Religion, Nation and Gender: A Study of the Problematic of Representation and Violence in the Context of Sri Lankan Literature

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CERTIFICATE

This thesis titled **"Religion, Nation and Gender: A Study of the Problematic of Representation and Violence in the Context of Sri Lankan Literature"** submitted by **Ms. H. M. Nimmi Nalika Menike,** Centre for Linguistics, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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This thesis titled **"Religion, Nation and Gender: A Study of the Problematic of Representation and Violence in the Context of Sri Lankan Literature"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institute.

19/07/16

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INTRODUCTION

Present study titled "**Religion, Nation and Gender: A Study of the Problematic of Representation and Violence in the Context of Sri Lankan Literature**" adopts a poststructuralist approach to language and culture in order to delve into the problematic of identity and violence that unfolds in the context of being. Accordingly, the study attempts to explore language as the crux of the problem regarding identity and violence, projecting every culture, religion, community, and knowledge as that which is constituted in and through language. This view necessitates probing into the idea of language beyond the general understanding that views language as a mere instrument of communication. So doing, it attempts to understand the political aspect of language in terms of questions of power. It interrogates the hegemonic power of discourse that functions as a mechanism of domination and subjugation in exluding and suppressing the other.

The study majorly deals with the dichotomy of speech and writing that has governed Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Saussure, within which speech has been privileged over writing. Privilege held by speech over writing is governed by the idea of the presence and the proximity of being, within which speech has been seen as that represents the *presence* of being. Accordingly, the philosophy of Plato considers speech as pure, natural and immediate to thought, while placing writing as secondary since it is that which is adjoined or added as an image or representation of speech, owing to which speech alone is considered as the language *proper*. This notion of language determined by the metaphysics of being has thus neglected writing, since writing comes *without* the presence of being and thus *contaminates* the *purity* of language, which is also the purity of being. Hence, it is for the continuity of language in its pureness that writing, which is the *other* of language, has been kept aside from the domain of language by the Western tradition, later by modern linguistics founded by Ferdinand De Saussure, who followed the idea of Plato in understanding the idea of language.

The question invokes two important concepts, which are of extreme significance in addressing the question of identity and violence. One is the idea of

continuity of *self-sameness* in order to remain pure and natural in the contexts of being and language; the other is the idea that *resistance* and the *exclusion* of the *other* demanded by the need for *self-preservation*. These two ideas that lie at the depth of the *given* understanding on language and being depict the way in which the particular theory of language along with the philosophy of being has constructed, contributed, legitimized, and facilitated Eurocentrism that underestimates the other non-European civilizations as primitive, while justifying the subjugation of the other through invasion, colonization, and exploitation in the disguise of civilizing them through modernization. On the other hand, exclusiveness of writing from language, due to the fear of getting contaminated, highlights the idea of *purity* not just in the context of language, but also in the context of Europe and its people as one community. It is this purity of language and community that has been emphasized through the very idea of exclusion of the other that unfolds as the *closure* of Western philosophy, under which the tradition of Structuralism that is founded on the basis of modern Linguistics plays a decisive role.

However, challenging the above idea of language, Jacques Derrida emphasizes the *impossibility* of excluding writing from language, consequently from speech, due to the very supplementary nature of language. This nature of language disables the possibility of having any appropriation in terms of matching the thing or the object with the word. Derridian notion of violence in the context of language unfolds in relation to this *impossibility* of *appropriation*, according to which language is viewed as that which involves violence, since it keeps attempting to appropriate that which *cannot* be appropriated. This idea of language dismantles the possibility of experiencing anything in its *pure* or *original* sense. Hence, it is the very element of supplement that is at work in language through which language becomes language ceaselessly; hence, writing, which is *already* considered as supplementary to language, actually becomes the very locus within which language is to be found. Consequently, writing becomes that which is inevitable in language, therefore, to speech.

Derridian idea of language as writing suggests the impossibility of the continuity of self-sameness with regard to language, since it keeps becoming other than what it *is* due to this element of supplement. Therefore, there is no possibility for

as suchness in language, since whatever is constructed in and through language undoubtedly becomes that which *cannot* have any fixity in the sense of identity. Thus, the idea of identity that is prevalent in the context of being, whose identity is set in terms of community, culture, gender and so on, becomes highly *questionable*, since they are constructions of language. On the other hand, as far as being is taken into consideration, being itself cannot be appropriated to any image or form *as such*, since being itself, like language, is in a status of *in-finite becoming*, due to its *exposure* to the *other* that is *outside* of itself. Hence, neither being nor language can be fixed or confined into any particular identity; instead, what could be seen in both being and language is nothing but the multiple identities that *cohabit* simultaneously, owing to which being and language unfold as a chain of relations while becoming the very relation itself.

Nevertheless, taking the scenario of everyday world and its language, there is an attempt to fix being and language to a particular identity so that self-sameness can be maintained through creating a *totalized* closure in terms of *I* – the self, while distinguishing the self from the other. This significant distinction between the self and the other that is made through recognition is grounded within the idea of power. In that sense, idea of identity is an idea of power that asserts the possibility, ability, and capability that the being possesses in identifying its own self as *I* – the *Self*, who is also the linguistic *first* person in language. Therefore, to have an identity that is identical to *self* is to think, speak and inhabits in this powerful *I* language, placing the self as *first* person. It is through this *I* language that the world is perceived by the self, according to which knowledge that comes through the perception of the self becomes a self-centered knowledge, since that knowledge is derived according the way through which things appears to the vision or the point of view of the self. Accordingly, the above mentioned distinction between the self and the other, which is demanded for the possibility of identity, is attempted and located within the domain of the self-centered language, through which the other is perceived, analyzed, and defined. Hence, the language that is operative in everyday life is the language of the dominant discourse of the *self*. The dominant discourse of the self that is explained here is not only limited to the domain of being; but, it can also be extended to wider domains of culture, community, religion, nation and so on in understanding how the mechanism of domination and subjugation is put into practice by socio-cultural-political and

economic institutions, in order to maintain their *pure* and *sovereign* space through resisting the entry of the other. This otherness that is suppressed under the dominant discourse can be understood with regard to gender, caste, class, race, religion and so on.

However, the above discussed violent, discriminatory and hierarchical structure of power, within which the other is kept under the power of the self, becomes *problematic* when it is addressed in relation to idea of *ethics*. Taking the idea of power that is involved in the context of above structure into consideration, it is the power that unfolds in terms of *possessing* the power to be powerful, within which *I* - the Self becomes the powerful. Hence, *ethics*, which *summons* the power of the powerful into question, should be even *more* powerful than the power that *already* exists. But, is there anyone who can be powerful than the self, who is already the *first* among others? Then, the idea of ethics that is highlighted here cannot be understood with relation to the power that of the powerful; instead, it is found as a power that emerges in the context of the *powerless*. This idea of ethics is different from the ethics that is grounded in the Western philosophical tradition that asserts the continuity of *self-sameness*, interpreted according to the point of view of the self. Accordingly, in the Levinasian idea of ethics, the idea of relationship between the self and the other is seen not in terms of power and law of the Self, but in terms of responsibility as an ethical exigency, which erupts *before* the intervention of socio-political, cultural, economic and linguistic category. It is in relation to this relationship between the self and the other that the power of the *self* needs to be questioned, through which self opens up to the other in *response* to the call of the other. And, this opening up is also opening up of the language of the self both as *response* and *responsibility* to the other. According to Levinasian philosophy, the opening up of language in and through which the self is preserved in terms of the sameness that creats a closure of the self is broken away from the continuity of the self-sameness such that the self becomes other than what it *already is*. This idea succeeds in dismantling the possibility of holding onto any given identity.

Hence, the present study insists on the necessity of *de-constructing* the dominant discourse of the self along with its *I* language in order to welcome and accommodate the *other* without enacting violence upon the other. However, this

would not suggest a possibility of doing away with violence that is under discussion, since violence is inevitable in the context of language and being. Rather, it necessitates a rupture, yet another violence, that disrupts the continuity of the self-sameness, in a way that the self undergoes transformations by opening up its closure. It is by opening up of the closure of the self that the being and language is delivered onto their *infinite* possibilities for the self and the other through *becoming*.

Nevertheless, this opening up for the infinite possibilities cannot take place in the everyday life of being and language, since it is caught up within the power of the discourse, which censors, negates, excludes and suppresses certain existences that do not fall within the demarcated space of the socio-political, economic, cultural and linguistic order of the ongoing discourse. Redemption from the confinement of being and language within the dominant discourse can be attempted to be reddemed through writing, since, as Maurice Blanchot shows, literature is the domain within which *nothing* is *negated* or prohibited, for it is the domain of *infinite* possibilities. Language through *writing* is the domain within which being is able to appear not as a subject, who represents and manifests certain ideology in terms of culture, religion, community, gender and so on, but as mere being, present to itself *immediately* without any *mediation*.

Hence, one can say that to write is to *die* as a subject and experience the death of the *I* – the self, which is also the death of the given speech; then, there could only be *silence*. It is that silence, which becomes language that appears as writing. Therefore, to write is to speak in a *different* language, which is other than the language of speech, therefore, there that of the subject. In that sense, writing *introduces* a possibility of another language that is *beyond* the language of signification and representation. And, that language, which unfolds through writing, does not speak or communicate any particular meaning or information *as such*. It is not assigned to undertake any responsibility. Instead, language in writing just keeps appearing as the very being, thinking, living and experiencing itself. Thus, writing invents both language and being. Accordingly, the study attempts to explore language through literature through writing as pure language that is other than mere representation. In so doing, it tries to probe into the possibility for alternative existences in and through writing, within which those who are underprivileged,

discriminated, subordinated, suppressed and excluded find an idiom to express their own desires, sufferings, agonies and problems.

The question of suppressed otherness that is highlighted here with regard to identity and violence is addressed in relation to gender and sexuality, under which, firstly, the problematic of representation and violence in the context of women is studied, projecting woman as the *other*, who is subjugated and discriminated under the phallocentric ideology. Accordingly, the study attempts to view the way in which women have been confined to a particular identity through defining her as a totalizable entity, for which the identity of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist women is taken into serious consideration. In addressing the question of violence with regard to fixing women to a particular identity, the present study investigates the significant involvement of religion in constructing the ongoing identity, understanding, and knowledge regarding women, critically. Consequently, it also discusses how religion, which is believed to be non-violent in its approach and practice, involves violence through operating as another institution of self-centered phallocentric discourse. Secondly, the study seeks to address the question of sexuality as another domain, where the problem of identity with its violence unfolds. Sexual orientation of an individual has become another problem that is simmering, especially in South Asian society. Accordingly, sexual practices that do not or cannot come under the *order* of heterosexuality have socially been considered as uncivilized, primitive, and repulsive, while the same is often interpreted by law as a crime. On the other hand, in certain contexts, even though the judicial law has somehow become relatively flexible, like in India, in giving some recognition to various alternative sexual practices, the social orientations are yet to change for the better. These repressive and exclusive social structures along with their ideologies, which resist the acceptance and accommodation of any sexuality other than heterosexuality, have turned some individuals' lives into a tragedy. Homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender and so on are thus considered as social calamities, which destroy the purity and authenticity of indigenous cultures of South Asian societies. Therefore, despite the stance that is held by judicial law regarding such practices, the eye of the socio-cultural discourse, very often, scorns whoever that cannot be identified with and within its order, owing to which they all are considered as *insignificant*, *harmful* and *unwanted*. And, this social pressure, which is also legal in certain societies like Sri Lanka, demands those others to

submerge, silence, forget and neglect their own sexual orientations *unless* they compromise on their personal inclinations through *recognizing* themselves with the ongoing order of the discourse, which is heterosexuality, in and through *assimilation* and *submission*. Pertaining to these problems concerning sexuality, the present study delves into the question of identity and violence, problematizing the power and the legitimacy held by the order of male-dominant-heterosexual ideology and discourse in interpreting, defining and projecting every other sexuality *negatively*.

However, there are many studies that have already been done addressing the question of gender identity in Sri Lanka, within which the identity of Sinhala Buddhist women has been explored with reference to Buddhism. Among such studies, scholarly works by Gananath Obeysekera, Kumari Jayawardena, Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, Indrani Munasinghe, Nirmala Salgadoo, Malathi De Alwis, and Ranjith Perera are very significant and indispensable for the present study. Their works, such as *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* by Kumari Jaywardena, *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka* by Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* by Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeysekara, *Domesticity and Its Discontents* by Malathi De Alwis, *Sri Lankan Woman in Antiquity (Sixth Century B.C to Fifteenth Century A.C.)* by Indrani Munasinghe, *Equality and Inequality in Hinduism and Buddhism* by Nirmala Salgadoo, and *Jataka Kathave Niyojanaya vana Striya: Stri Swabhavaya Yanu…?[1]*, have probed into the way in which religions, especially Buddhism, have played a decisive role in constructing the ongoing identity and space that is given to Sinhala women in Sri Lanka. Another idea that has been widely discussed within these works is women's emancipation, within which the present-day Sri Lankan Sinhala woman has been seen as someone, who has managed to gain more freedom when compared to her condition of pre-colonial Sri Lankan woman. This claim, which majorly appears in Kumari Jaywardena's *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, has been justified with reference to the advancement of women that began to take place with the opportunity granted for women for education and universal franchise.

