing I was gay in a world where there were no positive role models. At the same time, I came from a loving family and this gave me a sense of confidence to venture out into the world and become a writer, as well as come to terms with my sexuality. All this has influenced the philosophy behind my writing as well as the content of the writing itself (Kelly).

Selvadurai is never restricted to what he has seen or experienced in life. He did not only retell how cruel this universe is, but also reiterates as to how beautiful it is. His fiction successfully highlights as to how one could be placed in confusion and complexity depending upon the kind of environment that one faces in life. Though Selvadurai mentions how he is understood and accepted by his family, he is also concerned about people like him who are still entangled and bound by the family or the society. Instead of running away from the conflicts that he experiences in life, Selvadurai constantly tries to find the kind of shackles that bind one. He believes that art is the way to change the issue of LGBT in Asia, as it already led people to understand the concept of sexuality in the West.

Chapter II

Identity and Social Construction

This chapter “Identity and Social Construction” attempts to analyze how identity is completely a social construction in which there is always a system of social and cultural obligation that requires an individual to be identified with certain identities within the context of a collective framework. Selvadurai deliberately explored and analyzed the theme of identity and social construction in all the selected novels for this study. By delving deeply into the selected texts of Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), and *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013), this dissertation attempts to explore how the social constructed identity of an individual functions as a tool to accomplish judgement in a society. Identity itself could never stand alone and has to be supported and coordinated by the collective framework as well as the power structure. The order of the institutions and the order of interactions among every individual dynamically function for the completion of individual identifications in a society. Jenkins stated, “In the organisation of identifications, the interaction order and the institutional order are routinely and mutually implicated in each other” (Jenkins “Social” 168). There is an unending involvement of social environments in which individuals are bound to act according to their identities that are given to them. So, taking in the concept of queer identity under this power structure, one is able to see the concept of queer existence and its parameter of acceptance made within the structure. The whole concept of sexuality has come to be contested, challenged and protested within this paradigm. Sexual category was created to decide an identity of an individual in which the law functions as a power to repress the entire being.

The law as a ruling factor stands to set everything according to its potential order. A nation, state, society, community, family, marriage, educational institution, friendship, relationship and many other precepts function to operate under the structure of the law. Even in the past, as it is in the present, the law constantly serves to decide everything related to the

identity of the humans. Humans are constituted to abide a set of laws in order to maintain one's own existence in the society. It abides stronger when one constitutes with it. During this process of constituting oneself, it reaches every issues of life including the mindset, the perception, the action, and behaviour consciously and unconsciously. There is always a cultural requirement that requires one to be according to what has been set. When one is identify with one's own tribe, religion, society, sex, caste or class, culture and tradition, there is also a need to maintain all the requirements behind these institutions. Identity is something that contacts both the law and the individual, both the outside world and the inside world. If one has no identity within the formation of the law paradigmatic, one is regarded to be out of the alignment. However, this whole concept of identity in itself is complex, vivid, and fluid. It is questionable and requires a forceful cogent to make it significant.

Individuals deployed a wide variety of identifications so as to build up themselves with the ongoing series of social environment. Born in a society, individuals are not given any alternative other than their beings treated as social beings. This has led to the progression of an individual to sense what is of the 'self' and the 'other'. With the limitations of an identity given to the individual, there is the requirement to play a role as a performer that best defines the given identity. By following such routines, identity continues to define and expand itself within the arena of the individuals and their social lives.

As written in an article “Articulating Identities”,

Social definitions (and re-definitions) are framed, for example, through prescriptive organizational and professional discourses relating to appropriate and desirable role behaviour as well as the creation of shared beliefs through ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1997) or the social construction of ‘subjectivity’ through ‘disciplinary’ power – knowledge processes (Foucault, 1972). All such processes are located in the wider societal mélange of cultural conditioning, class affiliation and religious and moral codes (Ybema 301).

The whole progress of an individual is framed within “social definitions” and thus reliant on the very nature of the particular social constructions. It is therefore difficult for one to abstract oneself from this formation within the society. The mechanism which lies at the very interior of this formation is made to expand by impersonating, copying, imitating, performing, and reproducing. Situated in the “wider societal mélange of cultural conditioning,” there is the need to fit into this wide range of collections. The processes to transform an individual to a given identity are shaped by the mechanics that participate actively within the individual as well as with the presence of the other individuals. There is the formulation of ideas in terms of how an individual should act both as individual and social being. An individual could never be separated from the criterion that has been set within the society. As Raymond Williams states, “The standard of perfection, of ‘the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity’, was now available, not merely to influence society, but to judge it” (Williams 63).

Hence, these societal constructions became a contingency for the deployment of gender identity. It is not only the involvement of a society in the individuals, but most importantly, the constructions that were there within the society. A judgement was therefore made according to the “rigid boundaries of sexual orientation” (Morland and Willox 23). Sexual orientations and gender identities go hand in hand. The understanding of gender identities led to the understanding of sexual categorizations in which sexuality started to get repressed. The sexual desire in an individual had to be limited according to the construction of sexual orientations. Sexual practice and sexual identity are entirely constituted with culture. As Turner states,

Instead, the relationships among desire, repression, and politics become matters for scrutiny. But even this is too simple, for – as Sedgwick insists in the same article – one cannot understand desire and repression without understanding gender, which in our culture is inextricably related to sexual practice and sexual identity (Turner “Introduction” 4).

Turner mentions how the categorizations of some groups of people as ‘queer’ could lead to the outcome of violence since the law has already been defined conservatively from the standpoint of the heteronormative and this is true if one studies the miserable event that happened earlier. This relates to the whole notion of political as well as social principles in which there is the requirement to see how identities are produced. He mentions about the death of Matthew Shepard who was a gay college student and a partial list of a group of people that are deemed to be bisexual, transgender, gay and lesbian who had died as a result of anti-queer violence. Therefore, Turner states, “This is a question about categories, about representation, about the process of attaching individuals to their identities as much as it is a question about politics and law conventionally defined” (Turner “Introduction”2). This is also about the

questioning of how identity has been constructed, labelled or attached according to the law of the mainstream within the institution. The matter here is that the reconstructed law of the majorities is the only channel that could give the mainstreams assurance to rule according to their imparted methods. Thus, the law was exercised only to subjugate, conquer and torture the minorities.

By bringing in the queer paradigm within this structure of identity and social construction, there is the need to challenge why a group of people are called minorities and why they are being oppressed. Queer theorists therefore stood out to see how this system has been practiced as well as how it includes the political system as a whole. As Turner clearly depicts about the Queer theorists in his book *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (2000),

They wonder how meanings and practices of identity circulate in our culture such that perceptions of entitlement and objection along lines of race, gender, sexuality, class, and so on become the very horizons of individual self-perception for most persons, demonstrably playing a much more important role than any stirring statements of principle in determining the willingness of those individuals to participate in political processes, including protest (Turner "Introduction" 19).

Under this light, it is remarkable that Selvadurai as a gay writer who writes about the lifestyle of the gay community also participates in dealing about these issues and thus stands out to protest from the political processes of Sri Lanka principally. In almost all of his novels, Selvadurai mentions many sufferings and hardships that were faced by his protagonists as they are of mixed heritage, of being identified as a gay, and also because of being identified as immigrants. All these forced Selvadurai to bring to light the conflicts that were caused by identity in his novels. These novels therefore traced how identity fundamentally functions in a

society with its placement of differentiation in race, gender and sexuality. Jenkins placed identity as one that is obligatory in the society. He writes, “Without identity there could simply be no human world, as we know it. This is the most basic sense in which identity matters” (Jenkins “Social” 27). With this statement, this dissertation will reflect upon the kind of significances that are laid behind the identity as well as the many alternatives that hindered and disturbed the same in the face of humanity. It is the history and the discovery of the past knowledge that continues to form individuals. The issues of identity, race, gender, class, sexuality, culture, and tradition in all the novels of Selvadurai highlights how one is made to attain a fixed identity. The very idea of having a fixed identity results with the outcome of quandary in all the protagonists. Selvadurai’s protagonists were created to underline how an individual is torn ‘in between’ as the force that pushed them acquires a fixed identity. By dealing with the situation of a people located in particular places like Sri Lanka and Canada in his novels, Selvadurai attains the ability to emphasize the universal criterion of human living.

Selvadurai understands the darker side of life and also realizes how complicated life could be. He later realized that the desire to have a fixed identity with the very idea of cultural and traditional pureness has led to the outcome of separation and divisions among one another. One always has to define oneself with one’s own cultural identity. Selvadurai protests against this and thus states how he does not want his identity as a writer to be addressed as a Sri Lankan-Canadian writer or Canadian-Sri Lankan writer in his edited book *Story Wallah!* (2004) (1). He witnesses how a duality in identity causes many difficulties in an individual. Particularly as an immigrant with dual identity, Selvadurai mentioned how he shared the force of this burden. Thus, he says, “In my day-to-day interactions with the world outside, I share the irritation, the burden, the occasional danger of this visible otherness” (Selvadurai “Story” 2).

Parallel with these issues of biculturalism and dual identity, Selvadurai's novel *The Hungry Ghosts* underlines the difficulties of the protagonist and his families as they were immigrants in Canada. The relationship between the protagonist Shivan's sister Renu and Jaya could not succeed due to their culture and traditions. In the case of Renu, it is feasible to get married if people really love one another. As Jaya was already engaged to Otara, everyone felt that it would be reprehensible to cancel the engagement in order for Jaya to get married to Renu. Renu therefore felt that all the earlier arrangements could be cancelled since they no longer lived in Sri Lanka and were neither bound by its culture and traditions. While for Shivan, there was no major change in the matter of culture and traditions even if one migrated to another country. He says, "We might be living in Canada, but we had brought Sri Lanka with us" (Selvadurai "Hungry" 126). People often changed their place of living, migrated from one country to the other, but a change in people has its limitation and could never be completed. When one is born into the world, one mechanically achieves one's own identity through one's own parents, sexuality, culture, tradition, gender, nation, and many other factors. Likewise if one migrated from Sri Lanka to Canada also, the mind-set of being a Sri Lankan and a compulsion to follow 'what is of Sri Lanka' is always there. Thus Jenkin states, "Habitualisation may be necessary condition for institutionalisation, but it isn't in itself enough. A degree of intersubjectivity – shared meaning – is required" (Jenkins "Social" 158).

Society has constantly shaped and constituted its people to identify themselves with something or someone that are considered to be related with their identity. Shivan was also repetitively torn in between since he was not able to figure out his true identity. He was never freed from his dual identity and was seen to be biased in his life throughout the novel. He wished to change his name so that he would be counted as a Sinhalese while this matter could never be

understood by his mother and sister who had already accepted their given identity with a sense of security. While for Shivan, identity was more of something that you could match, attach, and even eradicate from you. The desire to change his name shows the fluidity of his given identification. His Tamil name gave him a feeling of otherness while living in a Sinhalese house and eating a Sinhalese food. In the article concerning Derrida's "Differance", Itzkowitz stated, "*All attempts to articulate identity are dependent on moments of otherness and articulate instead differance as the belonging together of otherness and identity, difference and the same*" (Itzkowitz 129, 130).

There was a peaceful feeling shared between Shivan and Mili as comparing to what Shivan had shared with his Canadian partners earlier. With Mili, they "both understood the same world and its idioms" (Selvadurai "Hungry" 169). This elucidates how a person depends on similarities and differences in order to appreciate and recognize one another. To categorize one another implies that humans are entirely a cultural being. It is always the difference that plays a vital role in finding commonalities. Raymond Williams states, "Where *culture* meant a state or habit of the mind, or the body of intellectual and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life" (Williams "Introduction" xviii). There is a nature that interacts between the individuals and this nature of interaction moulds the individuals to be of a particular corporate community. It is not just the thoughts and feelings of being a gay that plays actively between Shivan and Mili, rather it is the operation of their entire cultural embodiment that functions dynamically in novel *The Hungry Ghosts*. The immediate experiences in the individuals relate to how an individual identifies with the other, as to how an individual identifies with the surroundings or as to how an individual identifies with oneself. The search for shared meanings, the search for similarities and differences leads to the search for identification as with or against.

The freedom of homosexuality in Canada enabled Shivan to declare to Ronald, that he was a gay though Shivan was involuntarily filled with strangeness and started to cry as soon as he affirmed with his own mouth that he was a gay. Due to his previous identity that was altogether a social construct, there was a feeling of strangeness in Shivan while affirming his sexual identity to the outside world. Sri Lanka with its surrounding environments had repressed him as well as constructed him so intensely that he could not easily accept his true sexual identity even outside of Sri Lanka. Concerning his situation that reverberate the former condition of Ronald, Shivan says,

It felt so strange, those words coming out of my mouth, and the next moment I was crying. As I sobbed, he talked to me in a soothing tone about how it was alright to be gay and how one could find a lot of happiness in coming out, a lot of support, that I did not need to be lonely anymore, that he knew exactly what I was feeling because he had spent his teens in a small town in the 1960s and knew as well as anyone what it was to feel different and alone (Selvadurai “Hungry” 98).

Through Shivan’s declaration of his true condition, the novel clearly depicts how identity and social construction constantly go hand in hand. The feeling of being “different and alone” within a society highlights how homosexuality is disqualified and excluded within the heteronormative world. The feeling of being different and being lonesome that Shivan’s had faced in his life did not stop with his confirmation of his being a gay to the outside world. Rather, it continues throughout the novel. His mutual feelings with Mili was the result of his being not able to share the feelings of equality and his being not able to belong to the gay world in Canada. There is always a social construction that dynamically presents in all social groups; this in the case of Shivan is not only the world of Canada, but also the world of gay in Canada.

Shivan therefore says, “We did not belong in the gay world because of our skin colour, yet spurned by our own people, we had no choice but to linger on its fringes” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 107).

The Hungry Ghosts also serves as a mouthpiece not only to express the fixity of identity within the cultural world, but also of the queer identities in a homophobic world. The characters that are deemed to be ‘queer’ in this novel were made to fight for their identities. It is not only equality that they fought for, but these characters also sought for their own identity itself within the heteronormative world. The old beliefs that had been laid strongly on sexual orientations and gender identities results in the death of a character named Mili. All social and political movements were firmly operated in order to legitimize the heterosexual notions, beliefs, and terms. This novel parallels the statement that Foucault had made regarding the subject of the 19th Century in *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction* (1990), he states, “The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology” (Foucault “History” 43).

The concept of oppressing and downgrading homosexuals is firmly constructed and constituted deeply within the human minds. Throughout history, this results in the assumption that homosexuals have a kind of psychological disorder. It has always been the social role that creates the heteronormative world. It treats homosexuality as sin that is bound to be punished. The characters in all the novels of Selvadurai experienced punishment because they were considered different in the homophobic world, while this homophobic world is also just one of the worlds among many social constructed worlds. Differences on the skin colour of humans are also a kind of identity that clearly stands to discriminate. There has always been a construction of

centrality and normatively in which the white have a privilege over the representations of women and men of colour in a particular ways.

“White privilege constructs whiteness as normative and central to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) identities and is reproduced through social norms, media representations, and daily interactions” (Logie and Rwigema 174). All the identities that operate within the world of the humans are influenced by the ruling of the white people. The entire group including its sub-groups are exclusively constructed and operated according to the centrality of whiteness. The ‘privileged’ groups enjoy their privilege through their means of oppressing and discriminating the non-whites, and thus regard them as ‘under-privileged’. They judge the world according to their own social and racial boundaries. Racial discrimination is vitally involved whenever a number of people come together or stay together. Therefore, when a group of people are deemed to be a group of ‘queer’ or gay, favouritism and separation exist with the active participation of social and racial boundaries. With the presence of these boundaries within the groups, lesbian and gay men and women of colour experience “sexualized racism.” Logie and Rwigema have also denoted,

Racialized (e.g., Black, Asian) lesbians and gay men experience sexualized racism in LGBQ communities through being sexually objectified, masculinised, feminized, and/or characterized as sexually undesirable by white LGBQ persons The convergence of racial and sexual oppression may also be enhance vulnerability of LGBQ persons of color to racist homophobic violence (Hutchinson, 1999) (Logie and Rwigema 175).

A social boundary is one big issue even within the queer communities. These social boundaries have become an important issue in the study of queer identity. The whole concept of

'queer' does not fit within one identity. This formation of identities acknowledged people who are deemed to be 'queer' of colour, the working class queers, the privilege queers and many others within the ambit. The classification of these groups has become one significant focus within the study of queer theory. There has been a constant discussion and dispute between the identity of gay and lesbian politics and social constructivism which strengthens the fact that identity conflicts still occur strongly inside the social boundaries. The existence of queer with its goal to attain an equivalent social acceptance in the heteronormative world issues in the construction of other social boundaries within the ambit of queer. There is an incessant debate between the social and the anti-social in which queer studies by now appeared to adhere with the binary conflicts that they seemed to strongly resist at the very beginning of their existence. As difference is always there in a challenge to find similarities, it is impossible to avoid and abundant these multiple differences that has been powerfully laid inside and outside the humans by social constructivism throughout the centuries. Queer being a part of social group in a society, all these differences are actively presented within this social structure. There are in any case differences in religion, cultural background, skin-colour, nationality and many other aspects within or without the ambit of queer. As Mikko Carlson and Kaisa Ilmonen have stated,

When travelling from the First World to the Third World and back, queer is finally going to face its own internal differences, particularities and normativities. In the recent debates, everybody is eager to claim the position of Other in the queer theory. While the social side reminds us of the queers-of-color, or working class queers, the antisocial side waves the revolutionary flag of true misfits (Carlson and Ilmonen "Introduction" vi).

Other than trying to be equally fitted within the homophobic world, queer politics also has to fight against its own binaries. The idea to affirm sameness is bothered and shattered by the

involvement of differences within the community of queer. Though queer politics contests society with its created boundaries and discriminations, Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts* confirms how one is still discriminated within the world of gay. “Eric Marcus (1993:14) writes that “I’d rather emphasize what I have in common with other people than focus on the differences,” . . .” (Gamson 396). Though Eric Marcus writes how he would rather emphasize what he has in common with other people, Shivan is never to be blamed because of the differences he had experienced within the Canadian gay community. The first action that Shivan took to affirm his sameness with the other gay men in Canada was by taking the pamphlet from the bookstore that has a question in bold white letters, “Are You Gay?” (94). Shivan finally gave a call to the number that was written on the pamphlet after many considerations. Shivan tries to find his similarity with these gay men while the person who answers his call keeps asking questions related to whether Shivan is from India or not and also other topics like “the Tamil Tigers’ chances of getting an independent country. . .”(Selvadurai “Hungrey” 97). He was asked about his being gay only after having a long conversation about his own family background, race, and Sri Lanka. Thus, the hope of Shivan in achieving similarities with the other gay men was hindered by racial and social boundaries. This confirms the fact that similarity is achieved only through difference on the one hand. On the other hand, it depicts how difference within the community obstructs one in achieving sameness with the other gay men. Though Shivan wants to emphasize what he has in common with the other gay men, the white prejudice caused Shivan to be discriminated within the group.