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[1] This essay is written in Sinhala and the title of the essay can be translated into English as "*Woman represented in Jathakas: The Nature of the woman is …?*"

Certainly, the opportunity for education and universal franchise has considerably changed the traditional role of woman in Sri Lankan Sinhala society, for she has been able to become independent and strong, economically and politically. As well as, there is no such gender discrimination or inequality that could visibly be seen within the Sri Lankan political, economic and legal structure. Hence, as Jayawardena suggests Sri Lankan woman is far more advanced when compared to women in the other South Asian societies. This advancement is due to the freedom that the Sri Lankan woman has managed to gain in economic, political, and legal spheres and it has undoubtedly been able to elevate the position of the woman in social and cultural terms as well.   Nevertheless, the sense of freedom in the context of women that is discussed in most of the above mentioned studies is based on the idea of freedom that projects freedom as that which is *calculable* and *measurable*. It is under such viewpoint regarding freedom that the condition of Sri Lankan women has been compared and contrasted with that of in the other South Asian societies and Western societies; also with the freedom of men in general. Subsequently, certain satisfaction regarding women's freedom in Sri Lanka has been highlighted while necessitating further enhancement of the same. Another idea that has been emphasized in some of those studies is the necessity of gender *equality* through which the freedom of women has been projected as that which needs to be *on par* with men in a way that both share equal power and position.

However, the necessity of present study is based on two ideas that underscore certain politics that is operative within the very conceptualization of freedom with regard to gender in most of the above mentioned studies. The first one is related to the concept of freedom which is teleological according to which freedom needs to be thought on the basis of *as such*. This *as suchness* of freedom creates certain closure that sets limits with regard to the freedom through the very attempt of defining it for once and forever, because of which freedom becomes that which can be *totalized*, and, thus can be set as a goal to be achieved. Hence, the idea of freedom appears as that which can be materialized some day in its *fullness*, and women are projected as those who are *on the way* to achieve this freedom, some day. Moreover, it is to be achieved through a struggle. It demands the necessity of a revolution initiated from the side of women in order to gain the aspired freedom. Kumari Jayawardena, Malath De Alwis, and Tessa J Bartholomeusz have presented certain momentums in this

struggle describing them as some of the efforts, which have managed to win part of the aspired freedom. Accordingly, women in Sri Lanka, as well as in other societies of South Asia, are on the way to win this struggle in order to become free *just like* men — the other, since the struggle is motivated by the desire for *gender equality*. Thus, the idea of women's freedom has been explained in comparison to that of men, according to which, on one hand, the aspiration of achieving this freedom is to become free *from* the domination of men, while, on the other hand, becoming *equal* with men in terms of power and position. However, this analogy undoubtedly demands furthering the strength and continuity of the mechanism of binary opposition, which is operative in and through the exclusion of the other. Hence, though the idea of freedom asserted in these studies certainly demands the necessity of freeing women from the clutches of male dominant ideology, *on the other hand*, it also creates another *closure* by making a *women-centered* discourse, within which men are kept as the other who is necessarily *the opposition*. In that sense, the freedom becomes a force that manifests another version of the self-same discourse of the *sovereign* self that generates resistive and exclusive forces towards the other.

Secondly, the idea of equality that is explained in the context of gender is determined by the binary formula that exists with regard to gender i.e. male and female. Within this formula of the two, all men, who are identified as belonging to the male gender, have been projected as those who enjoy freedom and power in an absolute sense, due to which *all* men are seen as powerful other by women. This totalizing notion with regard to men and women in terms of gender is determined by the *biological* gender, which is also the *given* gender. Accordingly, *all* men have been considered as those who recognize themselves with and within the phallocentric ideology, while *all* women are shown as those who aspire to overcome this ideology. Here, the problem that is necessary to be raised is that how to think of those who *do not* or who *cannot* identify themselves within and with reference to this phallocentric ideology or in terms of these two dominant and popular categories of gender. Ideas of schollars like Kumari Jayawardena, Malathi De Alwis, Indrani Munasinghe and Tessa J. Berthalomusz, who have addressed question of women with regard to many aspects, seem to be located within this binary gender ideology. So doing, they have implicitly offered some consensus in neglecting, avoiding and discarding the existence of *alternative* genders and sexualities, which are other than and beyond the

binary opposition of male/female that is found and strengthened by the dominant ideology of heterosexuality. Consequently, questions of gender identities that emerge with regard to the gays, lesbians and the transgendered in relation to other sexual practices such as homosexuality, bisexuality and so on have not been addressed by these scholars. In that sense, the emancipation of women that has been extensively discussed in and through these works is actually directed only toward those who are identified under the dominant concepts of sexuality and gender.

Hence, addressing the question of women with reference to the dominant discourse of gender and sexuality in the thoughts and arguments in these studies, present study attempts to explore alternative discourses of gender and sexuality that asserts the idea that the *other* that cannot be ignored in any domain that unfolds in the context of being. It also attempts to explore how certain ideas that emerge within the discourse of feminism themselves create a shield against certain otherness, which does not identify itself with the dominant and popular ideology of feminism.

Methodology

Present study, based on both primary and secondary data, is drawn keeping the poststructuralist approach to language and culture, within which ideas and thoughts presented by Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Hélène Cixous regarding the idea of language, being, violence, gender and writing have widely been referred in constructing the conceptual framework of the analysis and the argument of the study. Constructing and providing a picture of Sri Lankan culture and the image of woman that unfolds within Sinhala Buddhist heterosexual nationalistic discourse, the study is focused on certain significant texts in Sri Lankan history and Sinhala Buddhist literature, such as *Mahavamsa* and *Pansiya Panas Jathakya*. It also has referred to certain academic writings by Sri Lankan scholars, such as Kumari Jayawardena, Malathi De Alwis, Gananath Obeysekara, Indrani Munasinghe, Ranjth Perera, Nirmala Salgadoo and some others, who are constantly engaged in re-visiting the question of nation, history, women and religion in the context of Sri Lanka. Moreover, in addressing the question of violence with

regard to gender identity in literature and writing, the specific focus of analysis is based on the literary works by Sri Lankan-Canadian writer, Shyam Selvadurai.

The thesis is comprised of five chapters that probe into the question of being, language and violence, extensively. Accordingly, the first chapter provides a descriptive account on the idea of being with reference to the philosophies of Heidegger, Sartre and Levinas, highlighting the elements of violence referred to their philosophies. The discussion on violence in the context of being unfolds with regard to the notion of death of the subject, within which the relationship between self and the other finds a greater significance.

The second chapter deals with the question of being as a question of language. Here, the question of metaphysics of being and language has widely been discussed with regard to the idea of *presence*, which suggests being as an empirical and analyzable entity. Subsequently, with reference to Derridian critique of traditional Western metaphysics that appears in his *Of Grammotology*, it seeks to interrogate the idea of language from Plato to Saussure, which privileges speech over writing. The subject in relation to power is another question that is taken up in the chapter, following which the chapter gives a great deal to Derridian idea of deconstruction of language in terms of writing is brought into discussion. Moreover, it also focuses on idea of literature and translation with reference to philosophical perspectives of Blanchot, Walter Benjamin and Derrida.

In the third chapter, study places the question of violence with regard to gender identity in the context of culture and discourse. It tries to understand the way in which cultural and communal hegemony enacts violence on individuals in its project of fixing being into *this* or *that* identity, in relation to which the question of women as the subjugated and excluded other under the male dominant discourse is addressed. Apart from the question of women's identity, the chapter elaborates on the idea of sexuality that goes beyond the popular and dominant order of heterosexuality. In this regard, the ideas of Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida on identity and gender majorly provide the conceptual framework of the chapter.

Question of gender identity and violence in the context of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist women is addressed in the fourth chapter. It attempts to investigate how

religion has involved in constructing the ongoing understanding regarding women within which the impact of Buddhist literature in shaping the understading of socio-cultural milieu in Sri Lanka is brought into consideration. Further, certain issues such as politics of writing history, problematic of Sri Lankan great chronicle — *Mahavamsa*, empowerment of Buddhist nationalist discourse that has submerged the other discourses, the impact of Hinduism on Buddhism are some of the other themes that are addressed within the chapter, in detail. In this regard, scholarly works by Kumari Jayawardena, Pradeep Jeganathan, Gananath Obeysekara, Malathi De Alwis, Nrmala Salgadoo, Ranjith Perera, Indrani Munasinghe, and Tessa J. Berthalomusz are significant and indispensable in critically addressing the question of nation, gender, and religion in the context of Sri Lanka.

With reference to the literary works by Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Shyam Selvadurai, the last chapter of the thesis discusses the idea of literature through writing as the means of survival and freedom. Here, asserting on Derridian notion of "violence of the letter", the chapter seeks to approach the question of being and violence from the side of literature through writing, giving greater significance to Blanchot's and Cixous's idea of writing. Especially, Cixous's idea of writing and the feminine finds its enormous value in discussing and understanding Selvadurai's works that place various existential problems in human life that make the very notions of identity and humanity tremble.

HEIDEGGER AND LEVINAS ON BEING

1.1   Introduction: Philosophy and Metaphysics

Plato, who was disappointed with the given systems of rule: Timarchy, Oligarchy, Democracy, Tyranny, tried to emphasize the necessity of bringing the philosophers into Republic to rule its citizens, because Philosophy and Philosophers as *outside of* the day-to-day society. Also, they were considered as those, who know *the truth* and who can bring light to the society and society into the light. As Socrates says in Plato's *Republic*,[2] 'the society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands.'[3] According to him, the truth is something that has to result from reasoning, not from emotions that have got nothing to do with rational thinking. It is that logical and reasoning mind that could show the way to truth. Thus, as he shows, the Republic should try to be *away* from art and poetry, because they are misleading and out of touch with reality or truth; they do not give the required knowledge needed to be a worthy citizen.

For Plato, philosophy is more important than anything else; also, it *cannot* be understood by lay persons. According to Socrates, as Plato says, philosopher is "the man, who is ready to taste every branch of learning, is glad to learn and never satisfied."[4] And, philosophy, in "Plato's etymological reading of *philo-sophia*", is "love of wisdom or passion for knowledge."[5] Thus, if philosophy means the love for knowledge or *to know*, the next problem, which immediately arises, is *what* is there *to know*? Going through the history of knowledge, the problem of knowledge, the problem that came as the major problem of philosophy and also the philosophy itself, has been appearing in different traditions in different ways with different definitions

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[2] Plato, 1974
[3] Ibid, p. 192 (473 d-e)
[4] Ibid, p. 197 (475 c-d)
[5] [Phaedo, 66e, 68a] quoted in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006 (2nd Ed.)., Vol.7, p. 589

and methods.

After the effort taken by Socrates and Plato to define what knowledge *is* and *how* to access that knowledge, which is also *the truth* or *the nature* of a thing, it is the tradition of Aristotle that takes the control over the question of knowledge or *truth*, and this tradition is known as Western Metaphysics that has a history of hundreds of years.

Encyclopedia of Philosophy[6] explains Metaphysics as 'the philosophical investigation of the even more fundamental nature of being as such. Metaphysics is concerned with the contours of the categories of entity postulated or presupposed by any possible, acceptable account of the world, whether of the physical world or of any other aspect of the world.'[7]And, the task of metaphysics is to capture the *correct account* of the world, in which world has to be understood in the sense of world *as such*. Accordingly, the philosophy from Socrates to Hegel has been a philosophy that searches for the *fundamental* nature of being and the *correct account* of the world.

The fundamental character of all the ideas of being is the very affirmation of the existence of *being as such* with an *essence* or a specific *nature* of its own. It is that *essence* or *nature* that has to be understood properly in order to arrive at *the truth*. Jacques Derrida understands this idea that appears within the tradition of metaphisics as the "Metaphysics of presence"[8]. However, as far as the metaphysical ideology in nineteenth century and twentieth century is concerned, which can be termed as 'phenomenology' and 'existentialism', the approach that has been taken to arrive at truth, which is different from Cartesian rationalism and Kant's transcendental metaphysics, has also been anyway immersed in the question of searching *the truth*, believing in the certainty of truth *as such*.[9] Accordingly, while phenomenologists hold that common sense and science presuppose a more primitive experience that can be grasped by a deliberately naive description of how things actually appear to us, existentialists argue that the subject of metaphysics is a reality which is in some sense possessed or encountered in personal commitment to cause or in facing the certainty

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[6] Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006 (2nd Ed.), Vol. 6
[7] Ibid, p. 169
[8] Derrida, 1994
[9] Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006 (2nd Ed.), Vol. 6, p. 195

of one's own death.[10]Thus, though they were two different approaches, Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre combined them systematically through their ideas on time and death.