Even after coming out of the closet, the characters in Selvadurai’s novel had to identify themselves among the groups of people who were deemed to be ‘queer’. The protagonist Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts* highlights the fact that as much as there is prejudice outside the queer

ambit, the same also happened within the queer ambit. Social constructivism has led all humans to experience how biased one could feel with one's own identity in social and racial boundaries. Shivan was not able to attain complete happiness even after living with the gay men and women in the gay world. After having a confession of his being gay to his mother and sister, Shivan also confessed his problem within the gay world to his sister and thus said, "She asked me about the gay world and my trials in it, nodding encouragingly as I confessed my continued unhappiness" (130). Here, Shivan did not focus only on the differences, but he was more anxious and troubled on the discrimination that the white gay men imposed upon him. Furthermore, it is not only Shivan who was facing problems within this social constructivism. Cultural differences and racism in Canada also caused Shivan's sister Renu to want to get away from the country. She even says, "Canada is the shits . . . I am getting the hell out of here" (Selvadurai "Hungry" 130).

Social constructivism is a paradigmatic that modifies and changes the whole notion of sexual identity. It constituted a systematic approval and disapproval of particular sexual identities. Sexual politics is firmly linked with sexual law and order in which sexual identities and its regulations unite with the institution of social norms and practices. Sexual tendencies and preferences constantly prevail with its descriptive classification of sexual identities. With the descriptive labels given to the individuals, the characters in Shyam Selvadurai's novels represent the categorizations of sexual identities within the heteronormative world of sexual preferences and tendencies. In *Funny Boy*, Arjie as a gay protagonist was lost 'in between' and did not know where to go. Being an innocent boy, he did not have any sexual preferences and tendencies. He did not even realize that he belonged to the 'boys' world'. He did not prefer to join the world that was already set for him. Instead, he desires to be in the 'girls' world' without considering the

classification of sexual identities. He did not recognize that heteronormative society had already set its preferences and tendencies towards the 'boys' world' for an innocent boy like him.

Being uninformed about his sexual identity with its preferences and tendencies constructed by the society, Arjie's sexual identity has nothing to do with his natural being in *Funny Boy*. He simply stays where he finds joy and where he fits well. Selvadurai did not place Arjie with any definite sexual categorizations. Unlike his other novels, Selvadurai did not employ the phrase like "gay." He plainly placed Arjie beyond the boundaries of sexual categorizations. Arjie did not incorporate himself with the 'boys' world' even after he was debarred from the 'girls' world'. He was placed 'in between', the 'between' which is outside the category of demarcated gender and sexual boundaries. Arjie knows that he does not belong to any of the worlds created distinctively by the society. He has to pave his journey outside the categorizations of gender and sexual boundaries all alone. His pleasure and delight of being a bride in the game "bride-bride" was forcefully gripped away from him by the categorizations of gender and sexual identities constructed in the society. Arjie has to find his own world and has to think about his own amusement outside the collective frame of gender and sexual demarcations. He therefore says, "I would have to think of things with which to amuse myself, find ways to endure the lunches and teas when the cousins would talk to one another about what they had done and what they planned to do for the rest of the day" (Selvadurai "Funny" 39, 40).

Arjie's inclinations became a disturbance to his family since the family is entirely bound with stereotypical gender inclinations. His un-stereotypical gender inclinations break the limited constructions of gender and sexual identity. The family members called him "funny" if he was found within the 'girls' world' and the stereotypical gender inclinations was depicted clearly both in Arjie's mother and father. Arjie's mother protested him playing with the girls and said to

Arjie, ““You’re a big boy now. And big boys must play with other boys”” (20). His father also constantly opposes the natural tendencies of Arjie from the very beginning of the novel as it clashed with his own stereotypical gender tendencies. He was the only one not laughing in the family when Arjie was caught with his appearance as a bride playing “bride-bride” within the ‘girls’ world’. The anger that crushes him was so intense to bear for an innocent boy like Arjie. Arjie thus says, “I felt the heaviness in my stomach begin to push its way up my throat” (14). From this unpleasant incident onwards, in the case of his son development, Arjie’s father incessantly strives only for his son “to become a man” and nothing else (210). With a stranglehold of stereotypical notion, Arjie’s father regulates his son, even in his choice of books. He did not even allow him to read a book like *Little Women* in which Arjie found delight and pleasure. All his natural inclinations and tendencies were disqualified inside the collective accepted norms as they marked the fluidity of the construction of gender and sexual boundaries. Just because Arjie was fond of reading books and playing with dolls, he was regarded as having “certain tendencies” by his father. Although Arjie’s father talked about the “certain tendencies” that Arjie had had, Jegan could not find anything wrong with Arjie. Even though Arjie’s father could not clearly indicate how precisely wrong these “certain tendencies” were, he still told Jegan that he would be able to help Arjie “outgrow this phase,” which is the phase of having “certain tendencies” (Selvadurai “Funny” 166).

Funny Boy questions the whole notion of collective identities. It distinguishes the instability of gender and sexual boundaries and therefore depicts the constructions behind sexual and gender identities. This novel does not only disrupt the world of heteronormativity. It is also interesting to point out that this novel interrupts the world of homonormativity. In this novel, Selvadurai does not direct Arjie to confirm himself with any of the sexual identities. Though

forced to be fixed with gender and sexual identity from all his surroundings within the heteronormative world, Arjie was all the same, disrupted in the homonormative world with the notion of gender hierarchies and identity politics. With the admiration of Jegan, Arjie lately found out that he “looked at men, at the way they were built, the grace with which they carried themselves, the strength of their gestures and movements” (161). Though Arjie knew that this admiration started from the changes he had had in his body, it also confirms the restricted world of Arjie and the outcome of his being debarred from the ‘girls’ world’. Though he built a good relationship with Radha aunty after being caught playing in the girls’ world, Radha aunty was again taken away from him in order for the family to maintain decent social norms and traditions. She was made to marry someone of her own race instead of marrying the person she loved in which marriage become an institution to display the power of one’s own social norms and traditions. This again led Arjie to leave the world of “bride-brid” entirely with the elaborate ceremonies he had created earlier. He finds no pleasure in Radha aunty’s wedding and thus said, “But I felt no pleasure, for I knew that, although everything would happen in the way I had dreamed, there would be something important missing” (Selvadurai “Funny” 99).

Selvadurai in the novel *Funny Boy* explores the social norms and practices in which one has a very limited choice in a wider culture of the nation as well as in an educational institution like the “Queen Victoria Academy”. Although Selvadurai has quite a pitiable portrayal of women in the society, this paves the way for him to depict a clear picture of queer identity politics in the novel. Arjie’s female cousin Meena is an important character that was never really explored by the author. Her character is totally opposite of what the society built and fixed for a girl. She plays cricket among the boys and acts like one of them. When Diggy tries to trade Arjie for Sanjay, “Meena spat out the seeds of the guava she was eating” and asked Diggy, ““Do you

think I'm mad or something?" (Selvadurai "Funny" 25). Being a female in the 'boys' group', Meena was never afraid of the other boys and seemed to play better than many of them. She has a different instinct from the other girls and chose to play cricket than "bride-bride." The feeling of differentness from one's own kind and the inability to fit within one particular collection might have happened to Meena's as much as it happened to Arjie. Meena's identity was never surveyed and the family also seemed to be unsighted on her condition. This brings to light as to how Selvadurai being a male writer, was not able to deal with the notions of queer in the female world of sexuality. This, according to William Turner is an omission of producing knowledge that could be reliable in presenting the definition of "woman" and "homosexual." Selvadurai, being a male homosexual seems to be short of the knowledge regarding "woman" and "homosexual" particularly "on the basis of their own experiences" (Turner "Introduction" 15).

Arjie's leaving behind of the 'girls' world' continues to have its impact on him intensely while trying to fit into the homonormative world in *Funny Boy*. When Arjie reached thirteen years of age, he longed to pass the awkward phase of his life in which his "voice sometimes slid embarrassingly into a high pitch." He says, "But I longed to pass this awkward phase, to become as physically attractive and graceful as the men I saw around me" (161). Though Arjie longed to become like 'the men' he saw and not the bride any longer, he was still seen by his father as having "certain tendencies." The further placement of Arjie at Queen Victoria Academy was only "to force him to become a man" (Selvadurai "Funny" 210). Arjie has no other choice than to become one of them. Even within the homonormative world, Arjie has to be a man and nothing else. The stereotyping of individuals according to their race, sexuality, gender, and class is still present within queer politics and homonormative proclivity.

Rittika Dasgupta and Rohit K Dasgupta write,

There is systematic discrimination against effeminate subject positions (femmephobia). Lisa Duggan (2002: 179) writing about homonormativity suggests that it is ‘a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption’. Shehan articulates this when he says to Arjie ‘Don’t be a Girl’ (249) to imply Arjie’s weakness, drawing a stereotype to attributes of the female identity when Arjie is forced ‘to become a man’ (210) . . .” (Dasgupta¹ and Dasgupta² 24).

Ethnicity has become a very important facet to support and defend identity both within the world of homonormativity and heteronormativity. It always seems to be very important for an individual to establish one’s own identity even under a flux of change. This is exactly what happened to Selvadurai in writing *Funny Boy*. Though unable to situate one’s true self under an unrelenting political struggle between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, Arjie was not able to position himself within the limited space of gender. His clinging to the ‘girls’ world’ has never stopped even after entering the world of homosexuality. His adherence to the ‘girls’ world’ and his outward identity being forced to be fixed with the ‘boys’ world’ never come to an end. His being forced “to become a man” and to no longer be of a girl kind even within the world of homosexuality firmly supports the world of homonormativity with its unrelenting grip on ethnicity.

Sharanya Jayawickrama writes,

Minoli Salgado describes how Arjie's "transgressive, desiring body" *requires* the fixity of gender and ethnic boundaries against which to articulate resistance. She foregrounds an important critique of the theoretical limits of Selvadurai's spatialization of identity by discussing how the mapping of space as demarcated or segregated is necessary to Selvadurai's project of positioning desire as an "unpredictable forcefield which threatens both to disrupt the established order of an ethnically divided society while simultaneously offering it its only means of redemption". In Salgado's reading of the novel "ethnicity becomes not so much a strategic identity, one that is adopted for specific ideological and political ends, but an immutable and transhistorical essence".⁴(Jayawickrama 124).

From this statement, it is apparent to note that Selvadurai is also biased and still struggled with his own identity; his characters, his being as a male homosexual or a male homosexual writer. His being a male writer seems to limit him from the female world of homosexuality. Though Selvadurai prefers to be addressed himself as a writer "precisely from the space between," (Selvadurai "Story" 1) which is the space between Sri Lanka and Canada on the one hand, he seems to struggle habituating the space between male and female homosexual worlds on the other hand. The internal feature of Arjie in *Funny Boy* constantly tries to fit within the regulatory structure in order to be identified with the others. The mingling of fantasy and reality continually operates when he read a book like *Little Women*. Before this book entered the life of Arjie, everything related to the life of Arjie were discovered parallel to the game "bribe-bribe." Arjie could not connect himself with the reality of the primary world even when Daryl Uncle died. Instead, the world of reality is connected through the book that he read. "Finally, I fell asleep and dreamt of *Little Women*. This time I was Jo and I was nursing Amma, who was Beth.

Then Beth died and I awoke to find myself crying as, for the first time, the understanding that Daryl Uncle was dead came to me” (Selvadurai “Funny” 138, 139). His yearning for the ‘girls’ world’ never really relent and he even found himself in his dreams as one of the girl characters from the book *Little Women*. The inability to fit within the ‘girls’ world’ as much as the failure to fit within the ‘boys’ world’ resulted in not being able to produce a coherent identity within the gender norms. Even after the acknowledgement of his inability to fit within both the worlds, Arjie’s desire has never failed longing to fit within the ‘girls’ world.’ His inability to fit within the homonormative world was also depicted when he was told not to be a girl. He was not allowed to be a girl because he was constricted to be a boy. He was not allowed to be a ‘girl homosexual’ because he was defined to be a ‘boy homosexual.’ This depicts how a person is continued to be defined according to the gender identity that is socially constructed. Butler stated,

In other words, the “coherent” and “continuity” of “the person” are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as “identity” is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of “the person” is called into question by the cultural emergence of those “incoherent” or “discontinuous” gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined (Butler “Gender” 23).

The need to fit within “the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility” is an important feature of social constructivism. The involvement of collective identifications defined the notion of “the person” in relates to the self as well as the others. To be “the person” in a society seems not to entail any of the identity classifications, while it involves the whole social institutions. It

includes “the gendered beings” in which “the person” is defined by the connection of the self and the others in the process of social identifications.

Richard Jenkins writes,

Social identification – knowing who we are and who others are – is a prerequisite of social action. In terms of identifications, what people think about us is no less important than what we think about ourselves. *Social identity* is never *unilateral*. Individuals have some control over how they are perceived in the interaction order (Goffman, 1983), but their categorization by others is always moot. Hence the importance of the interactional arts of impression management (Goffman, 1959). Individually, we identify ourselves, but we also identify others and are identified by them in turn, in the internal – external dialectic of self-image and public image (Jenkins “Categorization” 8).

The great search for individualism grew to a very great extent from the late 20’s till the present century. Selvadurai brings forth this search for identity as the main theme of all his novels. There have been many negative challenges that were thrown to the characters while having an exploration for the discovery of the true self. The opposition as well as the sociability of the “self” and the “other” exists in almost all Selvadurai’s novels. Society has moulded these characters according to its own prerequisite in order that they will exist according to the demands of the society. In return, it is the duty of the society to maintain and preserve those who go according to its own requirements. Failing to fulfil these societal qualifications by any individuals, it is the right of the society to leave these individuals defenceless. Nation is a part of a set that has been built-in by a society in order to regulate and legalize the demeanours of each individual according to its own collective ethnicity. It is always important to note that ethnicity

and nation go hand in hand. All social differences are made-up and practiced through the graph of nationalism. They are not natural and thus never exist by themselves; instead they are the outcome of social practices that rooted from history and are carried on through the shared beliefs of the people. Therefore, social differences that are marked by different identities and genders are all invented by individual themselves. Anne McClintock writes,

All nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous. Nations are not the natural flowering into time of the organic essence of a people, borne unscathed through the ages. . . . Most modern nations, despite their appeal to an august and immemorial past, are for the most part very recent inventions. Benedict Anderson thus argues that nations are best understood as “imagined communities,” systems of representations whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community (McClintock 104).

Under this light, the entire concept of nationalism can be clearly understood as “imagined communities” and “systems of representations.” Like many other nations, the nation of Sri Lanka is a nation that prompts from the connection of other nations in which colonialism play a huge role from the past centuries. Even after achieving independence from the power of colonialism, there is no entire freedom for the nation to rule without the attachment of colonial power. This is shown clearly when the characters Balendran and F. C. discussed about the politics of Ceylon in *Cinnamon Gardens*. As Balendran said to F. C., ““What in God’s name is the point of a free Ceylon when that freedom is only to be enjoyed by an oligarchy of the rich and high born? Congress, British, it’s all the same”” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 166). This novel contributes a very significant role to the study of gender and sexuality in which the root of sexuality and the very origin of gender could never be separated as they are explicitly linked with the nation building.

This novel particularly explores the Sri Lankan perception of homosexuality and heterosexuality and their connection to the very idea of nationalism. Identification of individuals through their sexual labels and gender performances is an obligation that has been maintained in Sri Lanka. The idea of nationalism is linked firmly with its belief of constructing a heteronormative world, where homosexual is wrong and has to be eliminated by all means. This is made clear especially in the case of Balendran's father who rule for the enhancement of the nation through his advantages achieved from colonialism and thus in turn supports the colonial traits of eradicating homosexuality in Sri Lanka.

There is no place for the 'self' in 1920 Ceylon. The 'self' of an individual is repressed and to come out of the repressed 'self' is to come out of the 'other.' The 'self' and the 'other' merged together in which the 'self' is also the 'other' and the 'other' is also the 'self.' Annalukshmi was not allowed by her mother to ride around on a bicycle. When Annalukshmi rebelled against her mother's disagreement and had a fight with her, her sister Kumudini came on the side of their mother and told Annalukshmi to be reasonable regarding the matter. Kumudini also wants Annalukshmi not to ride a bicycle and says to her, "You can't. People will say all sorts of things" (6). Here it is no more of the 'self', but the society as a whole. Girls are not allowed to ride a bicycle in Ceylon because they are imagined to maintain certain manners that have been shaped according to their gender identity. Failing the system of the society by riding a bicycle, Annalukshmi failed to maintain the consciousness of nationalism which was also altogether gendered. Maintaining the system of the society, Kumudini was regarded as the patriotic one among the sisters. Selvadurai writes, "Though Kumudini was twenty-one, and a year younger than Annalukshmi, she was regarded by everyone as the eldest because she was such a model of propriety" (Selvadurai "Cinnamon" 7). The idea of modesty, meekness, and

even submissiveness of a girl depends on how much a girl is loyal to the system constructed in a society. All these systems function in order to represent the consciousness of nationalism.

Selvadurai's novels greatly emphasize the emergence of identity categories in which categorizations of identity is a tool to construct desolation to some identities while the same means could be the very mode to exult some of the other identities. Patriarchy has always been the greatest oppression in all the three novels of the study. It is the means to oppress caste and class system, race, gender, sexuality, and many other subjects. Particularly in *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran's father Mudaliyar overruled the entire family with his power in which this power did not exist from him unaccompanied. There is so much involvement of social construction in which his identity with its power was the very production of the society. His power did not proceed only from his coordination with the British government; rather it is also the society that gave him his power. He has to hide his true nature, his relationship with the low caste woman as much as Balendran has to hide his true inner instinct. Unlike Annalukshmi, Balendran and his father repressed and hid their true selves in order to preserve their status in the family as well as in the society. Being so weighed down with social norms, both the son and father subdued their inner feelings while this subduing of the true self could not sustain till the end. Earlier, Balendran thought that his father had done the right thing in breaking his relationship with Richard (59). Balendran had thought it this way because he was on the mode of fulfilling all the social norms and traditions as well as achieving the social status and its well-off livings. It was only later in the novel that Balendran realized that he was "blind to the realities of life" (279). Even in *Funny Boy* and *The Hungry Ghosts*, patriarchy rules over the entire system. It is Arjie's father who takes up the position of headship in the family, who rules the life of Arjie, and who constantly desires Arjie "to become a man" in the novel *Funny Boy* (210). Outside the

family, it is the principal Mr. Abeysinghe who rules the life of Arjie and the other boys of “The Queen Victoria Academy.” As Diggy told Arjie, “Once you come to The Queen Victoria Academy you are a man” (Selvadurai “Funny” 211).