1.2   Heidegger on Being

Question of Being, which had been neglected by Greek thinkers since the idea of being is rooted in ancient Ontology, has been taken by Heidegger into account arguing for the need of understanding the idea of Being, since Ontology is anyway going to be on *that* Being. Accordingly, formulating the question of Being again, he says: "the question of Being requires that the right way of access to entities", because in his view 'there are many things which we designate as 'being' ["seined"], and we do so in various senses. Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the 'there is'.'[11]

However, as Heidegger points out, it is not possible for us to have a complete understanding on Being, since Being of entities is something that gets completed at the time of death. It is through death that the whole Being is achieved. In that sense, what we experience in our everyday life is not Being. According to Heidegger's explanation it is "Dasein" that we consider as being. Therefore, what we have in our hand for us to understand Being is being of "Dasein", because 'the ontological analytic of Dasein in general is what makes up fundamental ontology, so that Dasein functions as that entity which in principle is to be interrogated beforehand.'[12]

In Heideggerian view, "Dasein", which is not ontological Being but moving towards that Being in its being, 'is an entity which does not occur among other entities. Rather, it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being,

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Heidegger, 1962, p. 26
[12] Ibid, p. 35

and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being – a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, […] It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's being.'[13] This "Dasein" is moving towards Being, and this moving towards Being in its being is called "existence". And, due to this unavoidable movement of "Dasein", it is not possible to define the essence of "Dasein" "by citing a "what" of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter [eines sachhaltigen Was]", because its essence lies in the fact that "in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own."[14] However, in spite of whatever the case may be, 'Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent Dasein, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible. In each case Dasein exists in one or the other of these two modes, or else it is modally differentiated.'[15] As Heidegger explains, authenticity and inauthenticity are the two ways in which "Dasein" takes on a definite character, and these ways have to be understood as "a priori as grounded upon that state of Being. He calls this state of Being as "Being-in-the-world"[16], and it is through this constitutive state one can reach to a correct analysis of "Dasein". The "Being-in-the-world" is a unitary phenomenon, and it cannot be broken up into contents which may be pieced together. Yet, it can have several constitutive items in its structure: "in-the-world", "entity", and "Being-in".[17]

However, "'Being-in' is a state of Dasein's Being"[18] , but it "is not a property which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have"[19] , because it can never be free from Being-in. But, sometimes, Dasein has the inclination to take up a relationship towards the world, since Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. As Heidegger says, this relationship does not happen due to the availability of another entity that is present-at-hand outside Dasein. It happens due to its possibility of

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[13] Ibid, p. 32
[14] Ibid, pp. 32 - 33
[15] Ibid, p. 78
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, pp. 78 - 79
[18] Ibid, p. 79
[19] Ibid, p. 84

showing itself within a world.[20]

However, here, the "Dasein" that Heidegger brings out in his philosophy can be compared with Sartre's "being-for-itself", because Sartre too, like Heidegger does, posits two types of being in understanding the question of being i.e., being as "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself"[21]. As Sartre explains, it is through the "being-for-itself" that the being is presence to itself though the "presence to itself" "supposes an impalpable fissure that has slipped into being" since "if being is present to itself, it is because it is not wholly itself".[22] This duality or "fissure" that is posited in both Heidegger and Sartre in relation to their understanding of being suggests a formula that is meant to attain a preconceptualized *totality*. While Heidegger names this totality as Being which is the end of "Dasein" or impossibility of "Dasein", Sartre identifies the same totality as "being-in-itself" that marks the end of "being-for-itself". Therefore, Heidegger's "Dasein" and Sartre's "being-for-itself" can be located as the source of experiencing, understanding, and knowing being, though that being necessarily carries a "lack"[23] in relation to its existence, which is explained through the idea of "being-toward-death" and idea of "nihilation" by Heidegger and Sartre, respectively. Thus, though they seemingly employee two different approaches in understanding the totality of being in relation to the idea of death, it is obvious that their thoughts are opertative in the same sphere that places being as a *totalizable totality*. This idea can be understood when Sartre himself mentions these lines in the chapter 'The Origin of Negation' in his *Being and Nothingness* as follows. 'Now the characteristic of Heidegger's philosophy is to describe Dasein by using positive terms which hide the implicit negations. Dasein is "outside of itself, in the world"; it is "a being of distance"; it is care; it is "its own possibilities", etc. All this amounts to saying that Dasein "is not" in itself, that it "is not" in immediate proximity to itself, and that it "surpasses" the world inasmuch as it posits itself as not being in itself and not being the world.'[24] However, the being that is explained under Heidegger's "Dasein" and Sartre's "being-for-others" is in a journey toward the destination called "Being" or "being-in-itself", which is also "the hope" since the realization of Self

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Sartre, 1957, p. lxvii
[22] Ibid, p. 77
[23] Heidegger, 1962, pp. 279 - 280 & Sartre, 1957, p. 85
[24] Sartre, 1957, p. 18

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through death is "one's *ownmost* possibility"[25] for Heidegger, while it is that which "to hope"[26] for Sartre. (This idea of "hope" and "to hope" will be discussed later in the chapter in relation to the idea of death.)

Therefore, as Heidegger points out "Dasein" is not Being, but the "being towards death" through having being the being "as thrown Being-in-the-world".[27] In that sense, what we understand as being is the Being of "Dasein", and Being of "Dasein" is "Being-with" to which "Being-with Others" belongs. And, this particular state of "Being-with Others" is an issue for "Dasein" in its very Being. Therefore, Heidegger says, "Dasein is essentially for the sake of Others."[28] This essential and inevitable condition of Being of "Dasein" as "Being-with Others" due to its disclosure to the world as "there", since facticity marked by "throwness"[29] of being to the world making it appear as Being-in-the-world in terms of "that it is" is explained by Heidegger as "Being there as State-of-mind"[30]. However, this facticity, which is "that-it-is", never becomes something that one could come across by beholding it, because, in a state-of-mind, "Dasein" is always brought before itself, and has always found itself, but not in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has. As an entity which has been delivered over to its Being, it remains also delivered over to the fact that it must always have found itself – but found itself in a way of finding that which arises not so much from a direct seeking rather from a fleeing. It is through the mood we turn towards or turn away from "Dasein", and, according to Heideggger, "for the most part the mood does not turn toward the burdensome character of Dasein"[31]; instead, it is mostly a turning away. Nonetheless, this state-of-mind through which the thrownees of "Dasein" into the world 'is itself the existential kind of Being in which Dasein constantly surrenders itself to the 'world' and lets the 'world' 'matter' to it in such a way that somehow Dasein evades its very self.'[32] This evasion of being of "Dasein" from itself due to its "Being-in-the-world" as "Being-with Others" in which condition "most part of Dasein is absorbed in the "they" and is mastered by it" is

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[25] Heidegger, 1962, p. 354
[26] Sartre, 1957, p. 536
[27] Heidegger, 1962, p. 303
[28] Ibid, p. 160
[29] Ibid, pp. 174, 219 - 224
[30] Ibid, pp. 172 - 224
[31] Ibid, p. 178
[32] Ibid.

analyzed by Heidegger in relation to his understanding of "inauthentic being". And, he identifies this absorption of being of "Dasein" in the "they" as everyday being of the "there" as "Being-with Other", since Being-in-the-world as 'falling'[33] of "Dasein" from its being.

According to Heidegger, this throwness of "Dasein" to the world along with his fallenness "uproots" "Dasein" from his authentic being, though it is the "most everyday and most stubborn 'Reality'"[34], because the Self of everyday "Dasein" is "they-self", which is different from the authentic self.

However, Heidegger does not consider this "stubborn Reality" of "Dasein" negatively, because, it is inevitable for "Dasein" to remain as "authentic being", since he is in the world as "Being-with". But, due to this "inautheniticity" in which "Dasein" is dispersed into the "they", Dasein's authentic being is "concealed" and "obscured", owing to which "Dasein" is going away from discovering the world in its own way. However, Heidegger's this construction of "Dasein" as a being, who can be in two conditions as "authentic being" and "inauthentic being", can be understood as the possibility for "Dasein" "to be". He remarks it as follows: ' In terms of the "they", and as the "they", I am 'given' proximally to 'myself' [mir"selbst"]. Proximally Dasein is "they", and for the most part it remains so. If Dasein discovers the world in its own way [eigens] and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way.'[35] Here, due to the Dasein's "absorption in" in the world as "Being-with Other" through Being-with-one-another that is resulted in "throwness" and "falling" followed by "idle talk", "curiosity", and "ambiguity"[36], which makes him loose and forget his own Self, he defines "Dasein" as "inauthentic" that signifies "really not"[37]. And, this "inauthenticity" does not mean anything like "Being-no-longer-in-the-world"; instead, it means "Not-Being-its-Self", in which case "Dasein" is identified as a being, who is "completely fascinated by the 'world' and by

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[33] Ibid, pp. 210 - 214
[34] Ibid, p. 214
[35] Ibid, p. 167
[36] Ibid, pp. 211 - 221
[37] Ibid, p. 220

the Dasein-with of Others in the "they"".[38] However, this "Not-Being-its-Self" through which "Dasein" becomes "inauthentic being" "functions as a *positive* possibility of that entity, which is absorbed in a world", since "falling is a definite existential characteristic of Dasein itself".[39] Hence, it is this *positive* possibility of "Dasein" that helps Heidegger to come up with his notions of "care", "anxiety", "resoluteness", "hope", and "returning" that make his philosophy influenced by *nostalgia*. This can be understood through his explanation on "falling", where he describes to fall means also to fall away from something. Therefore, "in falling, Dasein *itself* as factical Being-in-the-world, is something *from* which it has already fallen away."[40] And, this "fallen away from" due to the *falling*, which is understood as "an alienation"[41], signifies a thing or a place where Dasein had resided *before* the *falling*, though Heidegger suggests that 'neither must we take the fallenness of Dasein as a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status'. Not only do we lack any experience of this ontically, but ontologically we lack any possibilities or clues for Interpreting it.'[42] Therefore, the being that we see proximally "everyday" is "Dasein" as "Being-with Others" and his "average everydayness" is defined by Heidegger as 'Being-in-the-world which is falling and disclosed, thrown and projecting, and for which its own most potentiality-for-Being is an issue, both in its Being alongside the 'world' and in its "Being-with Others".'[43]

Considering the idea of "fallenness" of being from itself to itself, the "fallen away from" can be located as the point of Self - *I* or the "authentic being", and this "falling", which is inevitable, is an issue since it hinders the very "potentiality-for-Being". Therefore, in "falling" or through "thrownness", what we have is the dispersion of the Self. This dispersed Self is encountered as "subject " to whom the particular dispersion is absorbed.[44] However, this idea of Heidegger that affirms the necessary and unavoidable dispersion that is in the context of "Dasein" as "Being-towards-death" is similar to Sartrian view of being as "being-for-itself" to be the "being-in-itself", though Sartre does not suggest a possibility of *returning* to the *Self*.

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid, p. 223
[42] Ibid, p. 220
[43] Ibid, p. 225
[44] Ibid, p. 167

Hence, in Sartre, there is no dispersion of Heideggerian terms or absorption of Self into "they self". Instead, "being-for-itself" for "being-in-itself" is a linear and a forward movement that is in process through constant nihilation, which is operative in order to achieve the fullness or totality of being.

1.2.1   Time, Anxiety, Hope, and Death

Heidegger's idea of two folds "Dasein" as "Being-in-the-world" while "Being-towards-death" presupposes a *previous* or a *primary* status to which he is bound to return. In a way, more than a bond, it is a *hope*. Dasein's "falling away from" the "authentic being" distracts him from his "potentiality-for-being", which could also be understood as the potentiality-for-returning to the self. On the other hand, in spite of these "disguises of everydayness", one is yet able to *return* to the thing that one had lost once. And, it is this possibility of returning to the Self that is extensively explained by Heidegger as "potentiality" – potentiality-for-being[45], while it is also the "possibility" of "Dasein". This idea of potentiality and possibility of returning to the Self, which is marked by the idea of summoning, locates Heidegger's view on the peripheral zone of nostalgia of a *lost world*, to which one is waiting with the hope to return, despite of all the hindrances that lie *on the way*. And, this way is identified as the way towards-Being and towards-Death — the Self. Therefore, Heidegger's being is moving "ahead-of-itself" to attain his awaited victory of *returning* to the Self through getting away from all Others, and this is a movement which is governed by the Past that can be marked as the point *before* "falling", through which the "fallen away from" gets a superior or a high position in relation to "falling" since he himself mentions "falling" as a "downward plunge"[46]. In other words, it is a "falling" *from* "the ground" *to* "groundlessness". Then, it is important to raise the following question: *what is this ground from which the being has fallen away*?

Considering this idea of *falling of being*, it is not possible, whether Heidegger liked to admit or not, to detach his idea of "falling" from the popular Biblical notion

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[45] Ibid, p. 183
[46] Ibid, p. 223

of "falling of man"[47]. In that sense, idea of "falling" *cannot* be taken in a very positive manner, though Heidegger wants it to be "positive" so that he can arrange his "Dasein" as Being-in-the-world"; because, "falling" is a consequence of "guilt"[48] that is resulted in the "original sin"[49] — the concepts which would not have taken different meaning had not Nietzsche questioned and criticized them in his *The Anti-Christ*[50]. However, as Heidegger points out, "guilt" is that which "Dasein" feels when he hears the "appeal" or the "call" authentically. He analyzes this "guilt" as"potentiality-for-Being-its-Self", through which one is reminded of one's own Self and to *get back* to one's own Self.[51] Therefore, according to Heidegger, 'the authentic understanding of the call has been characterized as "wanting to have a conscience". This is a way of letting one's ownmost Self take action in itself of its own accord in its Being-guilty, and represents phenomenally that authentic potentiality-for-Being which Dasein itself attests. […] In hearing the call understanding, one denies oneself any counter-discourse, not because one has been assailed by some 'obscure power', which suppresses one's hearing, but because this hearing has appropriated the content of the call unconcealedly. In the call one's constant Being-guilty is represented, and in this way the Self is brought back from the loud idle talk which goes with the common sense of the "they".'[52] Accordingly, to bring something back means to detach something from the current position or the place, and, then to re-locate it where it *was*, earlier. In that sense, Heidegger's analysis of "falling away from" and "summoning" bears the idea of moving something to *two opposite directions* – downward and upward, since, according to him, "falling" is "downward plunge", returning *has to be upward*. This idea can be traced back to the Christian theological view on supremacy, heaven, paradise, redemption and God — the paradise where Man was living *before* his sin. Therefore, it can be said that, as Adorno argues, Heidegger's "jargon of

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[47] Genesis 3, [Good News Bible, The Bible Society of India, p. 3]
[48] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ttp://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heaven-hell/ (accessed on 15.07.2013)

[49] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ttp://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heaven-hell/ (accessed on 15.07.2013)

[50] Nietzsche, 1968 [ed.1990], pp. 148 - 149, 177 - 178
[51] Heidegger, 1962, pp. 325 - 341
[52] Ibid, p. 342

authenticity"[53] is a "diminished theological resonance"[54].

However, this returning to the Self, who is *now* in dispersion due to the fallenness, has been projected as *the hope* that the "Dasein" is waiting to realize. And, this is a hope that is not decided by future, but a hope that has its base and certainty located somewhere in the Past. This idea can be understood through his analysis in the chapter 'Temporality as the Ontological Meaning of Care'[55] where he notes 'taking over thrownness signifies *being* Dasein authentically *as it already was*. Taking over thrownness, however, is possible only in such a way that the futural Dasein can *be* its own most 'as-it-already-was' – that is to say, its 'been' [sein "Gewesen"]. Only in so far as Dasein *is* as an "I-am-as-having-been", can Dasein come towards itself futurally in such a way that it comes *back*.'[56]

Therefore, it is the past that is projected and aimed to be achieved through the movement of "Dasein" as "Being-towards-death", where "Dasein" is moving "ahead-of-itself". Therefore, it is not a hope that is made at the present and then to realize in the future *to come*; instead, it is a hope that has *already* been presupposed by past. Accordingly, "Dasein" is moving towards future to *get back* to the past; it is a forward movement to *go back*. Nonetheless, as Heidegger says, 'the character of "having been" arises from the future, and in such a way that the future, which "has been", […] releases from itself the Present.'[57] And, this phenomenon, that "has the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been", is "temporality".[58]

However, when Heidegger locates this movement, which is within the effort of returning to the "authentic being", in the idea of time, it can be seen that there is no linear order for the movement of the being that can be considered according to the clock time, which has its realization through successive uninterrupted sequence of "nows". Instead, it is a back and forth movement of being from "inauthentic being" to "authentic being". In that sense, time or history cannot be understood as a linear

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[53] *Jargon of Authenticity* is a title of a book written by Theodor Adorno, and it is in which he criticizes contemporary German existentialists (Burber, Jaspers, Heidegger). There, he especially takes Heidegger's notion of 'authenticity' and 'authentic being' into account in developing his criticism against Heidegger's philosophy naming it as 'cult of authenticity'.

[54] Adorno, 2003 [1973], p. 2

[55] Heidegger, 1962, pp. 370 - 380

[56] Ibid, p. 373

[57] Ibid, p. 374

[58] Ibid.

movement in which each *now* is successively realized just as the way Hegel explains in his E*ncyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences.*

As Heidegger notes, his understanding of time is different from that of Hegel. According to him, Hegel puts space and time together: "Space 'is' time: that is, time is the 'truth' of space", because "space is punctuality".[59] For Hegel, as Heidegger points out, space is the abstract multiplicity of the points which are differentiable in it, and, though it is differentiated by differentiable points which are space themselves, space remains without any differences. It is here where Hegel brings the idea of "the point", which differentiates anything in space, due to which it – the point - becomes "the *negation* of space". Yet, it is a point that remains in space, due to which a point can be considered as space. However, this 'negativity, which relates itself as point to space, and which develops in space its determination as line and surface, is, however, just as much for itself in the sphere of Being-outside-of-itself, and so are its determinations therein, though while it is positing as in the sphere of Being-outside-of-itself, it appears indifferent as regards the things that are tranquilly side by side. As thus posited for itself, it is time'[60]. Therefore, the point is also negation of the negation since it posits itself for itself. This negation of negation, which is understood as punctuality, is time.[61] And, in Heidegger's point of view, if Hegel's above mentioned discussion has any demonstratable meaning, 'it can mean nothing else than that the positing-of-itself-for-itself of every point is a "now-here", "now-here" and so on. Every point 'is' posited for itself as a now-point. […] The "now" is the condition for the possibility of the point's positing itself for itself.'[62]

However, since Hegel explains 'time, as the negative unity of Being-outside-of-itself, is likewise something simply abstract, ideal. It is that Being which, in that it is, is not, and which, in that it is not, is: it is intuited becoming'[63], Heidegger says, for Hegel, 'time reveals itself as 'intuited becoming''[64]. Therefore, according to Heidegger, it is due to Hegel's analysis of time as "intuited becoming", time is

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[59] [Hegel, 1906, H. 429, Section 257] quoted in Heidegger, 1962, p. 481
[60] [Hegel, 1949, H. 430, Section 257] quoted in Heidegger, 1962, pp. 481 - 482
[61] [Hegel, 1949, Section 257] quoted in Heidegger, 1962, pp. 481 - 482
[62] Heidegger, 1962, p. 482
[63] [Hegel, 1949, Section 258] quoted in Heidegger, 1962, p. 482
[64] Heidegger, 1962, p. 482

'primarily understood in terms of the "now" '[65]. In this sense, time is something that does not have the difference between the dimensions called past and future since it is manifested as "now", therefore, only as the Present, though present itself is the result of the past and is pregnant with the future.[66] And, Heidegger argues that, 'if Hegel calls time 'intuited becoming', then neither arising nor passing away has any priority in time'[67], through which "now" becomes the point that posits itself for itself; accordingly, time has to be understood as a progression of "nows".

Going through the Hegel's view on time, it can be seen that time has been understood as that which is completely away from Being. As he says, "time is the pure Self-external, intuited, not grasped by the Self"[68], and spirit gets actualized when it falls into time in terms of 'now' which gives itself airs and "appears in time as long as it does not grasp its pure concept". Therefore, "*by its very essence* spirit necessarily appears in time" through which he analyzes world-history as the interpretation of spirit in time.[69] And, for Heidegger, Hegel's above mentioned notion of spirit in terms of time is "the concept which 'is there' [daseiende]", which means, for him, "present-at-hand". Here, Heidegger reads Hegel's notion as follows: 'as something present-at-hand and thus external to spirit, time has no power over the concept, but the concept is rather 'the power of time'.'[70] Analyzing how the spirit gets into time through making a kinship between time and the spirit in Hegel's philosophy, Heidegger explains how Hegel shows the possibility for the spirit to be actualized historically "in time". Accordingly, 'spirit and time get disposed of with the very emptiest of formal - ontological and formal-apophantical abstractions, and this makes it possible to produce kinship between them. But because time simultaneously gets conceived in the sense of a world-time which has been utterly levelled off, so that its origin remains completely concealed, it simply gets contrasted with spirit – contrasted as something that is present-at-hand. Because of this, spirit *must first of all fall* 'into time'.'[71] Here, as Heidegger mentions, considering its meaning ontologically, Hegel's idea of "falling or "actualizing" of a spirit remains obscured.

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[65] Ibid, p. 483
[66] [Hegel, 1949, Section 259] quoted in Heidegger, 1962, p. 483
[67] Heidegger, 1962, p. 483
[68] [Hegel, Phanomenologie des Geistes, Werke vol.II, p.604] quoted in Heidegger, 1962, p. 485
[69] Ibid.
[70] Heidegger, 1962, p. 485
[71] Ibid.

In contrast to Hegel's notion of time, Heidegger presents his idea of time in relation to the idea of "falling", in which "factically thrown existence" is concretized "in order to unveil temporality as that which primordially makes such existence possible", in which case the "spirit", unlike in Hegel, does not first fall into time; instead, it exists as the primordial temporalizing of temporality.[72] Here, it is the factical existence that "falls" as falling from primordial authentic temporality.

However, coming back to the ordinary interpretation on time, in which time is understood as "now-time", Heidegger says that the "now-time" lacks the "datability" and "significance". According to him, "datability" is the first essential item in the time to which we relate ourselves, and it is grounded in the "ecstatical constitution of temporality", while "significance" belongs to the structure of the "now".[73] "Datability" and "significance", the two structures that are related to the "world-time", are not there in the "now-time" that is characterized in terms of pure succession, because, as Heidegger points out, "the ordinary interpretation of time *covers them up*".[74] And, due to this covering up, 'the ecstatico-horizontal constitution of temporality, in which the datability and the significance are grounded, gets levelled off'[75] . However, here, Heidegger does not try to mean that the "now-time" as a false time. Rather, he tries to emphasize the fact that "now-time" as that, which arises from the temporality, through which temporality becomes the "origin" of the "now-time". Therefore, according to him, 'in the everyday way in which we are with one another, the levelled-off sequence of "nows" remains completely unrecognizable as regards its origin in the temporality of the individual Dasein'.[76]

Therefore, it is from this temporality that the full structure of the "world-time" has been drawn, and 'the interpretation of this structure gives us the clue for 'seeing' at all that in the ordinary conception of time something has been covered up, and for estimating how much the ecstatico-horizonal constitution of temporality has been levelled off'.[77]

As Heidegger points out, the problem that lies with the ordinary way of

[72] Ibid, p. 486
[73] Ibid, p. 474
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, p. 477
[77] Ibid, pp. 478 - 479

understanding time is that it interprets time as an "irreversible succession", due to which temporality is understood as "inaccessible in the reverse direction". However, his intention is to make "now-time" primarily grounded on "temporality" while interpreting "now-time" in relation to the "temporalizing", in which he brings the analysis of in-authentic being. Accordingly, temporality temporalises itself only in the inauthentic temporality, through which the "now-time" can also be understood as *inauthentic time*. In that sense, everydayness of "Dasein" is *inauthentic* in terms of being and time, while it is the way for it to return to the *authentic being* and *authentic time*, therefore, to achieve *Being and Time*. Thus, if the "now time" is considered as that which is *derived* from temporality, temporality becomes "the time which is primordial"[78]– the primordial time.

Considering the ordinary understanding of time as "now time", the "now" is considered as Present, and it cannot be helpful, as Heidegger shows, for someone to clarify the esctatico-horizonal phenomenon of the moment of vision that belongs to temporality. Accordingly, neither future nor past can be understood in terms of "pure now", since it considers future as that, which "has not yet come along but is only coming along" and past as that, which "has passed away". Instead, future and past has to be understood in "ecstatical" terms, through which future is 'the datable and significant 'then'' and past is ''having-been'' — the datable and significant 'on a former occasion''.[79] Therefore, as mentioned above, returning to the "authentic being" of "Dasein" through getting away from "inauthentic being" is a possibility, which is certain, since the "authentic being" is the being of "having being" at a point of time, due to which future is already a future that has *already* been coming still *not-yet-come*; then, it is also a *yet-to-come*.

The notion of Heidegger's "not-yet", which implies a certain "lack-of-togetherness", is that which makes "Dasein" wait. It is that, which defines his "hope", and this "hope" is *the promised and assured hope*, for which one can wait without having any doubt. Therefore, his anticipation is not an anxiety that keeps trembling with the fear that could arise in a condition of *what if*, which drags one into an imagination without giving any certainty to one particular image *as such*. In other

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[78] Ibid, p. 479
[79] Ibid.

words, there is no *risk*, *sadness* or *anxiety* in waiting; in anticipating; in hoping. It is *not* a future that is going to come without my knowledge or awareness. Instead, it is a future that is already predicted, decided and *recognized*. Therefore, the future towards which the self is moving "ahead-of-itself" is not threatening like the way *Levinasian future*[80] does. In that sense, the confirmation of returning to the Self, the "authentic being" - *the being before falling* - is both hope and promise of time, in which hope and promise get united at a particular point of time, where *then* time is realized in relation to the *having been* — the point where everything gets totalized.

Then, what is this promising hope?