In *The Hungry Ghosts*, it is Shivan’s grandmother who rules the entire family. The outcome of Shivan’s grandmother as being a terrifying matriarch in the family rooted from the experience she had had in the past as portrayed in the text. Brought up in a patriarchal family, she was never given an opportunity to make a decision of her own by Shivan’s great-grandfather and was forced to get married to a man who was much older than her. She was only regarded as a piece of property that could be sold and given away. Her anger in the past could never leave her and it was this unconquered anger that made her to regulate her family in a same powerful manner. The power and authority of Shivan’s great-grandfather has gripped Shivan’s grandmother powerfully that this same power was transmitted by the grandmother while ruling her family. As stated by Foucault, “. . . this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them” (Rivkin and Ryan 465).

By breaking the relationship between his son and Richard, Mudaliyar in *Cinnamon Gardens* thought he had saved his son from “degradation” (Selvadurai “Cinnamons” 367). This “degradation” according to Mudaliyar is the outcome that might have happened if his son and Richard would continue their relationship and the cost of it in the society. Homosexual and heterosexual, queer and normative, female and male, all these identities are produced from themselves, within themselves, and are never constructed from outside the realm of identity. Patriarchy has never disappeared from any of these social constructions. Its power has always been there. In an article “The Queer Debt Crisis”, it is written, “But in so far as all of these

“identities” are themselves products of a particular environment of commodity culture, patriarchy (no, it has not disappeared, and yes, it still operates to cover over, at great cost, the nothingness at its core) . . .” (Beroiza 102).

It is by the realization of the mess behind these social constructions that led Selvadurai’s characters to witness the fluidity of identity and its mutability from time to time. In *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran sees the realities of life by experiencing the messiness of life which is the productions of a “particular environment of commodity culture” and “patriarchy.” Therefore, the novel finally presents how Balendran was filled with “sudden tenderness” that he never had had earlier in his life. Selvadurai writes, “In the past, they were the things he had drawn around himself, entangled his soul in, weighed his desires down with. Now they stood apart from him and they had, as a result of this detachment, become strangely sweeter” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 386). The novel *Funny Boy* ends with the merging of the outside world and the inside world in which the inside has preserved nothing to be protected from the outside. The protagonist Shivan is left without holding back any of his past in order to explore the new world. The protagonist in *The Hungry Ghosts* also finally left Michael in order that the incident that had happened to him and Mili would not be repeated. Shivan does not want to repeat the fault of the past like his grandmother. Therefore, he says, “This time, I will save the person I cherish most by giving him up” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 370).

It is persistently his seeing of other people as also complex human beings that drives Selvadurai in his writing. Through his exploration of the greys of human existence, Selvadurai as an author also seemed to be perplexed with the categorizations of identity at some point of time in writing these novels. Although he experiences the part of him that appears to be complicated

just like all the other humans, Selvadurai never fails to depict what 'queer' can really referred to as Sedgwick writes elsewhere,

That's one of the things that "queer" can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (Sedgwick "Tendencies" 7).

Witnessing the whole notion of identity and social construction, the characters in Selvadurai's novels ultimately represent the possibilities as well as the potential to disengage oneself from the productive strategy of social construction and also from the scope of categorizing identity.

Chapter III

Analyzing the Queer

Selvadurai novels focused on how the human body itself has become a contested site of sexuality. The function of humans within a society, family, institution, organization, and many other collections are exclusively marked with the contestations of sexuality. Identity itself is made to be fixed with sexuality in which gender identity has ensued to express the categories of sexual orientation. Sexuality can never be fixed with the division of binary gender categories. Fixed definitions of sexuality and gender identities limited the world of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and other labels by forcing them to be fixed with exigent demands of identities. Queer theory depicts how these given identities create problems and questions in the lives of humans, especially to those that are oppressed within the heteronormative world. It also paves the way to recognize how these problems and questions are carried on by the very means of normative constructions regulated and designed by the socially constructed heteronormative world. As Kriten A. Renn states in an article “LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field”, “*Queer Theory* refers not to identity per se but to a body of theories that “critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender” (Abes & Kasch, 2007, p. 620)” (Renn 132).

Selvadurai deliberately explored and analyzed the queer in all his novels. Family is very important in all the selected novels of Selvadurai and it is through this deep relation to home that led Selvadurai’s novels to be characterized as queer South Asian diasporic literature. As Gopinath states, “Rather than simply doing away with home and its fictions of (sexual, racial, communal) purity and belonging, queer diasporic literature instead engages in a radical reworking of multiple home spaces” (165). Selvadurai novels are mainly tragic in many aspects because of the conflicts that the characters were facing in not being able to be accepted by the

family. It has always been an opportunity for Selvadurai to write these novels in order to stand out for the oppressed groups in Sri Lanka. Being afflicted by their sexual desires and passions, the oppressed groups have no possibility to come out from the domineering social constructions. The protagonists are defined and labelled by their sexual definitions and gender identities starting from their home. Thus, according to Gopinath, “The queer diasporic body is the medium through which home is remapped and its various narratives are displaced, uprooted, and infused with alternative forms of desire” (Gopinath 165).

The apparatus of the institution creates the discrimination between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal.’ The outcome of the production of such identities is the question that has been asked persistently. Being one of the writers who write about queer diasporic literature, Selvadurai constantly questions the elements of sexuality and gender that constitutes within the entire subject of identity. Though sexuality and gender identity could never be fixed and thus seemed to be indistinct, they are never omitted with the definition of human beings in relation to other humans, to family, to society, to religion, to politics, and many others. Since it holds such an important facet in defining human with the outside world, identity produced through sexuality and gender arouses many anxieties in humans. It is this non-conformity of gender and sexuality that continuously provoked certain kind of anxieties even in the characters of Selvadurai.

Turner states,

Gender and sexuality are only two of the myriad elements that constitute a given individual’s identity. But, especially where they seem ambiguous or undisciplined, gender and sexuality provoke the greatest anxieties. Such anxieties, in turn, surface around queers, queerness, and the work of queer theorists (Turner “Introduction” 5).

Therefore, there is a confirmation that could be achieved in Selvadurai himself as a writer of queer novels from this statement. Selvadurai came out with his novels in order to protest against the fixity that has been powerfully laid by the established parameters. By doing so, this chapter attempts to bring in debates that have been propounded within the literary aspect of queer theory along with its challenge to subvert this structure.

There has always been a failure in the characters of Selvadurai as well as in the author himself to fit within the categorizations of gender and sexuality. The characters in Selvadurai's novels are unable to fit within the world that is absolutely defined by social construction. The angst of the characters only proceeds from their being discomfited inside the restriction of categorizing identities. Selvadurai talks about his own experiences regarding his novel *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013) in one of his videos, "*Shyam Selvadurai The Hungry Ghosts*" posted on *YouTube*. In this video, he says that it is Toronto that gives him the peace of mind to write his novel. He also mentions that Toronto is a safe place in which he could write "unsafe novels" without the feeling of what he would have felt in Sri Lanka.

Selvadurai finds freedom in his writing in Toronto which he never had had in Sri Lanka. The phrase "unsafe novels" undoubtedly attests the stipulation of constraining a person even in the form of writing. Selvadurai explains how one could feel "the pressure of the incredible danger of telling the truth" in writing a novel that is related to queer literature in the same video "*Shyam Selvadurai The Hungry Ghosts*." The idea of differentiating 'safe' and 'unsafe' novels also brings in the concept of the 'healthy' and the 'unhealthy' text. Stereotyping texts that are related to queer as well as scrutinizing the authors of those particular texts has always been practiced within the heteronormative constructions.

Prateek stated,

A healthy text is a heteronormative construct, which refers to a text where first, heterosexuality is naturalized and homosexuality is either sidelined or demonized; secondly, where the writer manages to exorcise the demons of unheard voices, and finally, the writer can prevent the eruption of contested spaces. Since Selvadurai challenges all the above mentioned conventions connected to a heterosexual text, his text can be considered as a snapshot of what one can call an 'unhealthy text' (Prateek 156).

The division between heterosexuality and homosexuality is exclusively marked with the differentiation of male and female sexuality. Sexual identity is always understood as something that was prearranged and it is because of this concept that it was considered as a kind of fixed identity that could never be changed. Once an individual is regarded to be male or female, all the rules that are within the ambit of male and female identity has to be exercised incessantly. To force an individual to fit absolutely within the ambit of male or female sexuality is one of the central purposes of social constructions in differentiating identities as well as binaries. As much as gender is a social construct, labelling human sex according to the term that was coined earlier is also a social means of construction. Females are deemed to be feminine as much as males are deemed to be masculine. If any individual has failed to carry out one's own term, definition, identity, label, and many others that are solely defined by one's own sex, it is regarded as a failure of that particular individual while it also indicated a failure of the institutions that are behind the categorizations of sexuality and gender identities.

Sexuality is not just sexuality in itself; it is rather a social formation that carries a number of qualifications that has to be attained by all humans. In accomplishing all these qualifications,

an individual is regarded to be heterosexual or 'normal.' Differentiation of an individual as a heterosexual or 'normal' is maintained all in order to strengthen the world of heteronormativity. In failing to accomplish these qualifications, an individual is identified as a homosexual or 'abnormal.' Thus, the terms 'hetero' and 'homo' are never equal and are never arranged to mark an equivalent that runs a parallel line. 'Hetero' is a term which is welcomed into the world exclusively marked by the world of heteronormativity while 'homo' is a term that is foreign to the existing world where no other alternative world is willingly provided. An individual's sexual identity is not only defined by social constructions, but it is also controlled and forcefully given.

As stated in *Queer Theory* (2005),

For 'homo' and 'hetero' define themselves as opposites, however social science instruments like the Kinsey scale and the Klein grid keep demonstrating that such 'purity' is a cultural artefact. And identity politics as well as science has an interest in keeping them opposite. To add 'bisexuality' as a third category here is not in fact to refine the terms of analysis but instead expose the radical limitations of rights-based arguments when linked to the concept of fixed identity (Morland and Willox 68).

The requirement for human society to exist in a system of binary modes has never given a choice for those individuals who have both the sexes. The only choice available is that one of the sexes has to be eliminated. The elimination of one of the sexes in order to attain a fixed identity is therefore carried out by the decision of the parents with the help of doctors through scientific as well as systematic advancement.

Being one of the writers who write about the queer in a world where history had already moulded the shape of human society according to its social formations, Selvadurai's novels are

regarded to be 'unhealthy' and are thus 'unsafe.' By portraying and analyzing the queer in his novels, Selvadurai also unfolds the ugly truth that lies behind the system of the world. This led to the clubbing of his novels as 'unsafe,' however, royalties of this 'unsafe' concept vindicates Selvadurai. He depicts how 'normality' versus 'abnormality,' heterosexuality versus homosexuality, male versus female, innocence versus guilty, black versus white, pure versus impure, power versus weakness, and majority versus minority in his novels. Selvadurai novels were mostly intended to portray the struggle of a gay protagonist who is forced to fit within the world created for him. As written in a text *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader* (2013),

Queer studies' commitment to non-normativity and anti-identitarianism, coupled with its refusal to define its proper field of operation in relation to any fixed content, means that, while prominently organized around sexuality, it is potentially attentive to any socially consequential difference that contributes to regimes of sexual normalization. Rather than separating sexuality from other axes of social difference. . . . queer studies has increasingly attended to the ways in which various categories of difference inflect and transform each other (Hall "Introduction" xvi).

The refusal of having a fixed identity is all the time richly portrayed in the novels of Selvadurai. In order to unfasten the method of differences that exists within the ambit of social constructivism, sexuality and its concept of normativity is deeply analyzed in Selvadurai's novels. The notion of sexual differences with its demarcation of gender identities is the budding element of social constructions in order to normalize sexuality. In *Funny Boy* (1994), a socially constructed game meant for the children is used to categorize queer identity from the beginning of the novel itself. Earlier in his life, Arjie already knew that he was in the territory meant for the girls. He says, "The second territory was called "the girls'," included in which, however, was

myself, a boy” (Selvadurai “Funny” 3). He knew that he was not a girl, but that never led him to stop exploring the ‘girls’ world.’ Being really conscientious to all the differences of sexual categorizations that have been exercised within the social constructions on the one hand, the family did not question the identity of Arjie until they caught him playing “bride-bride” with his girl cousins on the other hand. It was only the arrival of Her Fatness’s family with their ideas of regulating the ‘boys’ game’ and the ‘girls’ game’ according to their concept of sexual categorizations that led the family to start scrutinizing about the identity of Arjie. His childhood innocence was visibly remembered. Arjie narrated the novel *Funny Boy* and included the part on how the “spend-the-days” were enjoyed on those Sundays by all the children in the entire family. In realizing the element of differences that he had suffered in his life due to his sexual identity, Arjie recalls his childhood memories and thus says,

Yet those Sundays, when I was seven, marked the beginning of my exile from the world I loved. Like a ship that leaves a port for the vast expanse of sea, those much looked forward to days took me away from the safe harbour of childhood towards the precarious waters of adult life (Selvadurai “Funny” 5).

From the time that Arjie was taken away from the “safe harbor of childhood,” Arjie was led to the unsafe life of adulthood. It is his gender identity borne by the definition of his sexual identity that led him to appear as a person who is now to be deemed as homosexual in the collective categorizations of sexuality and gender identities. The discovery of Arjie’s sexuality has changed the mother-son relationship as much as the word “funny” changed the entire manifestation of Arjie and the environment that surrounded him. As Arjie listened to the voice of his mother, he said, “I realized that something had changed forever between us” (Selvadurai “Funny” 17). Though there are binaries that are actively present in the differentiation of

adult/child, old/young, there is no other binary like homosexuality/heterosexuality that drives humans to be fully subsumed of what is deemed to be right/wrong, pure/impure, safe/unsafe, healthy/unhealthy. The inclusion of the aforementioned binaries in sexual categorizations derives from the wide demarcation that has been placed between the whole concept of 'negativity' in homosexuality and that of 'positivity' in heterosexuality. The discovery of Arjie's true nature from the game "bride-bride" shook his entire life. The labelling of Arjie as a gay by his family was achieved through the affirmation not just from the natural inclinations of Arjie, but from the affirmation that has been made throughout history. Sedgwick states, "The definitional narrowing-down in this century of sexuality as a whole to a binarized calculus of *homo-* or *heterosexuality* is a weighty fact but an entirely historical one" (Morland and Willox 86).

The protagonists of the selected novels have undergone the phase of being weighted by the facts that are from the past. The chapter titles of the novel *Funny Boy* "Pigs Can't Fly," "See No Evil, Hear No Evil," "Riot Journal: An Epilogue" are the chapters that highlight how humans are weighted by those facts that are carried on from the past. The fact that pigs cannot fly is a universal truth of the virtual world. The reason why this phrase was spoken out by Arjie's mother has a singular intention, and this intention was to force Arjie to believe and reside where society has placed him. He is regarded to belong to the 'boys' world' and he has to remain in that given world. By coming out from this world created for him, it was believed that Arjie would never really reach his dream world where he could be like his girl cousins. The game of "bride-bride" with its element of fantasy was completely destroyed by the phrase that has been regarded as a fact that guides the humans from the past. Likewise, the chapter "See No Evil, Hear No Evil" depicts how the unacceptable conducts in the society are blamed and are thus regarded as evil. All these unacceptable conducts are insupportable in the society because they are

constructed by the society itself to be unacceptable. When society is all about a collective constructivism, what is evil in the eyes of the society is meant to be evil. What is regarded unachievable within the collection is meant to be inaccessible. When the collective could not cooperate and function together, the outcome is to fight against one another within the entire collective constructions. It is entirely the human constructions that weight the complete history of humans with its idea of fact and belief. Thus, the notion of queer identity with its assumption of all the negative elements are weighted from history and is thus entirely emerged from the productions of human alone.

As much as it is history that moulds the present situation on the one hand, there is also the need to examine both the past and the present equally on the other hand. Denaturalizing the past alone would not present today's condition as the one that in itself is undefiled and perfect. There is also a requirement to observe the situation of today's world and its way of perceiving and treating homosexuality. It is all the productions of history that controlled the consciousness of the present world.

As written in *Queer Theory*,

Indeed, history writing – as reductive, biased, and creative as it may inevitably be – is a singularly important political act. . . . History *motivates* by offering examples of what can happen if one fails to organize and fight back, by stoking one's anger over the many horrors perpetrated by generations of oppressors, and by creating a 'telos' (an end-point or goal): the present moment where action simply must be taken or a future moment of 'liberation' that one must fight to realize (Morland and Willox 97).

It is the recollections of the past history that constantly operates in Selvadurai while writing his novels. Sri Lanka with its regular failure to accept homosexuality and its practice of segregating a group of people as ‘minorities’ throughout the past are clearly depicted through the writings of Selvadurai. Selvadurai had done this in hoping to motivate the present generation to fight back and stand against the “many horrors perpetrated by generations of oppressors”.

The realization of the past memories persistently haunted Shivan and his grandmother in *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013). The grandmother narrated her past story to her grandson Mili in hoping that the tie between the grandson and the grandmother would become close again. As Shivan says, “By offering this secret she was hoping to tie us close again. But all I wanted was to be free of the suffocating weight of our past together” (259). Though Shivan wanted to be freed from the past and even told his mother that he did not care about the past (287), the novel proceeds to prove how he could never be freed from it. The past that he had shared with Mili creates an unending hope in Shivan. The hope to meet Mili in Shivan was shattered when he realized that the stranger he encountered was not Mili. He then said, “I had been hoping he would be a replica of Mili, or at least a close approximation” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 274). The haunting of the past memories in Shivan never seemed to stop after meeting Michael and even after having a deep relationship with him. He still continues to have dreams about Mili periodically even after the passing of two years. Shivan therefore says,

After waking from these dreams, my old restlessness would take hold of me, making it difficult to get through a day, and causing me to feel distracted and irritated by Michael’s presence. I felt guilty because his little annoying habits, his tiny failures, made him less than Mili. I was aware this comparison was unfair, but had no control over the feeling, and this only increased my distress (Selvadurai “Hungry” 315).

This statement shows the fact that Shivan, being deemed as gay by the society is by no means different in his sexual characteristics to those who are deemed to be straight or heterosexual in the heteronormative world. Though he knew Mili was already dead, Shivan continued to long for this person whom he dearly loved, and was passionate enough to meet him again. It was not simply the sexual act that drives Shivan to make a comparison between Mili and Michael. He knew that it was unfair for him to make a comparison between the two, but affirmed the fact that he could not control the feelings that he had had for Mili. This feeling had not simply sprouted from the sexual act that had happened between Shivan and Mili. It is the feeling that all humans have, it is the feeling that could never be differentiated by the categorizations of sexuality and gender identity. The past has constantly torn Shivan apart and in order to move forward with his life, Shivan has to make a reconciliation with all that had happened in the past. He could not run away from the past as much as he could not run away from his feelings. The feeling of Shivan could never be seen and understood by his grandmother. This feeling in Shivan is clothed with not only the feeling of his desire and passion for Mili, but it is also the feeling that longs for the truth in order to find out the unrighteousness that was there behind the death of Mili. His loved for Mili was beyond sexual pleasure and its fulfillment. Shivan thus says,

Michael is wrong when he says my greatest challenge will be to win my grandmother's forgiveness. She will take me back, because I am to her like rain on parched land. The true question is how I will deal with her refusal to admit culpability in Mili's death, her impenetrable self-righteousness. I don't know how I am going to bear it, how I am going to keep loving and caring for her. I fear my failure, my anger (Selvadurai "Hungry" 363).

Since Shivan's grandmother only chose to perceive the categorizations of sexuality and gender identity, she failed to see the love behind the identity. The inner feelings of desire and passion that was shared between Shivan and Mili could not be seen because of the judgment made from the outside. The whole notion of sexual identities operate according to what has been seen, according to the outer form of an individual, and according to the understanding of the categorizations of sexuality and gender identity. From the time of its existence onward, the construction of identity with its categorizations already constituted a firm judgement of the righteous and the unrighteous. It was this judgement that had stood firm with the categorizations of identity that led the grandmother to judge the relationship of her grandson and Mili as a kind of unrighteous act. In recognizing that she has a comparable judgement with the society, she could never really accept the unrighteous act that she had done in the matter of Shivan and Mili's relationship even after the death of Mili.

As denoted in an article, "The Queer Debt Crisis",

An emphasis on the visual is, of course, one of the problems with the entire category of identity. Identity operates with the "visual"'s many resounding layers of supposed perception: exhibition, identification, insight, understanding. But the way visibility operates with contemporary concepts of identity also has conceptual baggage: it presumes consistency – the outer reveals the inner (Beroiza 103).

The novel *The Hungry Ghosts* clearly highlights how Shivan's grandmother was enraged with the marriage of Shivan's father and mother. The readers were told that Shivan's father was a Tamil and it was because of this that Shivan and his sister were also counted as half Tamils. They received hatred from others because they were Tamils, but this hatred was not a surprise

for them. As Shivan says, “For by the early 1970s, the tension between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils was escalating, particularly around the latter’s desire for a separate state” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 20). Shivan and his sister have to endure hatred of the society because their father is Tamil. They belonged to a social group that was counted as the ‘minority’ group in the society. It was never their choice and it was never their decision to belong to the Tamil group. They had to bear the identity that was deemed for them. It was the society who decided whom to ostracize and whom to like within the entire whole.

The authority of the majority constructed certain social orders in order to show favour to those that belong to the majority group by disapproving the other ‘minority’ groups. Without the disapproval that was already there for the ‘minorities’, the majorities have no other weight to control over the entire collections. Likewise, all other collections of identity functions in a related manner. As much as the Tamils were disapproved by the Sinhalese in 1970s Sri Lanka, homosexuality was also strongly condemned because of the beliefs and preferences made for heterosexuality. It has always been the majorities that rule over the minorities in the operation of identity. The identity of Shivan’s father was well-known as Tamil in the society because it is this identity that “presumes consistency.” The outer judgement of his identity as Tamil was made to establish to such an extent that his offspring were identified in that same identity. The judgement of his outer being was extended to the judgement of his entire inner being. Though identity functions in such a manner, there is a question that arises in the matter of identity when Shivan expresses the inner marriage life of his parents.

Shivan therefore says,

When my father was alive, there was hardly a night my sister and I fell asleep without the sound of our parents' fierce whispering in the living room or outside on the verandah, my mother crying, my father pleading. Sometimes, my mother would not be able to contain her anger and she would yell at my father, calling him a ponnaya, a faggot, railing at his weakness and incompetence (Selvadurai "Hungry" 19).

As much as one's inner feelings of passion and desire could never be really seen or understood by the others, there is also an inadequacy to identify an individual according to the outer appearance or the outer judgement. Though identity is based on the orientation that was already established long before, there is still a limitation for one to identify the other entirely. Identity that is based on sexuality and gender categorizations can never be firmly established as they are varied from one individual to the other. The definition of heterosexuality and homosexuality as a sexual category could fail to explain the orientation of sexuality as well as gender definitions especially in an individual like Shivan's father. Though Shivan's father is a married man with two children, there is still confusion that could be seen in his sexual identity. His identity that is placed within the ambit of heterosexuality is to be questioned when Shivan's mother called him a "ponnaya", a "faggot". This highlights the fact that the establishment of sexual categories can never be stable.

Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani have stated,

Consider that gender and sexual orientation are not empirically stable; what we observe depends on how we measure it. If we define homosexuality by same-sex behavior, then we will omit gay virgins but include women who kiss other women to satisfy the straight male gaze. If instead we define homosexuality by an identity category like gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB), then we will exclude those people who experience same-sex arousal or who engage in same-sex behavior but do not self-identify as GLB. In the biological and health sciences, a single instance of same-sex behavior can automatically place an individual in the homosexual category . . . (Brim and Ghazini 17).

It is very important to look closely into how an individual is continuously identified with a particular sexual category. The involvement of a conventional sexual orientation shaped not only the categorizations of sexuality, but also the whole notion of sexuality. The whole concept of sexual orientation is not fixed and involves a course that keeps going with the progression of everyday's life. It is the categorizations of sexual and gender identity that guide the ongoing course of human beings with its judgement of what is agreed and disagreed upon. Before Shivan's mother reveals the undisclosed identity of his father, Shivan's father was seen as someone that resides exclusively within the ambit of heterosexuality. It is only through the exposure of his true identity by his wife that the readers came to know about the instability of his previous sexual identity. His previous identity that operates according to the presupposed perception of his being as a son, as a boy, as a male, as a father, and as a husband in a society had already gained a temporary consistency and this eventually crashed down when his real sexual identity was later revealed by Shivan's mother. This clearly depicts the fluidity of the categorizations of sexuality and gender identity

As Robin A. Dembroff states,

. . . sexual orientation is based upon a person's sexual behavioral dispositions under the ordinary manifesting conditions for these dispositions (*i.e.*, the conditions corresponding to applications of the term 'sexual orientation' and related terms), and having a particular sexual orientation is based upon the sex[es] and gender[s] of persons one is (or is not) disposed to sexually engage with under these conditions. Importantly, these particular categories of sexual orientation do *not* reference one's own sex or gender (Dembroff 3).

According to this statement made by Robin A. Dembroff, it is apparent that identity achieves its stability only through the instability of other identity. In order to stabilize heterosexuality, there is the requirement to demoralize homosexuality. The concept of right and wrong, accepted and unaccepted, moral and immoral, all these were originally established from the same ground. Thus, the purpose of the establishment of these binaries is to draw a line of demarcation between the two binaries in which one is subjugated through the liberation of the other and that the other is liberated through the subjugation of the other. The act of dealing with these binaries in a pragmatic way so as to achieve sensible deliberations and realistic reflections was rather difficult to attain due to the impediment of some philosophical approaches that involves the unrealistic instead of the realistic.

The relationship between Balendran and Richard in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) accomplished its conclusion when Balendran's father came to visit Balendran's flat in London. By acknowledging the matter concerning his son's relationship with Richard, Mudaliyar completely destroyed the hope and love that both his son and Richard had already established for a period of time only through this single visit. He shattered the hope that the couple had lived

through and left them with no hope to attain further. The arrival of his father and his act of destroying the hope between him and his partner Richard struck at the notions of reality to Balendran. He finally realized that youth is not only beautiful but also painful and terrible. It was only later when Balendran has established his own family that he came to realize the rightful act that his father had done for him and his partner Richard. As it is written in the novel, “How foolish to have imagined that the world would change over for them. Balendran knew, now that he was a father himself, that his father had done the right thing” (59). During this phase of his life, Balendran could not figure out what exactly formed reality, as he was powerfully forced to get attached to the unrealistic structure of the conventional methods. He thought that his father had done all these in order to protect him. “At forty, Balendran felt that, despite the difficult years of his marriage, despite the necessary compromises he had to make, his father had acted wisely and correctly” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 59).

Balendran left the dream of the future that he and Richard had earlier hoped for in order to follow the conventional norms. He thought that this was what reality was all about and that he had to follow it instead of pursuing his inner desire and passion. The passing of twenty years had moulded him to a different person and he knew that “his love for Richard was long dead” (38). Selvadurai stated,

As for the type of love Richard and he had had, he accepted that it was part of his nature. His disposition, like a harsh word spoken, a cruel act done, was regrettably irreversible. Just something he had learnt to live with, a daily impediment, like a pair of spectacles or a badly set fracture (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 38).

Although Balendran knew that what he had done in the past was not right and even tried hard to run away from it, that part of him never really set him free as it could never be eliminated from his life. With the acceptance of his mistake, Balendran chose to lead a time-honoured life in the society. He married, begot a son, and even won back the love from his father. Though Balendran chose this way of life as he regarded it to be the reality of life, he did not really know what reality actually was. In choosing to live according to the conventional way of life, Balendran strongly suppressed his inner desire, his passion, and even his past memories. He did not even want to think back to the time when his father came to his flat in London and broke his relationship with Richard. He wanted to turn away from it altogether and wished not to stay on that memory (39). Although Balendran tries hard not to get back to those situations which would make him to be never accepted in the society, reality strikes with the appearance of Richard in his life again even after many years had already passed. “Balendran wondered, even to this day, how Richard had simply glanced at him and seen his desire. He, who was so very careful not to be detected watching men” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 112).

The inconsistency of Balendran’s sexual identity could be easily perceived through his meeting with Richard even after many years had already passed. Richard had not only seen him, he had actually seen him through. There is a desire that is still there in Balendran, and this desire is his desire for Richard. This exactly is his inner reality that could never be changed or transformed in the same manner as he changed his stance or transformed his appearance. It had always been there with him but had always been suppressed so that he would continue to live his life according to the expectations of others in the society. As he is blinded to see what exactly reality is, Arul says to him, ““You have been blind to the reality of life, Bala. You have spent your whole life living by codes everyone lays down but nobody follows”” (Selvadurai

“Cinnamon” 273). Balendran preferred to adjust his life and regulate his appearance in order to accomplish the codes that are laid down in the family. He withholds his true identity by suppressing his true inner feelings. He transforms according to the expectation of others. Just like what Indra has said in “Gender Fusion”, “My strategy around gender subversion is inconsistency. Just when you think you know what to expect from me I transform. Vast sliding movements over different positions on the gender spectrum. Slippery changes” (Morland and Willox 139). With the availability of these “slippery changes” within the categorizations of sexuality and gender identity, Balendran could appear as a heterosexual male when it is needed and could again easily come out with his true self outside the restriction of the heteronormative world. The judgement of Balendran’s identity changes from his society to his family, from his father to his son, from Richard to his wife. Balendran’s identity is perceived and judged by others according to how it has made its expression in their presence. As it is written in *Queer Theory*,

In this century, in which sexuality has been made expressive of the essence of both identity and knowledge, it may represent the most intimate violence possible. It is also an act replete with the most disempowering mundane institutional effects and potentials. It is, of course, central to the modern history of homophobic oppression. . . . (Morland and Willox 83).

The fear of violence was one reason that led to the conclusion of Balendran and Richard’s relationship earlier in London. There is a large possibility of violence when it comes to the issue of sexuality. The entire institution achieved a great faculty to exercise its power in order to enlarge the superior world of heteronormativity. The regulation of sexuality with its possible violence dominates the whole notion of homosexuality. Since homosexuality is considered to be

a punishable crime in a society, it is effortlessly linked with a permissible violence. It is because of this reason that a character like Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* could not come out and make his own choice even after he had discovered what he really desires in life. The weight of the regulations in a society is too heavy that it is not easy for a character like Balendran to drop this weight in order to disclose his secret to the world and to come out from the closet. This could be seen clearly in the final letter that Balendran had written for Richard. Balendran therefore writes,

I am trying, by this request, to learn to content myself with what cannot be changed, to draw sustenance from the small comforts. But perhaps that is not such a small comfort after all. Perhaps it is enough to have one person to whom nothing is a secret, to whom one can lay open the inner workings of one's heart. Possibly, at the end of a life, to have said that would be enough (Selvadurai "Cinnamon" 385).

Balendran confessed to his father that Richard was the one person that he truly loved and that if his father would have left him and Richard in the manner that they both were living in London, he might have been really happy. Mudaliyar still could never accept this kind of confession. No matter how pure or natural the confession might be, the love that Balendran had had for Richard was considered only a "filth" for Balendran's father. As Balendran confessed how he truly felt within, he continued to say to his father, "And there isn't a day that goes by that I don't live with the pain of knowing this and not being able to do anything about it" (367). In hearing this kind of confession from his son, Mudaliyar was so amazed that he only kept staring at Balendran. He was extremely shocked and shuddered with the truth that he heard from his son. Instead of accepting how his son has faced all these painful and vulnerable situations in his life, Mudaliyar said, "How dare you speak like this in my presence. It is not true. I will not

accept it” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 367). If the truth stands against the direction of the nation or against the conventional way of the society and the family, this kind of truth could never be accepted. In knowing that he would never be accepted by what he really was in the society, Balendran thus preferred to learn to be satisfied with what he could reach in life. He knew that sexuality was deeply constituted with the “national subjects” and that his confession would not just end here as sexuality was rooted with the whole notion of a person’s being acceptable or unacceptable in the society. Heather Smyth states,

. . . focusing on the closeted Balendran and his relationship with his politically powerful father, is, I argue, just as important to the issue of nation-building, as it demonstrates the ways that sexuality shapes national discourses. Selvadurai shows that sexuality constitutes public, national subjects, and is not merely a private matter . . . (Smyth 5,6)

Balendran would not be counted as a ‘normal’ man if he continued his relationship with Richard in the eyes of his father as well as in the eyes of the entire society. He would no longer fit to be his father’s inheritance since a person like Balendran would never achieve respect in the society. If Balendran follows his father’s pattern and chooses to hide his inner desire and passion, he would easily be seen as a respectable man in the society. Particularly in the Sri Lankan context, family is one of the most important units that hold the value of respect in a society. It is because of this matter that Balendran could not easily come out with his real self. Balendran clearly knew that he would weaken the value of respect which was already possessed by his family if he decided to come into sight according to his true desire and passion. Kaushav Bakshi states, “One obvious reason for not acknowledging gay and lesbian lives is that they considerably destabilize the family, the basic unit on which the nation-state is founded . . .” (Bakshi, sec, III). The desire to maintain the honour of the family and the desire to take up the

way of the family, especially the behaviour of his own father strongly constituted the life of Balendran already. The patriarchal system of a son being considered to be submissively constituted with his father's way is apparently seen when Sonia became involved in the issue that relates to Balendran and his father. It was at this moment that Balendran said to his wife Sonia, "He is my father. It is our way. Perhaps you can't understand it" (138). The declaration of "our way" here is made to emphasize the inter-relationship between a father and a son as well as the inter-relationship that is maintained between a father and a son in the Sri Lankan context with its judgement of the other contexts, especially with a person like Sonia who was half British. A set of rules has to be followed in order to survive in a family. This is seen clearly when Arul said to Balendran, "A set of rules. We are told we must follow them. Some of us obey in spite of our natures. Others only make a pretence" (Selvadurai "Cinnamon" 275). Balendran's father imposed a set of rules for Balendran in order that Balendran would be able to inherit his position one day. A person like Balendran obeys these rules in spite of his nature while a person like Mudaliyar only makes a pretence to these rules so that he would be able to impose the rules to his son, to his family, and even to the society.

By delving deeply in all the three selected texts of Selvadurai, the notion of sexual identities, politics, history and communities are all limited within the subject of heteronormativity. With the restriction of these borders that were already formed long before their existence within the heteronormative context, the characters in Selvadurai's novels have to produce a new world that does not simply locate itself within the framework restricted by the inside/outside politics. Locating oneself inside/outside the context certainly generates different outcome especially if one moves from inside to outside or from outside to inside while the

outcome of this move is nothing but still a shift that happens within the framework of heteronormativity.

Ki Namaste stated,

Queer theory recognizes the impossibility of moving outside current conceptions of sexuality. We cannot assert ourselves to be entirely outside heterosexuality, nor entirely inside, because each of these terms achieves its meaning in relation to the other. What we can do, queer theory suggests, is negotiate these limits. We can think about the *how* of these boundaries – not merely the fact that they exist, but also how they are created, regulated, and contested. The emphasis on the production and management of heterosexuality and homosexuality characterizes the poststructuralist queer theory project (Namaste 224).

The current conceptions of sexuality in which these novels were located have a lot to do with the formation of gender hierarchy that in Sri Lanka. By looking into the novel *Funny Boy* particularly, the concept of sexuality that was established long before the existence of Arjie was introduced to him by his own family. It was only through this introduction that Arjie came to realize about his own queerness, the queerness that was constructed within the domain of gender hierarchy. The institution of a family that exercises its power and dominance for the shape of male/female identity within the ambit of gender hierarchy could never admit the expansion of the queerness that was there in Arjie. The discovery of Arjie's queerness was new to the other family members as much as it was to Arjie. When Arjie heard his parents fighting in their room after they found out about his sexuality, his father asked his wife demandingly how long has this aspect in Arjie been going on? Arjie's mother answered his father and said, "It was as new to

me as it was to you” (14). Arjie’s sexuality was questioned only through a single discovery of his being performed as a bride in the game of “bride-bride”. The discovery of Arjie’s queerness was never fully known by any of the family members to the extent that it could be taken as a site of collective contestations. The failure of Her Fatness to accept male as a bride in the game “bride-bride” also confirms her inability to accept the game simply as a game that was created to be played by kids like them. She preferred the game of “bride-bride” to be played exactly according to the order of the real world with its systematic categorizations of male/female identity. By showing all the valid orders that were practiced within the human institutions, Her Fatness already ruled with the power which composed the authority of the entire institution. Arjie therefore says, “I stared at her, defenceless in the face of her logic” (Selvadurai “Funny” 10). Arjie was powerless because Her Fatness stood with the logic that constructs the institution of marriage which is the true force of heteronormativity.

Even if one steps out from the heteronormative structure, one cannot be out of it exclusively. In the case of Arjie, he was forced to follow the structure that was already set within the institution. He was imposed to play with the boys and follow the standard that has been set for him. He could never really manage to survive in the ‘boys’ world’ as much as he could not find support in the ‘girls’ world’. The novel highlights that he was caught in “between the boys’ and the girls’ worlds” (Selvadurai “Funny” 39). Since he is a person that exists in the world of heteronormativity, he is addressed and situated with the identity that is ‘his’ identity in the formation of gender hierarchy. There are several boundaries that were formed, twisted and shaped long before his existence. These boundaries were regulated and contested by the power that stands predominantly with the authoritative system that has its firm corporation with the

formation of the heteronormative world. As soon as the 'I' identity stands out to perform, question arises simultaneously whether the 'I' that stood out is the 'he' or 'she'.