In Heidegger's philosophy, hope is "to be" *I* or the *Self*, and it is confirmed through the possibility of *returning* due to the potentiality-for-being that the "Dasein" possesses. Thus, the possibility of becoming the Self through *absorbing the scattered*, while leaving all the others, is the possibility of *totalized* Being, and this totality is the possibility that is confirmed by death. Therefore, Heidegger analyzes death as the possibility of becoming the *Self* – the *I*, through which Self is understood as something that is possible only as death.

In Heideggerian philosophy, "the utter loss of Being-in-the-world" is considered as "death". But, it is through death that one reaches one's *totality*, as it is that, which lies ahead for Being to reach in its "Being-towards". 'When Dasein reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the Being of its "there".'[81] Accordingly, death has to be understood as the *totality* of "Dasein", though "Dasein" itself cannot reach this totality. As Heidegger explains, "Dasein" cannot experience its own death in his death. He can experience only the death of Others. At the same time, no one can experience the death of Others, because, in dying, only *I* can die, and that very *I* cannot be replaced by another Other; "at most we are always just 'there alongside'"[82]. Therefore, death is that which is very personal but no one is able to experience it by his or her own. In Heideggerian words, 'dying is something that every Dasein itself must take upon itself at the time. By its very essence, death is in

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[80] Levinas brings out his idea of death in relation to time and other in his *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, (1969) and in his essay "Time and the Other" that appears in *Levinas Reader*, (1989). As he mentions, the Other comes from the same zone from where the future and the death comes.

[81] Heidegger, 1962, p. 281

[82] Ibid, p. 282

every case mine, in so far as it 'is' at all.'[83]

Therefore, death is a possibility of Being, through which "Being-towards-death" becomes 'Being towards a possibility'. Also, "Dasein comports itself towards something possible in its possibility by *expecting* it."[84] However, this possibility of death is 'the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all. […] It is the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing.'[85] This possibility is made possible by the anticipation that which understands the potentiality-for-Being to find its authentic existence, because anticipation does not let the being of "Dasein" to evade the fact of its own most death. Instead, it frees itself for accepting the death as its own most death that is non-relational. In so doing, it liberates one from one's lostness in falling in idle talk. Thus, anticipation utterly individualizes "Dasein" and allows it to become certain of the totality of its potentiality-for-Being.

Thus, death, which is the unity through totality, is the *end* of the *other*, since death is the possibility of impossibility to be "Dasein". In that sense, it is a unity that confirms the "End"[86] of everything due to the successful realization of being and time that has been anticipated since the time of falling. In that sense, the realized Self through death can be understood as Being *before* falling; also, the realized time through passing away the now time can be seen as the primordial time that has been there *before* the falling of being. Therefore, the realization of the Self as the totalized being is the "End" of being scattered, and this accumulated totality is a totality that is meant to affirm the possibility of becoming one's self who is completely cut off from all others. In that sense, this realization of Self – the *I* or the Being – is the victory.

According to above views on death by Heidegger, it can be understood that death is no more to be looked at pessimistically, since it is the possibility of *affirmation* of *I*. However, in contrast to Heidegger's view, Sartre brings his notion of death, in which death is perceived as the affirmation of *I* through *negation*, through which space is given to the Other. In his view, death is that which alienates one from his or her life "to the advantage of the Other", because, "to be dead is to be a prey for

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[83] Ibid, p. 284
[84] Ibid, p. 306
[85] Ibid, p. 307
[86] Ibid, p. 285

the living", due to which "one who tries to grasp the meaning of his future death must discover himself as the future prey of others".[87] Sartre tries to analyze and justify this idea through his explanation on living being, where the "being-for-itself" is in its constant active movement, which results through the negation to be "being-in-itself". Accordingly, "being-for-itself" is that, through which *I* can escape what *I* am for the Other, overcoming the knowledge that the Other has "about me" through his or her projection. And, this escape happens not through the revelation of the very person *I am* to the Other or myself to the Other; but 'by revealing to myself by my freely posited ends that I am nothing and that I make myself be what I am; so long as I live, I can give the lie to what others discover in me, by projecting myself already towards other ends and every instance by revealing that my dimension of being-for-myself is incommensurable with my dimension for being-for-others. Thus ceaselessly I escape my outside and ceaselessly I am reapprehended by the Other.'[88] Therefore, so long as one is alive, there is no chance for the Other to have any appropriation to one's self, though one keeps trying to appropriate through apprehending one's self. In that sense, to live means, for Sartre, to negate the Other constantly through escape, whereas for Heidegger, to live means to be with the others despite my effort to be Self. Therefore, for Heidegger, living is the affirmation of the impossibility of the Self, while it is the negation of the Other for Sartre. Death is thus the *impossibility* of the *Other* in Heidegger's philosophy, while it is the *impossibility* of the *Self* for Sartre. However, in both the philosophies, there is a negation that is involved, though it is differently projected i.e., in Sartrian view, this negation is something that happens till the end in which case negation becomes the ultimate in the realization of being, due to which death itself is negated since death is that through which the self is realized as "being-in-itself", due to which death is destroyed. But, in Heidegger's philosophy, the negation is not a continuous process. It is a negation that ends with the realization of the Self through death, in which case death is not negated, but affirmed as the affirmation of the Self. Accordingly, it can be said that Heidegger's philosophy is utterly Self oriented or *Selfish*, since his effort is to realize *Being and Time* at the end of all the derivatives — derivated being mostly as the "inauthentic being" and derivated time as the "now-time", the ideas which certainly do not carry negative

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[87] Sartre, 1957, p. 543
[88] Ibid, p. 544

connotations, but the elements that suggest some *falsehood* in everyday being and time.

However, in Sartre, death is not a possibility that *I* can discover, since it is a "contingent fact which belongs to facticity" and "a certain aspect of being-for-others", due to which death becomes the possibility of the *Other*; because, in the death, there is "a permanent alienation of my being" making me inescapable from the Other anymore.[89] Therefore, in Sartrian point of view, death is something that cannot be awaited. Here, he tries to differentiate "to wait" from "to expect" since he finds them as two different acts[90]. Accordingly, death is that, which cannot be awaited, since one "can 'wait for' only a determined event which equally determined processes are in the act of realizing", in which case each passing minute is considered as that which brings the particular *waited for* closer to the one who is waiting. But, death cannot be foreseen though it is inevitable and certain. And, it is this unpredictability and unforeseeability that which makes death as that cannot be awaited. Therefore, on the other hand, death is that which can be expected, because, as Sartre remarks, "to expect death is not to wait for death"[91], in which case death can come to *me* at any point of time, due to which death cannot be discussed in terms of "coming closer" along with the passing moments. Instead, it has to be seen as that which is "sudden", and this *suddenness* is the unique quality of death that gives the surprise. This 'sudden death is undetermined and by definition can not be waited for at any date; it always, in fact, includes the possibility that we shall die in surprise before the awaited date.'[92]

The above idea of Sartre on Death, which suggests the *suddenness*, disables perceiving death as the possibility that is *within me* — the idea that is brought by Heidegger. In Sartrian point of view, it is the "chance" that detaches my possibility in relation to death; because, 'this perpetual appearance of chance at the heart of my projects cannot be apprehended as my possibility, but, on the contrary, as the nihilation of all my possibilities, a nihilation which *itself is* no longer a part of my possibilities.'[93] Here, Sartre emphasizes that death as not "the possibility" of *I*, "not

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[89] Ibid, pp. 545 - 548
[90] Ibid, p. 535
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid, p. 536
[93] Ibid, p. 537

even one of *my* possibilities"[94]. Hence, death is not that which brings "The Meaning" *of* life, in which death is seen as that, which is within the life or *inside* the life, like the way Heidegger explains; instead, it removes all the meanings *from* life. "It comes from outside and transforms us into the outside", through which I am entrusted to the Other forever.[95]

However, considering Heidegger's and Sartre's views on being and death, it can be understood that both the philosophers are trying to emphasize a *possibility* of *totality*, in which being can be analyzed as a *whole* – the possibility of a *completion* – through which one can finally become the Self or the *I*. Though this fact is clearly visible and explained in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Sartre, who produced his *Being and Nothingness,* in a way, in order to make his viewpoints as a way of reading, analyzing, and criticizing Heidegger's idea on Being, Time and Death, *does not* clearly bring his affirmation of the *Self* or possibility of affirming the *Self* in and through death; because, he tries to hand over being to the Other to take care of the life *after* death, making the Other as *irresistible* at a particular point of time. But, the problem here is that, this particular time, where other becomes powerful or decisive, arises only *after* my death. Here, his affirmation of "after" is significant, since it is this "after" which stands in-between the *changes within* and *changes from outside* that the dead undergoes in relation to death. As He says, after death, 'nothing more can happen to it inwardly; it is entirely closed; nothing more can be made to enter there; but its meaning does not cease to be modified from the outside.'[96] If so, till death, being is in a continuous resistant to the outside or the Other confirming his own possibilities, power and strength   forming a closure of self, though Sartre says that being is in continuous nihilation of itself. Certainly, it is a nihilation, but not a nihilation of the self in order to accept or to open up to the other, in the sense that the self undergoes transformations that are unpredictable; instead, it is a nihilation to affirm one's own possibilities to *overcome* the other. It is a *nihilation* of itself *for itself*. In that sense, the transformations are *consciously* made without meeting an *accident*, because, for Sartre, "there are no accidents in a life", since 'what happens to me happens through me, and I can neither affect myself with it nor revolt against it

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[94] Ibid, p. 540
[95] Ibid, p. 545
[96] Ibid, p. 543

nor resign myself to it'[97], because, 'each person is an absolute choice of self from the standpoint of a world of knowledges and of techniques which this choice both assumes and illumines'[98]. Accordingly, like in Heidegger's philosophy, in Satrian philosophy too, the self is realized as "being-in-itself" at death, where "being-for-itself" becomes impossible. However, though he considers death as the triumph of the Other over me, this triumph that is given to Other in his philosophy is made *without me*. And, this triumph that is of the Other yet stands *outside* me, since my death has closed all the spaces, through which the other could have entered me otherwise and changed or transformed me *within*. Therefore, Satrian being also becomes a strict closure of the Self through death, in which the *absolute* space of the Self is affirmed maintaining the dichotomy of *inside/outside*, positing the other as the outside that always remains as outside, which cannot challenge me. In that sense, despite the effort that Sartre made to stand in opposition to Heidegger with regard to the idea of death that suggests death as my peculiar possibility, he also ends up analyzing death, certainly not as my peculiar possibility, yet, as in Heidegger, as the way in which my being is realized *totally*, though death is not any of my possibility. Therefore, it can be analyzed that the philosophies of Heidegger and Sartre on Being are directed to confirm the possibility of creating a *totality* — the *Self*.

1.3   Levinas on Being: **Self and the Other**

It is the above discussed strict closure[99] of the Self, the dominant ideology in the Western Philosophy, which has shaped prevailing knowledge and truth in the world. In that sense, all kinds of systems, structures, and knowledge that have come so far, certainly with different shapes and faces, are the *affirmation* of a possible *totality* that necessarily *excludes* the *other*, creating and maintaining the binary opposition of self/other. In this opposition, the other is *subjugated* to the power of the Self.

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[97] Ibid, p. 554

[98] Ibid, p. 555

[99] Simon Critchley, in *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas,*(1999)*,* gives a descriptive analysis on the word 'closure'. As he explains, it is helpful to make a distinction between two senses of closure: a spatial closure and a temporal closure. Accordingly, 'spatial closure is that which encompasses and encloses all the co-ordinates or constituent parts appearing to a given, finite territory, and temporal closure is the activity or process of bringing something to its conclusion, completion or end […], Understood temporally or spatially, it is necessary to understand *cloture* as a limit, a moment in time or points in space which delimit a given area and seek to circumscribe it.'   pp. 61 - 63

Therefore, Western philosophy, the monologue of the *Same*, is a system or a knowledge constructed *without* Other - without *outside* - keeping the *self* as the *center* of power. And, it is this self-centered power structure which has to be questioned in order to open up the strict closure of the self to the other — the outside.