Judith Butler states,

Indeed, I can only say "I" to the extent that I have first been addressed, and that address has mobilized my place in speech; paradoxically, the discursive condition of social recognition *precedes* and *conditions* the formation of the subject: recognition is not conferred on a subject, but forms that subject (Butler "Critically" 18).

Since the "I" stood out not only to represent the subject but as the one that forms the subject completely, all the characters in Selvadurai's novels are completely positioned within the ambit of gender constructions. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the notion of queer identity with its assumption of all the 'negative' elements is a weight from the past history that is bigoted in the present. The beliefs and practices of the past that are obstinately attached to the present are also imagined to be the constituents of the future. Therefore, gender is performed in order to substantiate sexual orientation and gender normativity while queer goes beyond that. The ability to perform the sexes, the ability to cross-dress, and the ability to reach beyond gender normativity had already undermined the biological, psychological, political, historical, sociological imperatives that guides the heteronormative structure. Selvadurai novels pave the way to analyze the term 'queer' and the inability to locate queer entirely outside or inside the site of contestation. Though the characters are sometimes placed in between the male/female identity, located within the ambit of homosexuality or heterosexuality, or positioned to be in both the 'boys' world' and the 'girls' world' at the same time, they are still situated outside or inside the sexual categorizations since the outside reveals the inside as much as the inside reveals the

outside. The outside will eventually expose that the inside could not go along with the outside just like how the inside will ultimately make known that the outside label of gender categories is not always true to that of the inside. To come out involves both liberation and restriction. According to Diana Fuss,

“Out” cannot help but to carry a double valence for gay and lesbian subjects. On the one hand, it conjures up the exteriority of the negative – the devalued or outlawed term in the hetero/homo binary. On the other hand, it suggests the process of coming out – a movement into a metaphysics of presence, speech, and cultural visibility (Fuss Intro 4).

The inside/outside rhetoric is still not very clear and has brought confusion in the study of queer theory. There is an unending query in the establishment of sexual differences where the outside stands for the inside and vice versa. To come out in order to be termed as ‘homosexual’ confirms the hierarchical conflict of sexual differences in which binaries always stand for an implementation of regulatory regimes. The term ‘gay’ does not achieve the meaning of the term ‘gay’ alone just like how the term ‘homosexual’ does not have its complete meaning with the term ‘homosexual’ itself. Therefore, to come out, implies the coming out of an individual to admit the term given to him/her, or to come out from the term itself in order to achieve liberation in which this liberation could only be achieved through the deliverance of an individual from those restrictions that are laid within the homophobic order of sexual differences. Restrictions are always within the categorization of sexualities. As Butler states in “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” “If I claim to be a lesbian, I “come out” only to produce a new and different “closet.” The “you” to whom I come out now has access to a different region of opacity” (Fuss 15). This statement clearly depicts the urgent need to break all the regulatory regimes that subsist along with the collection of gender and sexual identities.

After Balendran wrote Richard's letter, he was filled with a "sudden tenderness" that he had never experienced earlier in his life. His coming out, of his real term is a new closet where he would continue to inhabit from that moment onwards as depicted in *Cinnamon Gardens*. The novel concludes, "Balendran straightened his tie and went to take his place amongst his family" (Selvadurai "Hungry" 386). The things that had weighted and entangled Balendran earlier in his life become "strangely sweeter" as they finally stood apart from him. This is the result of the detachment that Balendran had experienced as depicted in the novel. As Balendran "went to take his place amongst his family" at the end of the novel, he came out from his 'closet' to the 'new closet'. The novel concludes as Balendran takes place amongst his family. Balendran does not declare to his family what exactly had happened to him. There is no definition after this moment of detachment and the promise of this detachment is never mentioned. As Butler states, "Hence, being "out" must produce the closet again and again in order to maintain itself as "out"" (Fuss 16)

Selvadurai's heroes were all left in between the context of inside/outside. They cannot be inside completely, nor outside entirely. Arjie in *Funny Boy* does not feel the need to protect the inside world against the outside world after he discovered the wholeness of both the inside and the outside world. It is the realization of this wholeness that drives Selvadurai's heroes to come to terms their own selves. Though Arjie did not bother to close the gate that he left, he could not prevent himself from turning back to look the house again (312). It was during the moment while Arjie was looking at his house that the novel concluded. Thus, Arjie says, "For a moment I saw it, then the rain fell faster and thicker, obscuring it from my sight" (312). With the merging of the inside and the outside, the novel *Funny Boy* did not continue, as it immediately made its conclusion here. One could not witness what had happened to Arjie after that moment onwards.

The idea “coming out” in this novel could be seen as the discovery that Arjie had attained in the homophobic world. Thus, the question remains as to what extent does Arjie attain this discovery? Does he not attain this self-discovery endlessly from the beginning of the novel onwards? This is a process of discovery in which Arjie continues to find out his true self not from the role of his being a gay but from the role that he was anticipated to perform in the homophobic world. The repeated play of sexuality according to its categorization is what drives Arjie to rediscover his own sexuality. Arjie was torn in between the desire he had had for Shehan and the disgust that he had had because of that desire (Selvadurai “Funny” 266). With the discovery of his sexuality comes the discovery of sexual categorizations in which Arjie presumed his desire to be termed as ‘bad’ or ‘abnormal’ in the regulatory regimes. Even after he felt guilty of what he had done, Arjie could not stop reconstituting his being as gay in the society. As Butler again states, “. . . paradoxically, it is precisely the *repetition* of that play that establishes as well the *instability* of the very category that it constitutes” (Fuss 18).

Selvadurai’s heroes have passed through a painful period of self-discovery throughout all the selected novels. Being powerfully weighted by the past, Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts* had to reconcile with his past that led to the death of Mili. Shivan gave up Michael in order that what had earlier happened between him and Mili would not be repeated again. Shivan is the most pitiable hero among all the heroes of the three selected novels. The discovery that Shivan had had is the discovery of the cruel homophobic dominations that could repeat exercising its domineering power even in the future. Therefore, he had to leave Michael in order to save him. Though the voice within him has called him to turn back, Shivan could not turn back to it anymore. At the end, it is his giving up of the past that sets him free. He says, “But there is also a calm within me now, the inner stillness of someone who has finally given up, who has stopped

clinging to the ridiculous notion that he, or any of us really, can avoid our fate” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 371). In trying to resolve with his past, Shivan gave up his sexual desire and decided to move back to Sri Lanka. Rajorshi Das stated,

As a political exile, Selvadurai’s Toronto offers him a “safe place” from where he can write “unsafe novels” (Toronto Book Awards interview). Yet his prototype, Shivan must give up his relationship with Michael to retrieve his lost homeland, thereby suggesting the obfuscating (at least temporarily) of his Queer sexuality to perform the role of a good grandson and by association that of a good citizen (Das 325).

The Hungry Ghosts, Cinnamon Gardens, and Funny Boy highlight the differences that exist while analyzing queer novels. Though written by a same author, the queer elements that are portrayed in each novel are never similar. This proves that Selvadurai, as a writer of these novels knows about the differences that are there in all humans. Though these protagonists are generally linked with one another because of their being not able to fit within the authoritative regimes of gender categorizations, they are still very different from one another. The machinery that functions with the regulatory systems of gender stratifications has limited these characters to be constituted within the queer ambit simply because of some similarities that were discovered in them. It is simply because of these limitations that all the heroes of Selvadurai were grouped into a same sexual category. Though all the protagonists achieved their own conditions of freedom or liberation by giving up or by coming out at the end, there is no freedom that is untainted from the regulatory regimes of sexual categorizations or gender identity. Therefore, Butler states, “Freedom, possibility, agency do not have an abstract or pre-social status, but are always negotiated within a matrix of power” (Butler “Critically” 22). So, it is by his portrayal of the gay protagonists in these novels that eventually led Selvadurai to succeed in exploring both the

stability and the instability of sexual categories in terms of their different consequences and implications.

Chapter IV

Sexuality and Power

Foucault states, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault “History” 93). In studying the texts of Selvadurai, it is apparent that the notion of sexuality is controlled by a whole system of institutions that rules powerfully throughout the ages. The study will therefore attempt to analyze the issue of sexuality as well as an exploration on how the modern individual is subjected to the power that lies within the notion of sexuality by bringing in the selected texts of Selvadurai. The selected texts of Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), and *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013) have clearly portrayed how there is a never-ending demand for truth in all the individuals concerning the issue of sexuality. Power has brought a standard to be followed, firmly imposing its principle to all these characters consciously and unconsciously. Starting from their childhood, most of these characters in Selvadurai’s novels were introduced to the division that was already there in the society. By following the rules that are readily available for them, the offspring in the family had assumed that they had done ‘right’. The rules that children have learned from the adults around them are regarded as the truth of life that they as a children should continue to pursue. When Shivan and his elder sister Renu were fighting over the scooter that was bought by the grandmother for Shivan, Renu confirmed that she has power over her younger brother for she felt she has better knowledge in regards to the rules of the scooter. Renu told Shivan that “‘it’s a girl’s toy’” while Shivan protested his sister by bringing in the knowledge he had had on the ground of colour demarcations. He says, “‘Blue and green are boys’ colours not girls’ ” (35). Though Shivan takes his own ground in order to win over his elder sister, Renu continues to rule over her brother in relation to the knowledge that she had had with the support of her Grade being the higher Grade than Shivan. She thus says to Shivan, “‘You are just a Grade One baby. I am in Grade Three and I am telling you that scooters are for girls’” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 36).

With this statement, it is comprehensible that power rules over life in order to regulate and institutionalize the individuals. The concept of the individual is brought out in relation to the power that an individual holds within the system of the society. As Barry Smart stated,

Specifically, the objective of relations of power is to administer, manage, govern, or foster life. Power over life is described as developing in two basic forms: one around a conception of the body, its disciplining, optimization, and increase in utility, and the other around a conception of population, the species body, and the various dimensions appropriate to its government, (i.e. propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy, etc.) (Smart 204).

There has always been a standard set for all the individuals as well as certain regulations to be maintained through the active functioning of the state institutions. Schools, colleges, educational institutions, hospitals, prisons, and many other institutions were all designed in order to maintain how sexuality should be carried out and performed by all the individuals as being a member of a “social body.” While “a discourse on sex” is neglected, all these institutions dynamically functions as “a whole series of mechanisms.” These mechanisms thus operate for the multiplication of many other discourses. As Foucault states, “. . . we are dealing less with a discourse on sex than with a multiplicity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions” (Foucault “History” 33).

By the time Shivan was seventeen in the novel *The Hungry Ghosts*, he had become a voracious reader. He found it favourable to read the biographies of the old Hollywood stars. The movies of these Hollywood stars were never made available in Sri Lanka as there was no market for them in Sri Lanka. The term “homosexuality” was introduced to Shivan through his reading

of the “biography of Montgomery Clift” (55). As he read through the life of this particular actor, Shivan said,

The star despaired over his homosexuality (a word I had not encountered before) and became addicted to alcohol and pills, finally crashing his car into a telephone pole and ruining his once-famous beauty. In the last photograph taken before he died of a heart attack, Clift, at forty-six, looked shrivelled and haunted (Selvadurai “Hungry” 55, 56)

With very limited information about the biography of Montgomery Clift, Shivan came to note only about the negative consequences of Clift’s homosexuality. Even though Shivan was being repelled by the life of this actor, he could never stop himself from discovering the true desire of his inner being. It was at this moment that he also realized that he had the same desire that the actor had had. He did not like to lead the life as the actor; but it was with this discovery that Shivan also proclaimed that he, too, was a homosexual (56). Shivan was never given any chance to discover his true sexual desire as it was forbidden in Sri Lanka. The discovery of this desire in him and the result of this desire that he instantly came to realize along with this discovery had left Shivan in an ‘in between’ situation. He could not figure out what kind of desire was in him as the term “homosexual” could not define the true meaning of what he actually felt within. It was new to him as he could not come to terms with the hidden meaning behind this single word. With this particular word that was related to his sexuality, Shivan only knew that his life started moving against the rules that were already firmly set within the society. The word “homosexuality” is one of the terms that resulted from the multiplication of sex in many discourses. The appearance of this single term is completed through the powerful functioning of the whole system of the institutions. Instead of discovering his true sexual desire and his true self, Shivan was only exposed to the negative side of his sexual desire. With the

revelation that was made known through the secret readings of these biographies, Shivan already knew from that time onwards that his life would be miserable since it was inclined towards the breaking of the rules that were all firmly set within the institutions. As he continues to say, “The sheer surge of my suppressed adolescent lust swept away shame or guilt or fear, along with the warnings, revealed by the biography, that my life would be miserable” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 56). He knew the warnings that were set before him, but Shivan could never be stopped from the pure desire that was rooted deeply within him only because of these warnings.

Since there is a multiplication of discourses in which the whole concept of sexuality has been dominated, there is a need to revise this system of multiplications. Sexuality could never be altogether confined within these concepts as it belongs beyond these discourses, and is even wider than sexual and gender categorizations that have been constantly limited by the institutions. With this, the whole concept of identity also becomes really complex as it functions for the very formulation of power and knowledge as a whole. As Altman also states in his review, “The History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction by Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley,”

Our culture, he concludes, is one which has developed a “*scientia sexualis*” rather than an “*ars erotica*” (a sexology rather than an erotic aesthetic tradition), one in which power has become organized less by law (the right to administer death) and more by norm (the power to categorize and regulate the biological energies of life) (Altman 14).

With a multiplication of discourses, there is also a multiplication of norms. All these norms are set to control the “biological energies of life.” Just like how the inner force in Shivan involved the norms that were there in Sri Lanka, Shivan could never live out his true desire

without the connection of the collective norms. The necessity to incorporate sex with these norms as well as the propagation for the “normal sex act” technically forced an individual to receive punishment without any room for further query.

Individuals who are considered as ‘queer’ are compelled to stay under a close observation. So, if they are caught being acting against the order of the law, they are not only forced to disclose their sexual acts to the public domain, but are also enforced to be listed under the “legal records” which in turn becomes the “historical record” in the coming future. This highlights the fact that sexual relationships are altogether controlled by an influential power for the constancy of the rules that are set by the institutions. As Foucault says, “Power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (Foucault “History” 136). The life of an individual has no freedom within this power structure set within the notion of sexuality. Similarly, *The Hungry Ghosts* also highlights how there is no freedom in a society for those who are regarded to be homosexuals. The loneliness that was there in Shivan during his teenage life denotes how there was no freedom available for an individual like him. He says, “TO TRULY IMAGINE FREEDOM, one must understand how one might escape” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 55). Though Shivan tried to achieve his freedom by reading the biographies of the performers whose movies achieved no market in Sri Lanka, he did not achieve any real freedom after reading them. As he pondered about the sexual adventure that could happen in America, the idea of sexual freedom started to take root in Shivan (56). With power that restrains, there comes a need to find an escape.

Since childhood, Shivan was aware of the rising tension between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Being one of the Tamils in the country, Shivan was also never left unaffected by the riots

that happened in the country. In acknowledging the suffering that was faced by Shivan, Mili introduced how Canada and Australia have offered immigration for Tamils who would want to leave Sri Lanka. With this kind of offer made for them, Shivan felt that he would be able to leave Sri Lanka finally in order to attain his real freedom. In his attempt to convince his mother for their migration, Shivan says to his mother, “But think of the life we could have there, Amma. Renu and I could go to a foreign university. Think,” I held her gaze, “of the freedom for me.” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 68). Shivan knew the freedom he would have had if he could have the chance to migrate to another country. This is the freedom that relates to his sexual desire and Shivan knew that Sri Lanka would never really provide him the freedom that he truly wishes in his life. The sufferings that he faced being a homosexual surpass the hardships that he faced as being a part of the Tamil race. The sufferings that Shivan faces in Sri Lanka intensely involved the entire politics of Sri Lanka, the politics both of the Tamils and the Sinhalese, the politics that would always be there even if any of these races won over the other. The kind of sexual desire that Shivan has had is put into operation with all the ongoing political, social, and religious conditions of Sri Lanka. It has the forms of knowledge that are all readily carried out with the authority of any political power. There is a consciousness of ‘truth’ that has been established collectively throughout the ages with these forms of knowledge in order to willingly disapprove homosexuality in all the orders of the political institutions.

Foucault stated,

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault "Power/Knowledge" 131).

In *Cinnamon Gardens*, Annalukshmi's mother Louisa blamed her husband for raising Annalukshmi as "if she were a boy." According to Louisa, this was a big mistake made by her husband. Thus, describing about her husband's fault in raising up Annalukshmi, Louisa says, "He was responsible for her reckless nature, a disposition that would have been admissible, even charming, in a boy, but in a girl was surely a catastrophe" (4). In the eyes of Louisa, Annalukshmi's nature was altogether unacceptable though it could be accepted if she were a boy. The word "catastrophe" here has described how Louisa has made distinctions between a boy and a girl. Annalukshmi was bound to inherit a nature that only suits the principle of the society. Though nothing was really wrong with her nature, Louisa could not accept Annalukshmi's nature since the discernment of nature between a girl and a boy was already strongly fixed within her concept. The rules that a girl and a boy should go after were made with many limitations between the two in a society. Freedom for girls is particularly not offered as females were forcefully confined within the strong power of societal norms. As in the case of Annalukshmi's mother, it is written, "She had tried to curtail Annalukshmi's freedom, to inspire in her an understanding of the necessary restrictions that must be placed on a girl to protect her reputation

and that of her family's" (Selvadurai "Cinnamon" 4). The strong notion of "necessary restrictions" situated on a girl shows an extensive demarcation set between a girl and a boy in a society. With this concept of necessity, there is no space rendered for any real new discovery outside the power structure. Everything has to be created within this structure, and even if there is a need to relocate any discovery, it still has to come under the law and order of this power structure.

Everything is judged from one ground, and this is apparent especially in the issue of identity. Identity has no other ground in order to be judged and revealed without the issue of sexuality. The very content of the power structure is what incessantly shapes the entire power structure. Thus, it is not only the subject of the structure itself, rather it is the conditions and procedures that have shaped the subject as these conditions and procedures are framed and governed by the historical framework. The "internal régime of power" is what constitutes the entire power construction in which even if there is a new discovery in order to define the role of an individual, this new discovery is still in accordance with the historical framework of the ongoing society (Foucault "Power/Knowledge" 113). There was no law that a female could not be a teacher earlier within the construction of a society. After the introduction of education, there is an extension prepared for the restrictions of female. As stated in *Cinnamon Gardens*, "Annalukshmi's qualification as a teacher was held to be her greatest crime by her mother's relatives, the Barnetts" (Selvadurai "Cinnamon" 3).

Apart from his relationship with Richard in *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran also maintained a secret relationship with Ranjan. This relationship with Ranjan was made so secret in such a way that Balendran would choose to ignore Ranjan even if he happened to pass by him in public. Though this relationship was never really disclosed, the two often meet as the narrator

says, “The last time Balendran was here, he had learnt about Ranjan’s mother’s illness and given him money to take her to a doctor” (81). In order to stabilize his identity in accordance with his choice of sexual act, Balendran did not want Ranjan to really know him. Though there was satisfaction in having a sexual relationship with Ranjan, there was also a constant need to protect one’s own identity in Balendran once the sexual intercourse got over. As written in the novel,

For, once it was over, he knew he would be visited by a terrible anguish. Then, walking quickly away from the station, he would curse himself for his imprudence, for putting everything at risk, his marriage, his family name. . . . He would not be comforted by the fact that Ranjan did not know his name. . . . Then Balendran would vow never to visit the station again (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 82, 83)

There is an unending demand for the attainment of stability especially in the issue of sexuality. The requirement in an individual to identify the self with a given identity is what connects power and sexuality. Sexuality is not just sexuality in itself, but it is a force to dominate, a power to rule upon, an identity to mark a distinction, and many others. Sexuality lies within the power that dominates and constitutes the whole notion of sexuality. Therefore, there is an urgent need to fight against the function of this whole system of power in order to discover the truth behind the concealed, the true self behind the given identity. In his interview under the title, “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity,” Foucault says.

I think that one of the factors of this stabilization will be the creation of new forms of life, relationships, friendships in society, art, culture, and so on through our sexual, ethical, and political choices. Not only do we have to defend ourselves, not only affirm ourselves, as an identity but as a creative force (Foucault “Sex, Power” 164).

All the protagonists in the selected novels of the study were created in order to portray these “new forms” as stated by Foucault. With the aim to stabilize the systems according to the relations of power, no space is really given for a new discovery in a society. In the event that a new program is set without any accordance with the old systems or the long-established rules, they are distinguished and categorized by the entire institution. When Selvadurai’s protagonists discovered the true sexual forced of their true selves, the protagonists themselves considered their conditions as unusual and they were thus left confused. The flux of identities that were forced to perform as being a part of the society has placed them in a state of perplexity.

The novel *Cinnamon Gardens* clearly signifies how power consistently exists in all the places throughout the centuries. The novel highlights how a mudaliyar served as a representative of the king before the domination of the European. After the domination of Cinnamon Gardens by the British, there is nothing that really changed in the operation of power relations. “The British had continued the mudaliyarships, but now it was an appointment by the governor based on loyalty to the Empire” (25). The setting of headship was changed from one ruler to the other in which power incessantly resides according to the effects that were imposed upon it. The relations of power constitute and control the entire regime of power all through the novel, either by the ruling of the British power or by the power of the mudaliyars. An appointment of the mudaliyars was made by the governor and this appointment was based on the loyalty to the Empire. This shows how power imposes its own succession by the very means of its own power relations and nothing else. Since the relation of power is constantly the same even if the position is modified, the intent is the same in both the British and the Congress governments who battled among themselves in order to rule over Cinnamon Gardens. Balendran had seen this, and thus said to F. C. “Your Congress is ultimately no different from the British. You want power to do

exactly what the British have done” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 166). Depending on the instructions that are laid by the outward institutions, power also functions accordingly. Though power is always there, relation of power is only carried out through the operating of a discourse. Foucault stated,

What I mean is this: in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse (Foucault “Power/Knowledge” 93).

Sexuality as a discourse is a fundamental facet to institutionalize the whole notion of sex under the power paradigm. The key functioning of a discourse on sexuality is to “normalize” and categorize sexuality since it has the ability to control and dominate the entire institution. The constitution of the entire social body is based on the issue of sexuality. A social body is formed by a collection of social beings and these social beings are no longer identified just as social beings within these collections, but as beings that are identified by a different set of identities. Sexual identity is predominantly an identity that marks the establishment of all the other identities. Identity is not just an identity that marks the outward differences of an individual to identify one another, instead this whole set of identity becomes an institution that constitutes the individuals for the establishment of power relations. So as far as sexuality is concerned, the discourse concerning sex is readily related to the ground of power. From the eighteenth century onward, the discourses concerned with sex developed into the discourses that stimulate power as they reinforced the institutional power to incite power mechanically upon the individuals in the

manner in which sex should be spoken as well as the way in which sex should be heard within the domain of the institutions. As Foucault stated in *The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction*,

But more important was the multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail (Foucault “History” 18).

With an institutional incitement as to how sex ought to be heard and spoken out, there is a prohibition that is laid for the individuals in listening as well as in speaking about certain words. Being a member of a society, an individual is under the domain of the social law and order. With this, there is also a great concern for the whole notion of censorship, restriction, suppression, and demarcation that are all actively generated in a society. The desire and choice of an individual is no longer at liberty with the active involvement of power over the entire institution. There is a need to translate all the feelings of an individual into discourse in which language itself is also altogether institutionalized. As Foucault states, “Not only will you confess the acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse (Foucault “History” 21). In the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran was a person who had a very strong societal attachment. It is his strong attachment to this collective bond that caused him to not being able to carve a life out of his own. Instead, Balendran was amazed to see Carpenter and his companion living a life out of the terms that they had created for themselves.

As denoted in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*,

When Richard and he had met Carpenter and his companion, George Merrill, Balendran had been amazed and then intrigued by the way they lived, the comradely manner in which they existed, the way they had carved a life out for themselves, despite such strong societal censure (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 59).

Unlike Balendran, Carpenter and Merrill were able to live out what they most wanted in life. In the case of Balendran, the way of life that Carpenter and his companion lived out became very astounding. For Balendran, societal bond was an important characteristic of his life, and it was measured from the notion that he had had from his being socially constructed. Although the condition of Carpenter and Merrill was such an encouragement for both Balendran and Richard, their faith to live like them in the future was altogether shattered with the arrival of Balendran’s father. Balendran and Richard were so terrified that day and this dreadful memory was so strong in them that it could not leave them even after many years had already passed. When both of them met and discussed the situation of that day again, Balendran said to Richard, ““Over the years . . . this is something I have felt ashamed for. It is something I will always live with”” (162). Even after many years had passed, Balendran had wondered as to how his relationship with Richard was made known to his father. He later came to note that it was his friend F. C. Wijewardena. A man he had considered his closest friend. It was impossible to comprehend” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 163).

The preparation of an individual to do something good in the society, the construction of an individual to follow the societal norms and traditions eventually succeeded. This further

defied the strong friendship that has been built and the great trust that has been maintained all through the days even between Balendran and F. C. Instead of discussing this matter with Balendran, F. C. chose to function as a secret agent in which he “made inquiries about him, and then actually written to his father” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 163). The categorizations of sexuality and the rules that are set firmly in relation to sexuality had already penetrated the deepest part of life in which it functions as a system that has been chosen over life as well as a kind of regulation that has been chosen over friendship. Sexuality, power, and knowledge are all connected to one another in which one could not function without the absence of the others. The right to question the sexual life of others and the right to have an investigation on what is deemed to be “abnormal” sexual relationship are all carried out by means of power and knowledge. The idea of “normalizing” the sexual desire of Balendran was the main intention that F. C. and Balendran’s father had maintained behind every action that they undertook to take to task the issues of Balendran’s sexual relationship. With this idea of “normalization”, Balendran was already limited and controlled by the power that has made itself readily possible through the notion of institutionalizing sexuality. Balendran’s father and F. C. were exercising their power in order to “normalize” Balendran’s sexual desire and their authority over the sexual act that Balendran had had with Richard was the only advantage that was readily accessible for both Balendran’s father and F. C. As Miller states, “Normalization is the process where the individual is not just categorized, but also controlled and even constructed by the power vested in institutions and antecedent social practices” (Miller 122).

A modern nation-state is an important aspect that helps in bringing out the aspect of law and order which are set within a certain geographical area. With a state, there is a strong institution where all the compulsory organizations are carried out with strong power. The people

of the state become the subject and it is mandatory for the people within the border of the state to go according to the law and order of the state. Since the people are entirely bound within a particular territory, violating the law and order that are set within the institution is regarded as a threat to both the institution and the people within it. As already mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, Sri Lanka is a nation-state where homosexuality is still outlawed. In an article “Commonwealth Summit: The Countries Where it is Illegal to be Gay” by BBC News, posted on 20th April 2018, there is a clear statement that people who are regarded as homosexuals still fight for their right with blood and tears. There is still a continuous demand in order that “laws banning homosexuality should be overturned”. Laws within a nation-state function as a benefit to expand the order of the heteronormative world. People who are regarded as homosexuals faced an unending demarcation, violence, unequal rights, amongst other aspects. They are defenceless and have no other ground than to stand up as the ones that rebelled against the state since heterosexuality is protected firmly with the power of the state that rules over the entire system. The article also states, “There are 53 countries in the Commonwealth and most of them are former British colonies. Out of those, 37 have laws that criminalise homosexuality.” Since Sri Lanka had also gained its independence only in the year 1948, it is significant to distinguish as to how the law criminalise homosexuality.

Being unable to legalize homosexuality by The Constitution of Sri Lanka, a Sri Lankan LGBTQ activist Rosanna Flamer denoted statement in an article “Activist Fights to Decriminalize Homosexuality in Sri Lanka” updated on 26th February, 2017.

Kristi Eaton denoted,

In January, the government opted not to decriminalize same-sex activity, saying it was a cultural matter and not a human rights matter, Flamer-Caldera says. Flamer-Caldera, who is Burgher with Dutch descent, says the irony is that the culture that is being embraced is not really the culture belonging to Sri Lankans, but has been brought over by the British (Eaton).

The British had overruled Sri Lanka in such a manner that Sri Lanka could never be liberated from the strong grip of the British even after the British had long gone. The culture of the colonizers eventually became the culture of the colonized. With the advancement of science and education, there is a need to display everything with proof and evidence. This is depicted clearly when Mr. Jayaweera says to Annalukshmi, ““We live in age when science reigns. We are both educated to think so. If it can’t be demonstrated with proof and evidence, it does not exist. But perhaps there are many things that cannot be explained in such a way”” (131). The British colonizers had eliminated the old ways as Mr. Jayaweera highlights this matter by presenting how they were taught to ignore the old ways. The colonized world is a world wholly set up to match the plan of the colonizers. The Christian missionaries had established schools for the education of the people while the main intention behind this was to impart their own religion, tradition, and culture to the people. The power behind this system of education was accomplished through the coordination of both the colonizers and the colonized. This is depicted clearly when Nancy said to Annalukshmi, “Ceylonese parents want the prestige of sending their children to schools run by Europeans” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 260). With this technique of colonialism, there is a whole new system of constructions made for the colonized state. Thus, this led the post-colonial constructions of sexuality to be entirely connected with the notions of

nationalism and ethnicity. Heather Smyth thus highlights the statement that was made regarding the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*,

Jeanne Marecek confirms that in Ceylon “[t]he successive waves of colonizers had imposed changes in marriage, gender relations and sexual practices, bringing them more into line with Western norms” (142). “Christianization transformed sexual behavior into a moral issue,” argues Marecek, and “under British rule, sexual behavior and family life came under state regulation” (142) (Smyth 15, 16).

The idea to regulate the state with moral issue was a major goal of the British colonizers. The people were forced to follow the rules that were set by the colonizers, thinking therefore that it was their duty to follow especially when these rules were sited under the state regulations. The people are entirely subjected by the state in which they become the very products of the state, or the products of the colonizers. The judgment of the productions of the state is made by the power that functions both internally and externally. Sexual behaviour is guided by moral issues which therefore led Balendran to regret in what he had done earlier in his life. The notion of this moral issue is set up from an individual to another individual by means of power relations. It was not only the respect that he had had for his father that drove Balendran to obey his father’s rules and regulations in the family. Along with this respect, there is also the involvement of the respect for the power that overrules sexuality, culture, social, political, tradition, and other issues. By breaking the system that was set for him, Balendran felt guilty and embarrassed as the subject of his sexuality constantly touches the issue of his morality as well. Thus, with regard to Balendran’s sensitivity to this matter, Selvadurai writes, “Speaking to his father about Richard was an unpleasant, embarrassing task . . .” (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 133) What had happened in the past between Balendran and Richard could never be forgotten, since Balendran’s past life

was strongly marked with the matter of homosexuality. Balendran's action in the past entailed what Foucault has stated as "a new *specification of individuals*" (42) that sustained throughout his life. Therefore, with regard to the nineteenth-century homosexual, Foucault also states,

Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature (Foucault "History" 43).

Homosexuality is made to be characterized in all the details of one's life if one is found to be engaged in the act or even being inclined to it. With this system of characterizations, homosexual identity is regarded to be present in every life form of a person. With this fixed identity inscribed on them, a male or a female is no longer identified just as a male or a female in a society, but a male or a female homosexual. Life itself is conquered by this whole system of characterizations, it is no longer a life of life itself, but a life that is to be dealt with, to be categorized, to be recorded, and even to be punished by the power of the institutions. This matter is clearly depicted in the novel *The Hungry Ghosts* when Shivan confesses that he is a gay to his mother. His mother says, "Are you idiot to choose to be gay when this plague is going on? Do you want to die young? Have I brought you into this world and sacrificed so much for you to destroy your life?" (129). Though it was never the choice of Shivan to live a gay life, it felt like a choice to his mother in which Shivan could change and transform his life in order to be not gay. Instead of sharing the pain that Shivan has gone through in his life, Shivan's mother regretted having a son like Shivan and even stated, "If I had known you would throw away your life, I would have aborted you. . . . I would have strangled you at birth" (Selvadurai "Hungry")

130). This confirms how sexuality overpowers life itself while life should be the one that conquers overall. All the past actions of Shivan were no longer counted by his mother in noting that he was a gay, instead Shivan's entire composition was already unwanted by his mother just because of the single statement that he made with regard to his sexuality. A person's sexuality is no longer a content of a person's life, instead it is a person's life that is now contented and defeated by the subject of a person's sexuality.

Although Shivan explained the hardship he had faced in Sri Lanka and his mother's reaction to his confession of his being gay to his partner Michael, Michael said to Shivan, "You were right to choose Vancouver, Shivan, to make a life for yourself away from all the pain" (313). Being a gay, Shivan has to choose where he could have his freedom. Not all places were meant for him, especially a place like Sri Lanka which was actually his homeland. Though Michael assumed that Shivan had made the right decision in choosing Vancouver to stay away from all the pain, there was the question as to whether Shivan was really away from the pain that he had experienced earlier in his life. There were days when the feelings of despair and grief and rage that periodically engulfed him had come back to him with renewed vigour when Shivan arrived at his apartment in Vancouver (311). Even during the time when Michael comforted Shivan by telling him that he had made a right decision in choosing to live in Vancouver, Shivan still cried to Michael while sharing the pain that he had gone through in life (312). This denotes the fact that the pain which Shivan had experienced earlier in his life has never really left him. It is the pain that cannot be eradicated by the change of the surroundings. It is the pain that deeply holds the power in Shivan as it is, his being gay that holds the power over his life. His being gay requires a confirmation within the system of identity politics and this is the reason as to why Shivan also made a confession in order to be accepted or identified by others. In the case of his

mother's reaction to his being gay, Shivan then continued to say, "She has come around to accepting who I am" (Selvadurai "Hungry" 313). With this matter of confession and acceptance, it is undoubtedly apparent to note that the issue of identity resides on how it has been taken into judgement. The concept of accepting gay identity lies with the whole notion of protecting identity that is deemed to be abnormal or minor within the heteronormative defined world. As written in *Queer Theory* (2005),

Finally, we would like to consider briefly the charge that identity politics of the sort we have been defending always belongs to a kind of minoritarian politics. Related to this charge is the claim that identity politics in matters of sexuality reinforces, rather than undermines, the dichotomy between hetero- and homosexuality (Morland and Willox 185).

Sexuality is the main component that builds identity in which heterosexuality and homosexuality stands in contrast as both these identities represent a wholly different set of descriptions. There is a division of identity in which some identities are made protected and positive as well as readily acceptable by the institutions while some other identities are deemed to be negative and are therefore driven with a conflict of change. The need to change and acclimatize one's own behaviour and performance in order to be accepted in a society is portrayed in many of the characters of Selvadurai. By looking into the character of Shivan in *The Hungry Ghosts*, he was overruled not only by his grandmother, but also by Chandralal who was actually supposed to be under his power. He was weakened because of his sexuality, and was damaged by the dominant power of heteronormativity. In order to protect his friend Mili, Shivan firstly has to submit himself under the power of his grandmother as well as Chandralal. Shivan

therefore told Chandralal about the promise that he had made to his grandmother in the matter of his relationship with Mili. He says,

“I have promised my grandmother I will no longer see him. Within a year, I will get married,” I found myself adding. “It will be entirely her choice whom I marry, Chandrarlal. Also, I am guaranteeing you that my friend will not speak of this abduction. Neither he nor I would want to see an old woman suffer . . .” (Selvadurai “Hungry” 235)

In order to admit his defeat to his grandmother, Shivan also needs to give in to Chandralal since his grandmother and Chandralal share the same discernment toward the matter of sexuality. Chandralal, in addition, clearly understood that Shivan was at his mercy. This is shown evidently when Shivan tried to explain his relationship with Mili to Chandralal. Chandralal did not honestly depict as to how Shivan’s behaviour was unacceptable in the presence of Shivan, but he did feel that Shivan’s conduct was insupportable when he said to Shivan that his grandmother was a good woman and that she was renowned for her pious deeds (Selvadurai “Hungry” 235). Chandralal tries to disclose upon Shivan’s nature and that it is unacceptable in the society, by displaying his grandmother’s religious nature and uprightness to Shivan. With this statement made by Chandralal, Shivan is in any case unacceptable in the eyes of the heterosexuals simply because of his homosexual relationship with Mili. This highlights the fact that homosexuality is readily unaccepted by the heterosexuals just because homosexuality is perceived differently.

Foucault stated,

Power over sex is exercised in the same way at all levels. From top to bottom, in its overall decisions and its capillary interventions alike, whatever the devices or institutions on which it relies, it acts in a uniform and comprehensive manner; it operates according to the simple and endlessly reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship . . . (Foucault “History” 84).

Shivan was seen to be entirely immoral especially when he was compared to his grandmother’s uprightness. Though Chandralal weights the goodness of Shivan’s grandmother by emphasizing upon the “bada maduwa” (preaching hall) that Shivan’s grandmother builds, the main intention of Chandralal behind the praise that he made for Shivan’s grandmother’s goodness was to demonstrate how powerful he was in rendering his judgement on Shivan for he knew that he was strongly supported by the law and order of the various institutions.