The effort of breaking away from the discourse of the powerful self seeing it as a philosophy of *violence* was realized by Leivnas, presenting the "Other" into the society of the self, making the self ethically responsible to the other *without* doing *violence* to the *other* through reducing the other into a defined category with a fixed meaning, resulted in thematization and conceptualization. Derrida describes this attempt of Levinas as a thought, "which fundamentally no longer seeks to be a thought of Being and phenomenality"[100]. And 'this thought summons us to a dislocation of the Greek logos, to a dislocation of our identity, and perhaps identity in general; it summons us to depart from the Greek site and perhaps from every site in general, and to move towards what is no longer a source or a site (too welcoming to the gods), but towards an exhalation, towards a prophetic speech […]. A thought which, without philology and solely by remaining faithful to the immediate, but buried nudity of experience itself, seeks to liberate itself from the Greek domination of the Same and the One (other names for the light of Being and of the phenomenon) as if from oppression itself – an oppression certainly comparable to none other in the world, an ontological or transcendental oppression, but also the origin or alibi of all oppression in the world. A thought, finally, which seeks to liberate itself from a philosophical fascinated by the "visage of being that shows itself in war" which "is fixed in the concept of totality dominates Western philosophy".'[101]

Criticizing ontology as a philosophy that reduces the other to the same promoting the freedom of being to be the Self, Levinas brings the philosophy of the "Other" connecting it to the idea of ethics – the transcendental metaphysics. Accordingly, his 'metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other.'[102] For him, this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other is *ethics*. As he explains, being is always in connection with the

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[100] Derrida, 1978, p. 82
[101] Ibid, pp. 82 - 83
[102] Levinas, 1969, p. 43

other, and he calls it a relationship. This relationship cannot be comprehended with the understanding of Heideggerian kind of Being in general, since, according to him, the very problem of Heideggerian Ontology is that "it subordinates the relationship with the Other to the relation with Being in general", though, as Levinas argues, "the comprehension of Being in general cannot dominate the relationship with the Other".[103]

However, in contrast to ontology, in Levinasian philosophy, ethics appears as the space, where the same takes the irreducible other into account. Here, the effort is to maintain the society of the *I* with the *Other*. This relation of the *I with* the Other is not prephylosophical, because it does not do violence to the *I*. Therefore, Levinasian Other is "absolute Other", who can call my spontaneity into question through appearing in front of *me*, paralyzing my possession with the face approaching me "not from the outside but from above".[104] This appearance of the other does not let me continue with my *absolute* power or sovereignty. However, the position of the other is not in *opposition* to me as a "freedom other than, but similar to my own, and consequently hostile to my own".[105] In that sense, "his alterity is manifested in a mastery that does not conquer, but teaches". Accordingly, the other is "my master"[106], who teaches me "how to *give* what I possess" with "his epiphany in the face", as "possession removes being from change", making him or her remain permanent in time. Here, as Levinas understands, teaching is not domination or hegemony at work within a totality, "but is the presence of infinity breaking the closed circle of totality".[107] On the other hand, the necessity of teaching that comes from the other is not anticipated by *me* due to some *lack* within me. Levinas says "'I' does not lack anything, and he is already a happy being in his egoism in separation, in which he is ignorant of the Other", but 'the desire for the other, above happiness, requires happiness, this autonomy of the sensible in the world, even though this separation is deducible neither analytically nor dialectically from the other'.[108] This desire, which is the "metaphysical desire"[109] that is distinguished from the idea of "need"[110] in

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[103] Ibid, pp. 46 - 47
[104] Ibid, p. 171
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid, p. 172
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid, p. 62
[109] Ibid, pp. 33 - 34

Levinasian philosophy, is a desire that comes to it from the presence of the other.

The desire, which does not coincide with an unsatisfied need, is "beyond satisfaction and nonsatisfaction", and "the relationship with the Other accomplishes it".[111] But, this relationship cannot be grasped or comprehended, because the Other is unknowable due to his "exteriority". However, it is this *exteriority*, which is also the infinity that appears in front of me from above without permitting me to be deceived by my glorious triumph as a living being. As Levinas says, the very call of the Other from above is language.[112] It is this height, which is above, that is designated in relation to the idea of teaching. Therefore, language and the other signify the "whole infinity of exteriority" through the idea of teaching. This 'first teaching teaches this very height, tantamount to its exteriority, the ethical. In this commerce with the infinity of exteriority or of height the naivete of the direct impulse, the naivete of the being exercising itself as a force on the move, is ashamed of its naivete. It discovers itself as a violence, but there by enters into a new dimension. Commerce with the alterity of infinity does not offend like an opinion; it does not limit a mind in a way inadmissible to a philosopher. Limitation is produced only within a totality, whereas the relation with the Other breaks the ceiling of the totality.'[113]

This unavoidable other is the very impossibility of possibility for me to be *I* – the Self through totality. As Levinas shows, it is the Other, who pushes me to the condition of "not being able to be I" due to the destituteness of the Other appearing in front of me with his face with open eyes. This powerful other due to the powerlessness demands *me* to break away from all the given knowledge and history that was already there, positing me in a condition that I am made to give away "the piece of bread"[114] from my mouth to fulfill the hunger of the Other. It is this unavoidability at the proximity of the Other that makes me *ethically* responsible, though I am not guilty. However, this proximity is not that which destroys the distance between the self and the other, but a proximity that does not let the other to be absorbed and subjugated by the self; it keeps the other in an incalculable distance to the self, in which case other becomes infinite establishing the very infinity. This

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid, p. 179
[112] Ibid, p. 171
[113] Ibid.
[114] Levinas, 1991, p. 56

infinity is that through which the Other remains as other, because, as Levinas explains, the idea of infinity, which breaks the totality, requires the separation between the self and the other, for it is through which they are in relation while absolve themselves in relation.[115] Accordingly, it is a relationship, whose positivity comes from remoteness since they are posited *in relation* through a *separation*. This remoteness is radical only if desire desires aimlessly — an absolute desire, in which the desiring being is mortal and the desired is invisible. Here, the idea of invisibility does not indicate an absence of relation. The relation that is indicated by the invisibility implies relations with what is not *given*, therefore, of which there is no awareness or understanding that is resulted through cognition.

In metaphysics, the relation between the self and the other is seen as irreversible, because the reversibility of a relation couples self and the other as "the *one* to the *other*"[116] fixing and completing them into a system that is visible from outside confirming the idea of totality, where the radical alterity of the other is destroyed. According to Levinas, the irreversibility of relationship indicates the radical separation between the same and the other, in which the impossibility "to place oneself outside of the correlation between the same and the other so as to record the correspondence or the non-correspondence of this going with this return"[117] is seen, and radical alterity is not destroyed.

The radical heterogeneity of the other, which is termed as "alterity", has to be understood as the possibility of the other to remain always at the possibility of departure in the relationship "to serve as *entry* into the relation, to be the same not relatively but absolutely"[118]. At this point of departure, in Levinasian view, a term can absolutely remain only as *I*. To be *I* is to have an identity as one's content. However, this *I* is not really *static*. *I* is the being who exists identifying itself throughout all that what happens to him. It means, it is the alterity of *I*. However, the breaking of totality is not an operation of thought. The distance that breaks the totality can be maintained "against an inevitably totalizing thought only if thought finds itself *faced* with an

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[115] Levinas, 1969, p. 102
[116] Ibid, p. 35
[117] Ibid, p. 36
[118] Ibid.

other refractory to categories"[119]. It is in this sense that Levinasian Other is understood as "absolutely other", who "resists the system" proving the impossibility of totality through "maintaining his transcendence in the midst of history".[120]

Here, Levinasian idea of transcendence does not denote some negative idea like the way Sartre has explained in his analysis of being through negation[121]. As Levinas says, "Transcendence Is Not Negativity"[122], because it is that which cooperates to maintain the idea of *infinity* — the idea connected to the notion of *perfect*. Accordingly, in Levinasian philosophy, the being remains as someone "unknowable fully". Therefore, there is no way to understand the idea of being in total, because, the relationship between the self and the other is inevitable in spite of the will, since will itself is that which is related and derived in relation to the other.

The *absolute* separation of the self is possible or knowable only in death, since death is the separation par excellence in which *I* can be *absolute I*; because, death is *my death* that cannot be owned by another or cannot be snatched from me. In *my death*, it is only *I* die; hence, death is where *I* have *my sovereignty*. But, as Levinas says, even in death, one *cannot* evade the other, because "the solitude of the death does not make the Other vanish"[123]. Also, I cannot know about my death, as it is *I* die in my death, due to which *I* cannot know what my death *is*. 'I can absolutely not apprehend the moment of death; it is "out of reach". My death comes from an instant upon which I can in no way exercise my power.'[124] It threatens me from "beyond", and "I am exposed to absolute violence" due to its "unforeseeable character".[125] And, according to Levinas, death and the Other are situated in the same region.[126] Therefore, 'the approach of death remained one of the modalities of the relation with the Other.'[127] In that sense, death is the moment where *I* is impossible — it is the "impossibility of possibility"[128].

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[119] Ibid, p. 40
[120] Ibid.
[121] Sartre, 1957
[122] Levinas, 1969, p. 40
[123] Ibid, p. 234
[124] Ibid, p. 234
[125] Ibid, p. 233
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid, p. 234
[128] Ibid, p. 234

1.3.1   Relationship with the Other: in Heidegger, Sartre, and Levinas

Considering the ideas of Heidegger, Sartre, and Levinas on being and death, it is obvious that three of them have taken the idea of Other into their analysis in a major way, though the intension of doing so varies — to exclude or include the Other or to question and to go beyond the given philosophical tradition governed by the metaphysical idea of *thing in-itself* with reference to the *self-presence* that carries the *essence* of being in relation to the notion of truth, in order to find an answer for the *question of being'* that is posed as *what is being*? It is for this question that Heidegger has tried to give an answer in his *Being and Time*, where he emphasizes the need of having a "correct approach" to understand the entities, for which he brings out the entity that is presence-at-hand in order to understand the ontological Being. However, despite his effort to break away from the tradition, he is yet another affirmation of the same tradition, since his whole philosophy is directed towards understanding the idea of Being, which is, as Derrida argues, 'the element to which he wishes to return thought is still – already – the Greek element, the Greek thought of Being, the thought of Being whose irruption or call produced Greece'[129].

Nonetheless, as discussed above, Heidegger and Sartre do accommodate the other in their philosophies establishing the relationship between the self and the other as necessary and unavoidable factor. For Heidegger, this relationship of the self with the other is not an act done with a *consciousness*, which is accelerated with an *intension*. According to him, the other is someone that the self is destined to be-with due to the" thrownness" to the world through "falling away from". In that sense, other is that which *happened* to the self for *which* or *whom* "Dasein" is not responsible: if there is any responsibility at all with which "Dasein" is bound, that is a responsibility towards the self in order to *take care of* the self amidst the crowd – the others. It is a responsibility *to not to risk* or to *not to forget* the Self, therefore, *to return* to one's Self. Therefore, the other that appears in Heidegger's philosophy is the other to whom *I* am not *open* due to a necessity that erupts from me with a *desire* for the other; but, a *given condition* created by the formula of *cause* and *effect* with which one has to move ahead. And, this movement is determined to eliminate the other — the hindrance, who makes the self forget about his "authentic being". Therefore, on the

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[129] Derrida, 1978, p. 82

other hand, though the relationship with the other is not made consciously due to one's need, the movement that stretches within the space marked by the point of departure and the point of arrival – the *falling* away from the "authentic being" and the '*returning* of the "authentic being" - is a movement that is governed by consciousness and knowledge that was *already* there. Accordingly, to eliminate the other through cutting *the other* away from me is a way to *bring back* the past, the time, the self, the knowledge, and the truth which was *already* a glory of the self.

But, unlike Heidegger, Sartre's idea of relationship between self and the other is directly governed by *consciousness*, since the relationship that the self has to maintain with the other is not that which *happens* to me *by chance*. For Sartre, whatever happens to me is "my choice", through which the negation that affirms my capacity and capability to "overcome" the other's interpretation on me without letting myself to be grasped by the power of the other. Therefore, the confrontation of the self with the other is a "choice" that is chosen by the self in order to affirm his or her own capability for "freedom", due to which the other's existence is considered as a "factual limit to my freedom"[130]. This choice that is made *consciously* in order to confront the other is an effort *to be free* – "to-be-free-to-change"[131]. However, though Sartre thus discusses about the need of "change of the self" in manifesting his notion of "alienation" of the self, it is an alienation that necessarily takes place not for the other, but for the very sake of the *self* - in Satrian words, "to be in-itself". Therefore, it is an "alienation" that happens with the *awareness* of the self, according to which one is aware of *from what* and *for what* one is alienated, due to which Satrian idea of "alienation" can be seen as *alienation with a decided direction*. In that sense, Sartre's "alienation" is not a *displacement*[132] – displacement from the self.