“Power over sex” as stated by Foucault has so much to do with the order of the institutions. It continues to reproduce mechanically among all the agencies of political, social, religion and many others and therefore it created a firm discipline, knowledge, awareness, regulation, and belief. With this system set within the social domination, anything that relates to sexuality entails many laws that are regularly extended according to the arrangement set by the institutions. In *Funny Boy*, power is not only laid within the realm of homosexuality and heterosexuality. Instead, it extensively deals with the notion of marriage as it is an institution that was set long beforehand and that continued its function according to the system of tradition, religion, race, and caste. Radha Aunty was not allowed to marry a Sinhalese man Anil, just because Anil was not Radha Aunty’s kind or race. When Arjie’s mother asked if Arjie would

like to be a part of a play called "*The King and I*" in which Radha Aunty also took part, Arjie first asked his mother as to what was the play all about. After Arjie's mother explained the nature of the play and Arjie raised the question as to whether the English governess would marry the King or not at the end of the play. Arjie's mother then gave her explanation as to why the play could not end with marriage by saying that the King could not marry the English governess because she was not of the King's race. Disappointment overcame Arjie and he was not satisfied with the explanation that his mother had given to him. He insisted on a definite reason as to why they were not allowed to get married. Thus, Arjie's mother says, "Because most people marry their own kind" (54). This is the law that could not be questioned. After Arjie's mother gave him the explanation, Arjie also mentioned that his mother had said this sentence in a tone that warned him to ask no further question (Selvadurai "Funny" 54).

The play "*The King and I*" could not end with the marriage of two different races, likewise, the relationship between Radha Aunty and Anil could not end with marriage because both of them belonged to different races. When the relationship was not approved by the law of the institution, it became an illicit relationship (Selvadurai "Funny" 76). With this system of marriage, nationalism and ethnicity also plays a firm role in which if one marries out of the institution, one breaks one's own home rule and traditions. In noting that she would not have the ability to go further by protesting against the marriage system that had been practiced throughout the ages, Radha aunty therefore ended up marrying a man whom she did not love, but who was of her own kind.

Gopinath stated,

In sharp contrast to the queerness of the wedding scene as performed by Arjie in “Pigs Can’t Fly,” the wedding in “Radha Aunty” serves to discipline bodies and desires that do not conform to ethnic absolutist notions of community. Here femininity signifies not gender play, fantasy, and pleasure but rather Radha’s acquiescence to this logic of ethnic absolutism. The pathologizing of Arjie as a feminine boy, then, is revealed to be but one component in the same structure of domination that renders Radha’s heterosexual, female body symbolic of communal purity and tradition (Gopinath 175).

The wedding scene of Radha Aunty and Rajan Nagendra was no longer the wedding that Arjie had always dreamt of throughout his early days. It was altogether lifeless in which Arjie “felt no pleasure” (99). It was clear enough that the power of the institution had quenched the feelings of pleasure, desire, love, and happiness that were supposed to be felt upon seeing the couple being united for a lifetime. Radha Aunty’s wedding only served as a tool to discipline the body as well as to control all the feelings of Radha Aunty because she was considered to be a subject to the power of the institution. There was no longer any pleasure to be found in Radha Aunty, but only an entire being that was forced to constitute the ideal symbol of the entire institutions. In order to follow the rules that are stipulated within the institution of marriage, the other family members completely overlooked the feelings of Radha Aunty. As Butler states, “The demand for lucidity forgets the ruses that motor the ostensibly “clear” view” (Butler “Preface (1999)” “Gender” xx).

Both within the worlds of homosexuality and heterosexuality, the characterizations of sexuality in accordance with the authority have no bounds. Since it could never be fixed with a

single institution and was extended from time to time, there is no single coherent rule that could explain the function of sexuality within the human institutions. As much as there is no explanation for the reason as to why the King could not marry the English governess in the play “*The King and I*”, the whole set of institutions function as a play in order to entertain a larger audience that could give neither applause nor approval to all the decisions that have been undertaken. Even in the case of Arjie, his homosexual nature could never be approved by his families since it is a nature that could not be approved by the larger institutions. Thus, there is no lucid reason that could be made in the act of condemnation and disapproval of homosexuality in all the novels that have been undertaken for the study. As Diana Fuss states, “The homo, then, is always something less and something more than a supplement – something less in that it signifies lack rather than addition, and something more in that it signifies an addition to a lack, a lack which, importantly, may not be its own” (Fuss “Introduction” 3).

With the dissimilarity that is defined in part, as stated earlier by Fuss, the heterosexuals hold an authority in order to create a world of order, a world where sexuality is maintained according to the heterosexual order. With this power of authority and violence upon sexuality, an individual is continuously put forward as an instrument in order to uphold the ongoing system while ignoring how much an individual could be naturally diverse from one another. An individual in a society eventually becomes a set part of a system, or even a machine that is utilized by the institutions. The more an individual is disciplined and dominated under the body of the institution, the more he/she is made to be powerful within the society. With a power that weights an entire society, there is an easier way to force the individual to admit him/herself openly or secretly to the power that rules unquestionably. The arrangement of marriage that was designed to happen implicitly between the male and the female, and the order of sex that was

ordained resonantly in a society, could never really depart from Arjie even after he chose to live out his true self. All these systems were already deeply constituted within him and this is the reason as to why Arjie was often left with guilt and fear in having a relationship with Shehan. In approaching his family after having a sexual relationship with Shehan, Arjie therefore says,

I looked around at my family and I saw that I had committed a terrible crime against them, against the trust and love they had given me. . . . I wanted to cry out what I had done, beg to be absolved of my crime. . . . Now I understood my father's concern, why there had been such worry in his voice whenever he talked about me. He had been right to try to protect me from what he feared was inside me, but he had failed. What I had done in the garage had moved me beyond his hand (Selvadurai "Funny" 262).

Even though this was the condition that Arjie has faced in his life, he could not help identifying with his true nature. He obviously knew the 'order,' but this 'order' could not stop him from having a sexual relationship with his male friend. He grew up by understanding how power could easily defeat him in regards to his sexual relationship with Shehan. His being a male was defined with a sexual order long before he even entered this world while he was actually beyond this definition. With regards to the violence of gender norms, Butler also states, "All of this subjected me to strong and scarring condemnation but, luckily, did not prevent me from pursuing pleasure and insisting on a legitimating recognition for my sexual life" (Butler "Preface (1999)" "Gender" xx).

Selvadurai's protagonists were all continuously forced to be subjected under the ruling of the institutions that functions in accordance with the normalization of sexual and gender categorizations. With this idea of normalization, these protagonists were never treated in the

same manner as the heterosexuals treated themselves. As long as this normalization process takes place in a society, sexuality is an important tool of hegemony. With its powerful tool, sexuality is made to control the systems of power by which a strong idea of legitimization is constantly propagated. As Rediker states, “Sexuality figured mightily in the discipline and codification of the body’s forces, in the institutional thrust toward social standardization, in the regulation of populations and work forces, and in a specifically scientific mode of knowledge” (Rediker 638). This statement clearly defines how sexuality has reached all the disciplines of life with its power to regularize humanity according to its system.

The whole system of power is firmly placed within the institution in which sexuality is the very product of the institution and no longer a natural element of humans. This depicts the reason as to why Arjie as well as other protagonists of Selvadurai’s novels have no power within the order of the society. There is no choice available for them, except to follow the rules. Thus Arjie raised a question by saying, “If you were like Shehan or me you had no choice but to follow what they said. But did you always have to obey? Was it not possible for people like Shehan and me to be powerful too? I thought about this, but no answer presented itself to me” (Selvadurai “Funny” 274). This highlights the fact that these characters were bound to follow what others have said and no other room was made available for them. Since the “language of sexuality” is ruled entirely by the institution, the institutions constructed and arranged “the individual identity, truth, and knowledge” while eliminating any wider space for the individuals to question further. In addition, this construction does not simply end there. It goes around to every corner of the societal arrangements in order to represent ‘truth’ by imparting it from one institution to the other and also from one individual to the other.

Sedgwick stated,

Furthermore, in accord with Foucault's demonstration, whose results I will take to be axiomatic, that modern Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more and more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know (Sedgwick "Introduction: Axiomatic" "Epistemology" 3).

Selvadurai's characters though bound helplessly within the problem of the relations of power were based entirely upon sexuality at one point of time. Balendran in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens* continued to live his life with a sense of guilt, over the years only because of his sexual relationship with Richard earlier on in life. Though Balendran tried to uplift the law and order of his powerful father, he could not stop reflecting upon the feelings that he had had for Richard even after many years had passed. In *The Hungry Ghosts*, Shivan was blamed by his mother for the choice he had made in his life. Though his being gay was never really the 'choice' that Shivan had made, it was still considered to be the 'choice' that he had opted for in life. Likewise, in the novel *Funny Boy*, Arjie was bound with self-condemnation and guilt because of his sexual relationship with Shehan. Though he did not really want his life to turn out that way, the outcome was never under his control as much as it was not under the control of his father's hand (Selvadurai "Funny" 262). They were unable to direct the natural instinct that was within them according to the dictates of the society. In actuality, the law could not stop and control what they were naturally formed of, and in turn it was these characters who overpowered the law that had ruled upon them. Foucault states, "Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the

position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (Power/Knowledge 98). Therefore, with regards to power and sexuality, as much as power can overrule sexuality, sexuality in turn can also overrule power because there is also power in sexuality that the power of the institutions could not quench.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The study has attempted to explore and analyze the different aspects of the queer from a study of selected novels by Shyam Selvadurai's. Through the study of Selvadurai's novels, the characteristics of queer theory and their relations to the collective formations have been established. As has been denoted, this study has explored the existence of queer within the institutions and it has also denoted upon the concept of queer as entirely placed under the power paradigm. The study of queer identity is beyond the limitations of the categorizations of gender and sexual identity. Sexuality cannot be grouped into certain categories since the feature of sexuality is diverse and is impossible to define it within a single perspective.

The system that is established as a law in a modern nation state continued to take up the notions of sexuality in accordance with the order of the law from the past. The British colonizers had a great impact for the criminalization of homosexuality in many colonized countries. Enze Han and Joseph O'Mahoney have stated, "The first claim, which has recently attained popularity, is the idea that the British Empire was responsible for spreading laws that criminalize homosexual conduct amongst its colonies, whereas other imperialists were not" (Han and O'Mahoney 269). People living within the domains of British colonization are still strongly constituted with concepts that sustain British law even after the colonizers have left the countries for already a long period of time; it is not difficult to comprehend how this system of dominance and supremacy has continued to extend within the colonized countries. Since it is also recognized that a country like Sri Lanka was also within the domains of British colonizers for a period of time in the past, the British had left their dominant ideologies on gender and sexuality so strongly in order that the country could not easily pull down their ideologies again in the future. With the information regarding the brutal and cruel occurrences that happened in the past, it is inherently difficult for homosexuals to come out of the closet. They are put under constant

surveillance in which the law acts as a ruling power to interrogate and judge them. The formations of the heteronormative world expanded its establishment by constructing several names that are related to homosexuality. The construction of identity happened as expected since these identities were intended to delineate as to how one may deplore the homosexuals. Even in the absence of an actual proof on whether an individual is really a homosexual or not also, he/she is still judged and mocked with an accusation that he/she did not live like a man/woman or she/he did not have a nature of a girl/boy. Certain conclusions are made from behaviour and conduct which an individual performs in society. Therefore, identity is judged and labelled through the performance as well as through the outward expression of an individual. This is precisely the reason why the characters in Selvadurai's novels are also called as "faggot", "ponnaya", "funny", and many other terms.

Though there are many changes in a society, with rapid development of advancement and technology, the gap between the notions of heterosexuality and homosexuality is still subjected within the control of authority. There is a never-ending intention to connect the idea of contamination when it comes to the notion of homosexuality. By judging homosexuality with this kind of concept, there is a continuous purpose to destabilize homosexuality. When there is this idea of destabilizing homosexuality on the one side, there is also a plan to stabilize heterosexuality through the destabilization of homosexuality on the other side. Thus, what is so wrongly judged and defectively identified in the ongoing society can be manifestly seen and understood through the study of queer theories. The concept of queer theory is generally identified as the representations of people who were connected with the term 'homosexuality' while this theory cannot only be limited by the representations of homosexuality as a whole. With queer theory, there is a portrayal of a contestation of categories made within the ambit of

sexuality as well as gender identity. Since there is a wide distinction that has been made within the field of gender identity and sexual categorizations till the present time of study, the study therefore has focused upon the anguish faced by the people who are termed as 'queer' as well as in terms of how culture, politics and tradition effects the outcome of these circumstances as a whole. William Benjamin Turner stated,

Gender and sexuality are only two of the myriad elements that constitute a given individual's identity. But, especially where they seem ambiguous or undisciplined, gender and sexuality provoke the greatest anxieties. Such anxieties, in turn, surface around queers, queerness, and the work of queer theorists (Turner "Introduction" 5).

The laws to discipline an individual's identity in accordance with gender and sexual identity involve the entire system of the institution. The very idea of categorizing someone as 'queer' involves how one is already a victim within the structure of gender and sexual identity. Since there is no way for all the individuals to be able to fit firmly within these categorizations, 'queer theory' therefore has been established in order to stay away from all these distinctions. It is a theory that stands out to highlight how identity based on gender and sexuality is completely fluid, unstable, changeable, and inconsistent. With this arrival of queer theory, the whole notion of heteronormativity was put at stake and the very idea of binary that lies between masculine and feminine gender identity with its secure relations were all troubled. By destabilizing the belief that was laid within the limited notion of heteronormative constructions, the study portrayed the features of everyday life in order to politicize the vagueness and instability of these given identities.

It is not difficult to distinguish the hatred towards homosexuals and the fear towards homosexuality since the concepts behind this identity were arranged and even agreed to believe in such a way that heterosexuality would extend its ground of power. The distinctions between the individuals who are deemed to be 'normal' and 'abnormal' resulted simply from the judgement made in regards to the given identities. This highlights how the concepts of homosexuality and heterosexuality have been constituted from the past. By plainly ignoring the desire that an individual could be constituted with his/her nature, the characters in Selvadurai's novels never really have a ground to be accepted within the society. As such, features of homosexuality that are portrayed through these characters can be undoubtedly said to be under the control of the power of the institution.

Sexuality is no longer just the sexuality in itself. With the never-ending discoveries in the ground of identity categorizations, it can be noted that modern civilization has so much to do with the notions of sexuality. The function of the family has a very great impact with this notion of sexuality. In order to achieve one's own social security, family is an important component that functions as a strong wheel of social machinery. The family as a social group constantly stands as an important tool to suppress homosexuality in order to maintain the law and order of the society. As highlighted by means of the study of Selvadurai's novels in the previous chapters, most of the characters tend to have their limitations because of the restrictions made within their families. In this sense, it is never easy for them to come out of these strong boundaries. This is also the reason why Selvadurai's protagonists could not easily decide whether to abandon their families or not in order to come out with their true selves. Though they find it difficult to belong within their families, these characters also could not forsake the emotions that they had had for their families. As one of the most important units of the society, family functions in order to

promote the heteronormative form of sexual coupling in a society. Therefore, although there are many other important aspects formed within the family, there is a great need for these victims to move out from the heteronormative distinctions powerfully placed with the order of the family in order to survive.

Since society and its norm play a vital role in shaping the lives of the people according to its law and order, it also reinforces the concept of sexuality through the means of several social groups. With the formation of heteronormativity, it is therefore mandatory to discover whether the sexual relationship between the two individuals is legitimate or not. Thus, based on the notion of sexuality, one is identified as 'gay,' 'straight,' 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', and 'queer.' There is a linkage of sexuality with "social rituals" and the requirement to maintain a legitimate "sexual act." Foucault thus states, "People often say that modern society has attempted to reduce sexuality to the couple – the heterosexual and, insofar as possible, legitimate couple" (Foucault "History" 45). This highlights the fact that a wide demarcation was firmly set up between heterosexuality and homosexuality in which there is also a necessity to survey the matter of sexual relationship even between the "legitimate couple." This surveillance was taken up in order to suppress sexuality according to the ongoing "discourse on sex." There is the establishment of both "knowledge and power" in which "power" is to institutionalize while "knowledge" becomes a channel to bring out the law into a standard order. The two go hand in hand in establishing sexuality as a mere machinery that functions according to the demands of the institutions. Equipped with the law and order of the society, technology, educational institutions and medical sciences, sexuality has now become a whole production of these institutions that attained its progression in accordance with the advancement of the present situation.

Foucault stated,

It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (Foucault “History” 105, 106)

As denoted in the earlier chapters of this study, queer theorists mainly focused upon protesting against the social constructions that led to the outcome of discrimination in an individual as well as the involvement of discipline that has been achieved through the means of power and knowledge. The whole progression of an individual is framed within the constructions of the society. The main focus of queer theory is to speculate upon how knowledge and power are always linked with the notion of sexuality when it comes to the matter of restricting, controlling, and limiting the individuals particularly. By being disturbed with the notion of sexuality and the endless social discoveries of societal rules and orders pertaining to sexuality, the concept of queer theories has also started taking up its stance in order to delve deeply into the inner lives of the victims who were deemed as homosexuals, who were manipulated and controlled under the power of the institutions chiefly by delving into the day to day lives of these individuals with their surrounding environments. Through this speculation, it is noted that these individuals were not only influenced by the cultural norms and traditions of the society, but also by the larger institutions that constantly propagates for the extension of heteronormativity.

Queer narratives view the ideals, morals and principles that are prevailing in the society and have critical thoughts about them instead of blindly following them. Likewise, the characters in Selvadurai's novels were also trying their best to follow all the principles in the society and were not simply skeptical and aggressive towards these societal principles from the beginning. By growing up with the rules that are set in the society, they eventually realized that these rules did not determine any course of action in their lives as the interpretations of the rule did not even resolve itself. As the law debates upon itself, all these societal rules also debate upon themselves. There is no specific reason as to why these rules were taken up in the society. Therefore, this is exactly the reason as to why Arjie in the novel *Funny Boy* (1994) could not get any definite answer from his mother even when he was no longer allowed to play the game of "bride-bride" (Selvadurai "Funny" 19).

In order to regulate sexual practices in the society, many changes have been made with the development of a society in a modern world. As denoted in the earlier chapters of this study, though science had already proved that homosexuality is entirely a natural element in humans as much as it is a natural element in animals, there is still a system that constitutes one's own knowledge in accordance with rules and conducts that are maintained in the society. In fact, the concept towards homosexuality is still passionately hateful and aggressive. There are a number of reconstructions that have been made with the progression of the society. Being identified as 'queer', one becomes the very subject of the psychiatrist, teacher, and doctor. Many of the institutions function in order to regulate as well as reflect the heteronormative system of sexual identity. The order of the school in *Funny Boy* like the "Queen Victoria Academy" was only to force Arjie "to become a man" (Selvadurai "Funny" 210). The further placement of Arjie to this

school was thus to regulate his sexual identity as well as to construct his body according to the system of heteronormativity. As Mark Vicars also stated,

On reflection, the sense of a divided self I lived with throughout my adolescence was, in part, constructed through participating in the discursive practices of everyday school life, and it meant that sexuality proved to be an increasingly problematic terrain. . . . I consciously tried to enforce separation between a private, dangerous knowledge of a homosexual self and the public heterosexual role that would have enabled me to pass through the school day unscathed (Vicars 351).

It is indeed very true that all the institutions maintained certain norms that alter the lives of the individuals. Though all the institutions do not function in the same way, there is always one subject in which these institutions function corporately. The notion of sexuality is formed in relation to the united institution as a whole. While homosexuality is only connected with a 'negative' element on the one side, heterosexuality is connected with a positive element on the other side. This creates a huge gap between the two in which a 'homosexual' person needs to perform his/her identity according to his/her surroundings. When there is a "homosexual self," there is also "the public heterosexual role." Therefore, people seek to present themselves in public as a figure of the heterosexuals in order to maintain their existence equally with the others around them. The characters of *Selvadurai* have experienced great distress in terms of presenting themselves in public as it is undeniably an outcome of their being not able to come out with their "homosexual self." In noting these characters attempting to make a wide separation between the inner self and the outer self, it can be justified that it is the search for impartiality, liberty, and the right for them to continue living peacefully in the society. Since sex has played a very significant role in the homophobic world, matters concerning sex are maintained and regulated distinctively.

As much as gender identity is performative, sexual identity is also performative. Judith Butler stated, “The very concept of sex-as-matter, sex-as-instrument-of-cultural-signification, however, is a discursive formation that acts as a naturalized foundation for the nature/culture distinction and the strategies of domination that that distinction supports” (Butler “Gender” 50).

As the subject of identity performances is felt strongly amongst the public in Selvadurai’s novels, queer theory stands for the deconstruction of all these given sexual identities and labels. The term ‘homosexual’, ‘heterosexual’, ‘gay’, ‘straight’, ‘queer,’ and many other terms are just a label in which an individual performs in order to be admitted socially according to the given identities. These labels are necessarily ordained in order to draw rigid boundaries between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’ sexual act. Since all these labels do not have a clear definition as well as clarification, they become wholly ambiguous. Thus, queer theory forces people to question the underlying system behind all these labels and identities since these labels and identities continue their functions unconditionally within the formations of a society. Iain Morland and Dino Willox have denoted, “Queer theory is about the deconstruction and the refusal of labels of personal sexual activity, and it is also concerned with the removal of pathologies of sexuality and gendered behaviour” (Morland and Willox 117).

Within the system that operates for the active functioning in order to label an individual according to his/her sexual identity, the individual’s body becomes a self-governing body that tends to follow the rules and regulations set by the system. An individual is regarded as the one who make the choice; in matters related to his/her sexual identity while the truth is that sexuality could never be limited by any of the choice of an identity made by the individuals. When this presupposed choice of sexual identity is labelled in an individual, the system has never taken up the blame of an individual’s sexual identity, instead, all the burden behind a given sexual identity

is carried on by an individual. While some sexual identities are regarded to bring about hatred, some are readily regarded to attain praise. Both the fault and honour carried out by the individuals in regards to their homo-hetero identity therefore creates a conflict as well as opposition between the two. These aspects fit into what Derrida analyses as the binary opposition since these binaries corresponds to one another. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are two different terms that depends upon one another and both the terms signify one another. Derrida stated, “But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes **or** insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence” (Derrida “Of Grammatology” 145). Therefore, the society as a whole is forced to control itself according to the order of the system while all these systems regulated in a society are in turn supplements of the other supplements.

The novels of Shyam Selvadurai have achieved great success in terms of questioning and representing the ambiguity of all these systems powerfully practiced within the society. The binary opposition that was always presented in terms of ‘gay’ and ‘straight,’ ‘female’ and ‘male,’ ‘homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual,’ were challenged by the main characters of the novels. Since these characters were not given any specific and honest answers for the doubt that they had had in regards to the established order, they eventually ended up discovering the truth behind their real self and were no longer able to continue accepting the orders set for them by the higher institutions and the powerful ones in the society. By looking into the queer themes of Selvadurai’s novels particularly, it is evident that queer and its many features create a number of doubts and problems in the day to day schedules of a society. The aim to construct fixation in a society by fixing an individual with a given sexual identity only leads to failure because culture could never survive without nature as they both are always connected with one another. When

there is an attempt to break the connection between the two binaries, the result is never successful. When heterosexuality is admitted culturally and politically, homosexuality also attained its own ground to be admitted in a society. As much as homosexuality is constituted by heterosexuality, heterosexuality is also constituted by homosexuality. When the element of homosexuality is disqualified in a society, the main characters in Selvadurai's novels that were constituted with this element ended up deconstructing the very fixity of heterosexuality and its cultural constructions.

Derrida, in his text *Of Grammatology* (1974), presents a deconstructive reading of Rousseau by bringing out Rousseau's idea of opposition. The opposition of nature to culture is strongly propagated by Rousseau in which Rousseau's conclusion lies in how "culture improves on nature." As A. T. Nuyen stated, "For Rousseau, culture improves on nature and eventually takes over" (Nuyen 31). This, according to Derrida is an element to separate the two in which there is unfairness in support of culture. A. T. Nuyen thus stated clearly,

The fixation and bias prevent Rousseau from seeing that nature and culture both belong to the wholeness of men and women, that there is no such thing as unsupplemented nature, that there are no unsupplemented men and women. The process of supplementation, argues Derrida, does not divide nature from culture in the way Rousseau envisages. Rousseau's "supplement" is an "undecidable" which disallows any reconstitution or synthesis of the opposing terms (Nuyen 31).

Derrida emphasizes upon the idea that everything effects upon everything and that there is nothing such as the untainted truth. The acceptance of certain sexual identities and the non-acceptance of other sexual identities could never be truly accurate as this denotes only the favour

of certain selected identities. Since the major goal of queer theory is to break this system of exploitation behind the binaries, the emphasis is also laid on the role of the notion of power behind the functioning of these binaries. Therefore, this is the reason why queer studies deliberate upon how the functioning of power is very complex between the individual and the institutions as well as between the individual and the other individuals.

In terms of queer theory, Dian Fuss came out to analyze the descriptions of sexual preference so as to challenge the very system that lies beneath the practice of sexual symbolizations as well as the political, social, and economic representations. She discusses the well-built discrimination that has been strongly laid between the terms 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality.' The discrimination that is between the terms 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality' is not just a matter of two-fold differences, instead there is a strong system that functions for a possibility to show favouritism between the two terms. Fuss also thus finds how the notion of discrimination actively plays in both the functioning of the language and law. She writes,

The language and the law that regulates the establishment of heterosexuality as both an identity and an institution, both a practice and a system, is the language and law of defense and protection: heterosexuality secures its self-identity and shores up its ontological boundaries by protecting itself from what it sees as the continual predatory encroachments of its contaminated other, homosexuality (Fuss "Introduction" 2).

Viewing the system of the society and its structural institutions, there is an unending attempt that has been made in order to stabilize and regulate the establishment of heterosexuality. And as established firmly, it restrains its other half which is homosexuality to be unable to truly

come out in order to term itself. In addition, what the identity of heterosexuality does is to enlarge its boundaries in order to protect its own identity. This is also for the establishment of its own identity by the very means of presenting how contaminated homosexuality is, in order to expunge homosexuality from the entire construction. Thus, queer theories constantly force people to observe the system behind the establishment of identity and therefore force people to question the system that they have followed actively throughout their entire lives.

The novels of Shyam Selvadurai greatly function as a tool to open the inner eyes of the readers. The novels selected for this study have examined details upon how sexual identity has had a sense of acceptance in all the individuals. By presenting different types of character in his novels, Selvadurai has achieved great success in terms of sexual and gender categorizations, social and political constructions, as well as power and identity politics. The protagonists in all the selected novels were portrayed in order to denote how gender and sexual categorizations function as an instrument to categorize as well as discriminate the people regardless of their age, race, social and political status. Selvadurai incredibly analyzes upon how a young protagonist like Arjie has come to terms with his sexual identity in the novel *Funny Boy*. This novel is an extraordinary work that contains a wide gamut related to the physical, moral, and emotional development of the protagonist in society. The flashes of an intuitive criticism with the strong consequences that Arjie encountered while growing up because of his being gay has been shared in the text. The horrific feelings of the family members in perceiving Arjie dressing up in bridal attire depicts how sexuality and gender is a principal theme in the novel as well as in a society.

The novel *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013) also presents how the protagonist Shivan is torn apart because of racial and sexual differences. As the theme of sexuality, racial, social, and political differences were all merged into the everyday life of the characters, the study has

attempted to analyze and explore the different aspects of varying theories on the queer. As denoted in the earlier chapters, this novel has particularly focused upon how racial differences have so much to do even with people who are considered to be 'queer.' The ruling of the white people prevails and operates within the entire world of the humans. The social and racial boundaries dynamically function regardless of whether some selected people are deemed to be a group of 'queer.' Shivan therefore experienced many hardships and sufferings because of his being an immigrant even among this group of people in Canada. His hope to achieve similarities with the other gay men in Canada had failed due to his racial and social differences. This was also the reason why he had confessed about his continued unhappiness to his sister (Selvadurai "Hungry" 130). The study has therefore analyzed upon how 'Black' or 'Asian' faced discriminations even within the group of people who are considered as 'queer' communities.

As indicated, there are many aspects of queer theory and it is also because of this matter that the study of queer can never be grouped into a single category. Queer theory is like a platform in which all the discriminations that have been practiced powerfully within the ambit of sexuality, gender, social, racial, and political are examined and analyzed in order to prove the injustice that has been carried out within the entire establishment. As highlighted, there is a power that disciplines this entire establishment. Within an institutional incitement, an individual is also regulated upon how the issue of sexuality should be expressed. By keeping in mind as to how sexuality has its connection to the regulation of language through the study in the earlier chapters, queer theory is also considered to be limited in the same way.

As denoted in the earlier chapters of the study, Selvadurai's novel *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) also has certain significant characteristics that confirm as to how social constructivism plays a dynamic role in restraining gender and sexual identity. This particular novel has had a

very rich theme on feminism in which a female character like Annalukshmi was constantly forced to be the perfect representation of a conventional female figure regulated by the patriarchal norms of the society. This was in a way similar as to how Arjie in *Funny Boy* was forced to become a man; Annalukshmi in this novel was also 'forced' to become a woman. She was not given any freedom to follow her own choice in her life. Therefore, whatever free choice she had made with regards to her life was considered to be a kind of rebellious act and 'improper' in the eyes of the society. The attachment of a conventional belief of sexual orientations shaped not only the entire categorizations of sexuality, but also regulated the entire concept of sexuality. Most of the characters were blinded to the reality of life because of the social norms and traditions that were implemented. This was exactly the reason as to why Balendran could not really stop regretting about his past relationship with Richard. The feeling of responsibility that he had had towards his father as being a male in the family and the desire to accomplish his duty as being an important figure in the society drove him to deny his desire and the reality of his true self. Since all these outward codes that he imposed upon himself had finally ended up in failure, Balendran had no other choice than to follow his true instinct. Since the outward codes of an individual in a society are all socially constructed and therefore could not discipline the true self of an individual, Balendran continued to have a relationship with other males despite his regret over his relationship with Richard in the past. While maintaining his status in a family as well as in a society precisely according to the demands of the society outwardly, Balendran could not stop his inner feelings and thus continued to break the codes in the society secretly. This is also the same case that continually happened to Balendran's father, Mudaliyar. Therefore, this is the reason as to why Balendran and many other characters in this

novel are “blind to the reality of life” as denoted by Balendran’s brother Arul (Selvadurai “Cinnamon” 273).

As highlighted by means of the study of Shyam Selvadurai’s novels in the earlier chapters, it can be stated that gender and sexual identity had created innumerable problems though it has also been considered as an important feature of the humans living together in a society. As already denoted by Richard Jenkins, identity constitutes the world of the humans in which “there could simply be no human world” without identity (Jenkins “Social” 27). As a form of approach towards this statement, the study has therefore reflected upon the kind of significances that are laid behind the system of identity and also the many alternatives that over-involved and troubled the same in the face of humanity. The study also has analyzed upon how all the protagonists in the selected novels were left with confusion and uncertainty while making an effort to attain a ‘fixed identity’ in society. The protagonists in these novels did not only fight for their equality, but also sought for their own identity so that they would be able to come out in order to truly term themselves within the homophobic world.

The study has also focused upon how the notion of gender and sexual identities, politics, history, and communities are all limited within the notion of heteronormativity through the three selected novels of Selvadurai. Since the entire institution lies within the context of heteronormativity, the characters in Selvadurai’s novel attempted to produce a new world that does not locate within the boundaries restricted by the inside/outside politics. Therefore, queer theories revive the people to see the notion of sexuality as inherently restricted within the ambit of heteronormativity. This forces the people to come out with countless questions upon the functioning of the system that they were led to follow and also the realization of the impossibility

to move out of the “current conceptions of sexuality.” As Ki Namaste stated, “Queer theory recognizes the impossibility of moving outside current conceptions of sexuality” (Namaste 224).

The study has therefore deeply focused upon certain kind of anxieties that the protagonists in Selvadurai’s novels had faced throughout their lives simply because of them being gay. Such anxieties are the anxieties that constantly surface around “queer, queerness, and the work of queer theorists” as stated by William B. Turner (Turner “Introduction” 5). By capturing the attention of the readers through the depiction of the lives of people who are deemed to be queer, the study has established Shyam Selvadurai’s novels as a tool to provide the deeper understanding of the difficulties and hardships faced by these people. The novels also open up the different dynamics of the notion of queer theories. Through the study of these novels, the study has also perceived how queer fiction attained the true elements of life. Selvadurai himself has also denoted this matter in the earlier chapter by declaring that his novel certainly has elements of his life (Yelaja).

Hence, queer theories, as well as queer fiction, encapsulate the discriminations that require serious consideration in the formation of society. It is altogether the result of social construction that did not authorize and allowed certain people to step out with what and who they really are. What has been ‘authorized’ and ‘accepted’ in a society, as well as what has been ‘unauthorized’ and ‘unaccepted’ in a society have thus been studied and re-analyzed through the concept of queer theory in an attempt to bring a clearer understanding of the concept of sexuality. By delving deeply into the queer themes of Selvadurai’s novels, it is evident that queer and its many features still create a number of conflicts in a society that has vested itself within established binary paradigms. The aim to construct fixation in a society by fixing an individual with a given sexual identity only leads to failure because culture could never survive

without nature as they both are always connected with one another. Since the entire institution lies within the context of heteronormativity, the study concludes with a challenge to produce a new world that does not locate itself within the boundaries that have been entirely restricted by the notion of heteronormativity, while situating itself through the characters of Selvadurai's novels.

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APPENDICES

NAME OF CANDIDATE	: Elizabeth Lalchhandami
DEGREE	: M.Phil.
DEPARTMENT	: English
TITLE OF DISSERTATION	: Portraying the Queer in Selected Texts of Shyam Selvadurai
DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION	: 27.07.2017
(Commencement of First Semester)	: 01.08.2017
COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER/DISSERTATION	: 01.01.2018
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL	
BOS	: 19.04.2018
SCHOOL BOARD	: 26.04.2018
REGISTRATION NO. & DATE	: MZU/M.Phil./443 of 26.05.2018
EXTENSION IF ANY	: NIL

HEAD

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Educational Qualifications:

Class	Board/University	Year of Passing	Division/Grade	Percentage
X	MBSE	2005	I	62.8
XII	CBSE	2007	I	64.17
B.A	Delhi University	2014	II	57.18
M.A	Delhi University	2016	I	62.07
M.Phil.	Mizoram University	Course Work completed in 2017	I 'A' Grade awarded. 10 pt. scale grading system, 'A' corresponds to 60 – 69.9 pts.	Corresponds to 75% in terms of percentage conversion

M.Phil. Registration No. and Date: MZU/M.Phil./443 of 26.05.2018

Other Relevant Information:

- 1) Currently working on M.Phil. dissertation entitled, “Portraying the Queer in Selected Texts of Shyam Selvadurai” under the supervision of Prof. Margaret L. Pachuau, Department of English, Mizoram University.
- 2) Presented and published a paper entitled “Folktale and its Element of Reality: A Study of ‘Mauruangi’ from *Serkawn Graded Readers*” to commemorate Pachhunga University College Diamond Jubilee (1958-2018) of National Seminar on ‘Understanding Children’s Literature of Nuchhungi Renthei : Approaches and Systems’ on 17th April, 2018 at Sikulpui, Serkawn, Lunglei, Mizoram. Organised by Department of Mizo, Pachhunga University College. (Certificate Enclosed)
- 3) Attended and participated in the Seven Day National Workshop on “*Documenting Oral Cultural Traditions of North East India*”, 12-18 February, 2018 at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (North East Regional Centre), Guwahati. (Certificate Enclosed)
- 4) Attended and presented a paper entitled “Mizo Tlawmngaihna and its Process of Discovery” to commemorate PUC Diamond Jubilee Two Day National Seminar on ‘Reconnecting Rev. Dr. Zairema : An Indepth Study of his Theological and Prose Writings’ at Pachhunga University College Seminar Hall on 1-2 November, 2018. Organised by Department of Mizo, Pachhunga University College in collaboration with Zairema Memorial Society (ZMS). (Certificate Enclosed)
- 5) This dissertation has legitimately undergone an anti-plagiarism check as per UGC stipulations. (Certificate Enclosed)

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Aizawl, Mizoram



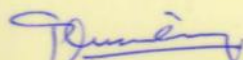
TO COMMEMORATE PUC DIAMOND JUBILEE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON
**UNDERSTANDING
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
OF NUCHHUNGI RENTHLEI :**
APPROACHES AND SYSTEMS


Participation Certificate

This is to certify that

Elizabeth Lalchhandami
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on 17th April, 2018 at Sikulpui, Serkawn, Lunglei, Mizoram.
Organised by Department of Mizo, Pachhunga University College.


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(Dr. ZORAMDINTHARA)
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CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This is to certify that
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.....
has participated in the Seven Day National Workshop on
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RECONNECTING Rev. Dr. ZAIREMA
AN INDEPTH STUDY OF HIS THEOLOGICAL AND PROSE WRITINGS



Certificate of Participation

This is to certify that

Elizabeth Lalchhandami
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to commemorate PUC Diamond Jubilee Two Day National Seminar on
'Reconnecting Rev. Dr. Zairema : An Indepth Study of his Theological and Prose Writings'
at Pachhunga University College Seminar Hall on November 1-2, 2018.
Organised by Department of Mizo, Pachhunga University College
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Rev. Dr. Zairema
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