Nonetheless, neither Heidegger nor Sartre tries to overcome the other or separate from the other through knowing the other. They do not know the other *as such*, though they assure the existence of the other. According to their philosophy, it is possible to overcome the other by the self due to the very awareness that one has about its own self. It is thus *self-confidence* that Heidegger and Sartre try to

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[130] Sartre, 1957, p. 523
[131] Ibid, p. 506
[132] The idea of displacement from the Self is emphasized by Blanchot, Derrida, and Deluze in relation to the idea of literature through writing.

emphasize in their philosophies of self and the other. Therefore, it can be said that neither Heidegger nor Sartre explains much *about* the other. They posit the other in their ideas only to the extent that they could analyze *how* and *what* the self does to confront or defeat the other in order to find *freedom* – to be the *Self*. They focus their attention only on confirming the possibilities and the power of the self. But, the Other that Levins brings through his philosophy is the other that the self is aware of through recognizing the Other *as Other*, according to which Other remains *infinitely inifinite*. However, since there is no such possibility of overcoming the other despite one's effort to fight and defeat the other that is explained by Levinas with the example of "war", Levinas considers his own philosophy as that, which gives space to the other in terms of ethical responsibility, according to which no violence is practiced by the self over the other. However, considering his views on the recognition of the other through the "face of the Other", it could be seen that, despite Levinas's attempt to eliminate violence, there are certain elements of "violence of the same". This is explained by Derrida as "the violence of light"[133] that is embedded in the Heliocentric[134]   Western philosophical discourse, under which he analyses metaphysical traits of self-presence that is visible in Levinasian notion of "epiphany of the face" of the other. Here, Derrida quotes few lines from Levinas's *Le temps et l'autre* to explain how the other no more remains as the other in 'the ancient clandestine friendship between light and power, the ancient complicity between theoretical objectivity and techno-political possession'[135] as follows: "If the other could be possessed, seized, and known, it would not be the other. To possess, to know, to grasp are all synonymous of power".[136] It is only within the "oppressive and luminous identity of the same", that the desire to see and to know, to have and to will unfolds. And, according to Derrida, for Levinas, they remain as "fundamental categories of phenomenology and ontology".[137] Then, problematizing Levinasian views, Derrida questions "how will metaphysics of the face as the *epiphany* of the other free itself of light?", when "everything given to me within light appears as given

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[133]Derrida, 1978, p.84

[134] Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/copernicus/ (accessed on 13.08.2013)

[135] Derrida, 1978, p. 91

[136] [Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*] quoted in Derrida, 1978, p. 91

[137] Derrida, 1978, p. 92

to myself by myself"[138].

However, taking his views on diachrony and subjectivity into account, it is undeniable the effort that is taken by Levinas to bring the idea of the Other into the sovereign space of the self, commanding and demanding the self to break away from the totality, in order to go *beyond* the prevailing philosophical tradition of the *self-sameness*. But, the problem with his philosophy is that it also, like Heidegger's and Sartre's, carries the elements of *consciousness* and *intentionality*. According to him, the self is not only aware of the other as *other*, but also aware of the movement of the self as a movement from "ego" to "me" in the "substitution of one-for-another"[139] in front of the the other. This unavoidable movement, which is resulted in breaching the totality of the self due to the presence of the Other, happens to *me* certainly not without my knowledge, but with my awareness of the very presence of the other in front of me. It is that *awareness* of the *presence* of the other as *other* in his vulnerability and helplessness and the awareness of *my need* for the other which pushes Levinasian philosophy back to the domain of *self-same philosophy*, because, whether Levinas acknowledges it or not, the above mentioned awareness of the self regarding the other is governed by *intentionality*. In this context, comparing Husserlian ideas with Levinas, Derrida tries to show how Levinas and Husserl are quite close to each other in relation to their ideas on the *other*. As Derrida explains, "Husserl's most central affirmation concerns the *irreducibly mediate* nature of the intentionality aiming at the other as other."[140] 'By acknowledging in this infinitely other as such (appearing as such) the status of an intentional modification of the ego in general, Husserl gives himself the right to speak of the infinitely other as such, accounting for the origin and the legitimacy of his language. He describes the phenomenal system of nonphenomenality. Levinas in fact speaks of the infinitely other, but by refusing to acknowledge an intentional modification of the ego – which would be a violent and a totalitarian act for him – he deprives himself of the very foundation and possibility of his own language.'[141] Here, Derrida questions the very ground from which Levinasian view on "infinitely other" emerges, 'if the infinitely other does not appear as such in the zone he calls the same, and which is the neutral

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[138] Ibid.
[139] Levinas,1991, p. 13
[140] Derrida,1978, p. 123
[141] Ibid, p. 125

level of transcendental description?'[142] However, as Levinas mentions, it is with this other, who is identified and identifiable *as* the *other*, the same is bound to maintain an ethical relationship through "ethical dissymmetry". Yet, on the other hand, there is no possibility to talk about such ethical dissymmetry without my becoming the other's other, where "I know I am, is the evidence of a strange symmetry"[143]. As Derrida argues, in Levinas's descriptions, there is no such appearance of the trace of "I".[144] Hence, self cannot desire or respect the other in ethical dissymmetry, without this evidence. This transcendental violence that does not spring from an ethical resolution or freedom originally institutes the relationship between two finite ipseities. In effect, the necessities of gaining access to the meaning of the other (in its irreducible lateritic) on the basis of its "face" and of speaking of the other as other on the basis of its appearing-for-me-as-what-it-is are violence itself. [145]

Nevertheless, though Levinasian philosophy too is, in some manner, grounded in the discourse of the *dominant self*, he throws the same discourse into an incalculable uncertainty in relation to the arrival of the other. Hence, the arrival and the appearance of the other is neither Sartrian "choice" or a decision that is made by *me* nor is it Heideggerian; because, as discussed above, according to Heidegger, the self is "thrown" towards the world, therefore, to the other, in which case self's meeting with the other is that which is *destined*. And, it sounds more like the *destiny* of *tragic hero* in Greek tragedies[146]. Contrastingly, in Levinas, other is an *arrival* — an arrival of which the self has no idea, control, or prediction, due to which there is no such waiting. Yet, one is exposed to the violence that comes from *outside*. As Sean Hand explains, 'Leivnas views death as something absolutely unknowable that comes at subjectivity beyond its possibilities. The mystery of death, which is the limit of the subject's virility and always in the future, replaces the project of Dasein with a

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid, p. 128
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] In Greek tragedies, hero is destined to be guilty and, then to suffer. The suffering destiny gets over only through death. This given destiny of the tragic hero is something which has already been decided by the Oracle, and, it cannot be overturned, despite whatever the effort made by the hero. Mostly, such irreversible destinies are the consequences of 'being disobedient' to the God's command or will. Aeschylus's 'Agamemnon', Sophocles's Odeipus the King, and Euripides's Hippolytus can be taken as few examples for such heroes.

recognition of the relationship with the other.'[147] Thus, it is the *coming of the other* to me – the self – from outside which makes being as a temporal being and which makes being "retreat" before the other, through which being is no more the Heidegger's "Dasein" who is moving towards death while waiting with the hope. Certainly, it is because neither Heidegger nor Sartre considers death *as* the other in the sense that other becomes that which is located in a zone from where death comes. Instead, for them, death is that which comes from the *sovereign* space of the self. For Heidegger, it is from the "authentic being" for the "authentic being"; for Sartre, from the "being itself" for being to be "in-itself". Therefore, especially in Heidegger's philosophy, death is not violence to which one is exposed in a way that one is at a *risk* of *losing* what one has in his possession. Instead, death is the way to *gain* what one had lost once, while it also becomes the gaining *itself.* Accordingly, there is no violence in death that one has to be afraid of. Yet, on the other hand, there is violence in death since it does violence to the other due to, as Heidegger explains, its 'individual character' in which case death becomes the impossibility of "Dasein" – the being-with-other. Compared to Heidegger's notion of death, Sartre's notion of death does affirm a strong *destructive* character that performs certain brutality. However, unlike Heidegger's violence, this violence is not directed towards the other. The effect of the destructive death is something that affects the self, consequently through which the self is negated through total destruction, though it is a *productive destruction*, since it is through that destruction the self is realized completely – therefore it is a *creative destruction*.

However, when it comes to Levinas, death is the *fear* from which one wants to run away; if not to run away, at least to "postpone" it in the sense of opposing death. Therefore, being is "the 'not yet' which is a being against death"[148]. Nevertheless, the resistance to death is enacted from *my side*, and it amounts to be an act which is performed infinitely and incompletely, since death cannot be apprehended by *me* due to its unreachability. As Levinas mentions, 'death is a menace that approaches me as a mystery; its secrecy determines it – it approaches without being able to be assumed.'[149] And, it is this unpredictability, undecidability and undefinability that

[147] Sean Hand in his introduction to *Levinas Reader*, 1989, p. 37
[148] Levinas, 1969, p. 224
[149] Ibid, p. 235

makes death so powerful than *my* power, due to which self becomes the impossible possibility. Nonetheless, death does not absorb me making a unity or a totality marking the end of the distance between the self and the other, since 'it approaches me without being able to be assumed, such that the time separates me from my death dwindles and dwindles without end, involves a sort of last interval which my consciousness cannot traverse, and where a leap will somehow be produced from death to me. The last part of the route will be crossed without me.'[150] And, it is 'this interference of movements across the distance that separates me from the last moment distinguishes the temporal interval from spatial distance'.[151] According to above analysis, it can be understood that, in Levinasian philosophy, there is something which still remains –*remnants* or *remainder* - even after death, due to which Sartrian *total destruction* and Heideggerian *complete absorption* asserted by their ideas on death are in question. Therefore, in Levinasian view, death is not the "End" of being; it cannot be considered either as nothingness or as commencement of life. It is an *infinite* movement which stretches to infinity.

Here, the most important but difficult task is to understand the above mentioned idea of "infinity" in Levinasian philosophy. The idea of infinity should not be understood as *infinity of infinite*, which is a *positive infinity*, but as *infinity of finitude*. If the idea of infinity is understood as *infinity of infinitely other*, then the other has to be understood as someone who keeps hiding within himself, forming another *absolute closure*. But, here, of whom do we talk about as other or whose space do we name as other's space? Is there a referential point in relation to other, and in relation to the space of the other? If it is possible to point out other *as* the other with a proper reference, how can that other be understood any longer as "infinitely other"? Is there a signification *as such* when we say *other*? Thus, the comprehension of the idea of infinity as *infinity of infinite*, like the way Levinas does, is another possibility of forming a sovereign closure of the absolute. According to Derrida, 'the infinitely other and the infinitely same, if these words have meaning for a finite being, is the same.'[152]

Therefore, idea of infinity in the context of the other has to be understood as

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Derrida, 1978, p. 129

"in-finite" – the one in "in-finite". Highlighting the problematic of Levinasian idea of *infinitely infinite* other, Derrida argues that '[I]f one thinks, as Levinas does, that positive Infinity tolerates, or even requires, infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first of all the words infinite and other. Infinity cannot be understood as Other except in the form of the in-finite. As soon as one attempts to think Infinity as a positive plentitude […], the other becomes unthinkable, impossible, unutterable.'[153]

However, Levinasian infinitely other, who "becomes unthinkable, impossible, unutterable beyond (traditon's) Being and Logos" is not possible, because 'in any event, that the positive infinity of classical infinity is translated into language only by betraying itself in a negative word (in-finite), perhaps situates, in the most profound way, the point where thought breaks with language.'[154] But, this is a break which will "resonate" throughout all language without forming a distinction or hierarchy between thought and language.

On the other hand, if there is such kind of betraying or violence happens with language – which is speech – one could think of remaining in silence *letting be* the other to be the other infinitely, so that the betrayal or the violence does not occur; so that "peace" can be maintained without creating a room for a "war", because, "there is war only after the opening of discourse"[155]. But, infinite silence is also violent, because it continues to remain as a *closed* discourse. As Derrida says, even 'war starts only after the opening of discourse, war dies out only at the end of discourse.'[156] In that sense, as far as speech and silence are concerned, 'speech is doubtless the first defeat of violence, but paradoxically, violence did not exist before the possibility of speech.'[157] According to above understanding, speech and silence are somehow a language with violence, though they are expected to do justice to the other. Therefore, it is not possible to think of a language which is *non-violent*, because, 'language can only indefinitely tend towards justice by acknowledging and practicing the violence

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[153] Ibid, p. 114
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid, p. 117
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

within it. It is the violence against violence. *Economy* of violence.'[158]

However, though violence is inevitable in language, the effort that is made within a philosophical discourse is to be *ethical* even within the domain of violence. As far as the oral discourse is concerned, where speech is privileged, it is a discourse where violence is done to the other through *my* power, *my* perception, *my* recognition, *my* understanding, *my* fixing and *my* imposition of meaning depending on all the methods of *calculation*, *classification*, *categorization*, *deduction* and *reduction,* because the meaning of a word is assigned by a tradition that comes under *my* authority, where, somehow, the other does not appear as the other *in-finite*; rather, it is an appearance of the other as *infinitely other* that is caught up within the language of the *Same* .

Nonetheless, in Derrida's view, other is "phenomenality of disappearance", according to which what we have as other or refer as other is not a person or a thing *as such*, but the "trace" of the other.[159] 'If it is called "trace", the word can only emerge as metaphor whose philosophical elucidation will ceaselessly call upon "contradictions".'[160] But, in speech, in the oral discourse of Leivnas, it is always necessary to have two identified individuals for the very purpose of communication — it is the discourse of face to face, where other is reduced to *You*, and where each of them has to be responsible for all the expressions and actions that they make. Therefore, Levinasian "transcendental metaphysics" is also a philosophy of violence and Derrida terms it as 'transcendental violence'[161].

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[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid, p. 129
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid, p.118

CHAPTER - II

BEING, LANGUAGE, AND WRITING

2.1 Language and Metaphysics of Presence

Husserlian Phenomenology, Heideggerian Ontology and Levinasian Transcendental Metaphysics can be viewed as milestones of Onto-theo-teleological philosophy of West since their respective philosophies are governed by the philosophy which originates with the question "What is being?". Considering the question that is posed as *What is being?*, it is not only the problem that has been the warp and the weft that weaved the fabric of Western philosophy but also the problem that has shaped the very language, in and through which the particular problem itself is constructed and posed, and, thereby becoming the language of Western philosophy. Consequently, Western philosophy and its language is nothing but the definition and answer for the question of Being that is posed with *What?*, where the word *what* has become the kernel of everything — everything that comes as an answer for the question that is posed with *What?*. Therefore, it can be said that the philosophical tradition from Greece to Jena is consisted with two major parts: *what* and *the rest*, and there is a possibility of compositing them to make the totality of philosophy – philosophy *as such*. Thus, philosophy that has become the system, which governs the system of knowledge producing the *systematized* knowledge, is the institution which legitimizes the subsequent systems, schemas and structures that are operative in search of truth and manifesting truth. Therefore, the institution that is called philosophy is the production house of truth – truth *as such*. Consequently, philosophy as *truth* and truth as *philosophy* is the machinery that has been functioning to affirm their own space and existence that is reciprocally and simultaneously constituted, through which, somehow, it has become the *monologue* that narrates its own story. Yet, it is the *harmony* — harmony of philosophy and truth that is capable of creating many more harmonies which make the very first harmony echoed in their pleasing sound. In a way, the idea of harmony itself is a construction of philosophy.

However, the problem here is that the question "What is being?" yet remains as a *question* despite the number of time it has been posed and answered throughout the history of Western philosophy. If it thus continues to be the question that thirsts for an answer, is it due to the inadequacy, incompleteness or irrelevance of the answers that have been provided so far by different philosophers or is it something to do with the very question itself — the question of *What?*. The question, which became the question that led for many other questions, thus becoming the major question, does not seem to have targeted its own formation or ground as that which needs to be questioned. Thus, it has been able to maintain its uninterrupted sovereignty for many years. Therefore, before anything else to be questioned, what has to be interrogated is the question itself, through which not only the question and its formation but also the very language in which it is formed would be questioned. Accordingly, it is the *constructed* question in and through language that has to be de-constructed. Certainly, not only thus the language and its form but also the *grammar* that has gathered those three words into a harmony has to be questioned in order to go *beyond* the *givenness* — the *givenness* of philosophy and language that is *Greek*. Therefore, there is a necessity of bringing the "what" once again, though with a different purpose which is not directed to find a particular answer, but to question the "what" in "What is being?". Therefore, here, *what* is not that which presupposes the presence of something; rather, it is that whic questions the existing discourse constituted with *What* — the *What* through which reference is directed toward something concrete, visible, audible or certain. Thus, the certainty that the *What* has confirmed, though it appears as a question, is *being* – being *as such*. Posing the question "What is being?", it establishes the very existence of *being* in terms of its *presence*, and it is that being that is there which is declared through the language of *there is* — language that addresses and brings the *presence* of the thing. Therefore, it is a problem of *language* before it becomes a problem of philosophy. Thus, philosophy itself can be seen as *a problem of language* and *language of a problem*. Hence, the circle of Western philosophy is that which is created through the language of logos, which is the language of metaphysics. It is a problem constructed through the language governed by metaphysics. Thus, language of metaphysics is the language and knowledge *about/of* being or the *meaning* of being — *being* that is *there* in terms of *there is*. Therefore, as Derrida remarks, the whole configuration of Being

constructed by Western Philosophy with regard to the question of Being is grounded on the concept of *sense*. According to him, 'the concept of sense, of meaning, is governed by the entire system of determinations that we are pointing out here, and every time that a question of *meaning* is posed, it must be posed within the closure of metaphysics.'[162] It is on the basis of this formulation that Hidegger goes onto analyze *being*, assuming being as *present* in its *presence*. It is this appropriation which is based on the idea of the *presence* of being that has presented *being* as an empirical and analyzable entity. And, this appropriation and analyzability of being is a possibility that is made through language, since language is considered as the manifestation of presence and the proximity of being. Thus, language is the very affirmation of the presence of being, since it is that which presents the being as *there is* — the speech.

However, speech is understood as language, since it is through that which one is able to hear and recognize the one who speaks. Speech is the very presence of the being since it is "the idealizing value of the *very near*"[163] that is calculated and measured by "the structure of hearing-oneself-speak"[164]. Thus, speech or voice has been playing the "kernel"[165] in authenticating and re-presenting the *being* and *the proper* of the being. Consequently, the question of Being and the answers for the same that have come up from Aristotle to Hegel is based on the "sonic vibration" of voice, and it is through this appropriation of voice to the being that *the meaning* and *the essence* of the being is comprehended and analyzed. In that sense, speech is the very reference to the being in itself – the sense and the essence.

Hence, it can be viewed that language is the sign of the very presence of the *self-presence* through "the articulation of presence upon self-presence"[166]. And, it is due to this possibility and the ability of speech to affirm the very presence of the being that the speech has been lifted to a higher position considering speech *alone* as language. The above idea of speech as the presence of the self-presence due to its

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[162] Derrida, 1982, p. 51
[163] Ibid, p. xix
[164] Ibid.
[165] Derrida discusses about the idea of "kernel" in his reply that is given to the question posed by Rodolphe Gasché. This interview appears in his *Roundtable on Translation* which is included in his *The Ear of the Other*, 1985, pp. 114 - 116
[166] Derrida, 1994, p. 246

"speaking-hearing voice", the idea that is confirmed in the domains of Theology from the time of Descartes and the modern linguistics that wishes to be the science of language with the acknowledgement of Phonology, has tried to keep *writing* away from language, since it is considered as that which *contaminates* the *essence* of language.

Criticizing the Western tradition that considers writing as *inferior* to speech, Derrida brings out his ideas on Saussurian linguistics as follows: 'Saussure does not recognize in the latter (*writing*) more than a *narrow* and *derivative* function. Narrow because it is nothing but one modality among others, a modality of the events which can be befall a language whose essence, as the facts seem to show, can remain forever uncontaminated by writing. […] Derivative because representative: signifier of the first signifier, representation of the self-present voice, of the immediate, natural, and direct signification of the meaning (of the signified, of the concept, of the ideal object or what have you).'[167] Saussurian understanding of writing, which is also the understanding of Plato and Aristotle, is a notion, as Derrida says, that is "restricted to the model of phonetic script and the language of words"[168]. Here, "the word is already a unity of sense and sound, of concept and voice, or, to speak a more rigorously Saussurian language, of the signified and the signifier"[169], though the idea of *word* implies other divisions. In that sense, writing is no more than an "exterior representation of language" and of the "thought-sound"; it will be the phonetic; it will be the outside.[170]

However, as Derrida explains, in spite of the rigorous exclusion of writing from language as "unrelated to [the]… inner system", it is expected that, within the domain of Saussrian linguistics, writing should respect and protect the integrity of the "internal system" of the language. The respect and the protection expected from the writing toward language in Saussrian views is something that Derrida does not want to simplify, because, he says, "on that point Saussure too is not quite complacent. Why else would he give so much attention to that external phenomenon, that exiled

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[167] Ibid, p. 30
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid, p. 31
[170] Ibid.

figuration, that outside, that double?"[171] Here, quoting Saussurian lines, he affirms the Saussurian fear for writing, since writing, though unrelated to the inner system, is *dangerous*. The danger related to writing is an idea that has been prevailing from the time of Plato. Accordingly, writing is dangerous since the *evil* of writing comes "from without", and it contaminates the language, which is basically speech. As Derrida argues, Sasssurian effort "to be acquainted with its usefulness, shortcomings, and dangers" is 'less a question of outlining than of protecting, and even of restoring the internal system of the language in the purity of its concept against the gravest, most perfidious, most permanent contamination which has not ceased to menace, even to corrupt the system, […], as a series of accidents affecting the language and befalling it *from without*.'[172] It is due to this contamination, 'the *Phaedrus* denounced writing as the intrusion of an artful technique, a forced entry of a totally original sort, an archetypal violence: eruption of *outside* within the *inside*, breaching into the interiority of the soul, the living self-presence of the soul within the true logos, the help that speech lends to itself.'[173] Thus, Saussurian "vehement argumentation aims at more than a theoretical error, more than a moral fault: at a sort of stain and primarily at a sin"[174]. Here, Derrida compares Sassurian definition of "sin" with the definition of sin that is given by Malebranche and Kant, which sees sin "as the inversion of the natural relationship between the soul and the body through passion", and "Saussure here points at the inversion of the natural relationship between speech and writing".[175]

Explaining the historic-metaphysical presuppositions that discuss the *purity* of *origin*, Derrida tries to analyze Saussurian point of view on the natural relationship between speech and writing. As Derrida describes, according to the Western tradition of metaphysics driven by the nostalgia of *naturalness*, 'there would be first a *natural* bond of sense to the senses and it is this that passes from sense to sound: "the natural bond," Saussure says, "the only true bond, the bond of sound". This natural bond of the signified (concept or sense) to the phonic signifier would condition the natural

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[171] Ibid, p. 34
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid, pp. 34 - 35

relationship subordinating writing (visible image) to speech. It is this natural relationship that would have been inverted by the original sin of writing:'[176]

However, since the definition of sin interprets sin as a result of "passion", for Sassure, in Derridian point of view, "to give in to the "prestige of the written form" is to give in to *passion*"[177]. Therefore, Derrida sees Saussure's view on writing, which suggests writing as a "tyranny", as an analysis and a critique of *passion*, because "passion is tyrannical and enslaving"[178] in general sense. And, "that tyranny is at bottom the mastery of the body over the soul, and passion is a passivity and sickness of the soul, the moral perversion is pathological."[179] Hence, Saussure does not want to accept the idea that there is a reciprocal effect of writing on speech. Derrida says, for Saussure, the above mentioned "reciprocal effect" is "wrong".[180] It is due to all these weaknesses and secondariness, since its inability to be *immediate* to the presence of the self through *voice*, that writing has been kept away from speech. It has been considered as *outside* and *exterior* while understanding its threat to the inner system of language through its monstrosity since its coming "from without". In that sense, the *exclusion* of writing from language is also an effort of protecting the *essence*, *naturalness* or *the purity* of language. Therefore, this system of purification against the contamination constituted by the tradition of metaphysics is a "system of defense against the threat of writing"[181].

If it is due to the immediacy with regard to the *self-presence* that the speech has been considered as natural, pure, authentic or true son of logos, therefore, given the precedence when compared to writing, the question that immediately rises in relation to the idea of *immediacy* is that of space and time, which lies irreducibly within being and language, speaking and hearing or the space and time that lies in-between the two faces facing each other in Saussurian "speaking-circuit"[182]. Keeping aside the idea of space and time between being and language to be disucsed later in the chapter, it is important to take Saussrian "speaking-circuit" into consideration in

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[176] Ibid, p. 35
[177] Ibid, p. 38
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid, p. 101
[182] Saussure, 1960, p. 11

order to build up the argument regarding whether there is such possibility of attaching *immediacy* to speech in relation to thought.

According to Saussure, it is required to have the presence of at least two persons to construct and complete the circuit. Then, he goes on to analyze how it functions as follows: 'Suppose that the two people, A and B are conversing with each other: Suppose that the opening of the circuit is in A's brain, where mental facts (concepts) are associated with representations of the linguistic sounds (sound-images) that are used for their expression. A given concept unlocks a corresponding sound-image in the brain; this purely psychological phenomenon is followed in turn by a physiological process: the brain transmits an impulse corresponding to the image to the organs used in producing sounds. Then the sound waves travel from the mouth of A to the ear of B: a purely physical process. Next, the circuit continues in B, but the order is reversed: from the ear to the brain, the physiological transmission of the sound-image; in the brain, the psychological association of the image with the corresponding concept. If B then speaks, the new act will follow – from his brain to A's – exactly the same course as the first act and pass through the same successive phases.'[183]

Considering the above analysis on how the "speaking-circuit" functions, language, which is speech, is a *representation* of thought or, in Saussurian terms, "mental facts" or "concepts". Consequently, it is also the *representation* of the *presence of being*. In other words, speech is the sign that presents or indicates the presence of being. Therefore, speech is considered as that which is able to *re-present* the thing *itself*, due to which it becomes the most proximal sign that establishes the presence of being, because speech is generated through the *voice* of the speaker.

However, as far as the notion of sign and representation is attentively looked at, sign and representation comes into play *in place of* something. As Derrida analyses in his essay *Differance*[184], 'sign is put in place of the thing itself, the present thing – "thing" holding here for the sense as well as the referent. Signs represent the present in absence; they take the place of the present. When we cannot take hold of or show the thing, let us say the present, the being-present, when the present does not present

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[183] Ibid, pp. 11 - 12
[184] Derrida, 1973, pp. 129 - 160

itself, then we signify, we go through the detour of signs. We take up or give signs; we make signs.'[185] Thus, if sign is invented in order to re-present the *absent presence*, speech cannot be considered as that, which presents the presence of the being *itself*. Instead, it is a *re-presentation*, due to which it becomes, according to Derrida, a "differed presence"[186]. However, suggesting language as a system of signs that is used by individuals for expressing their own thoughts, Saussure has kept language as that, which is *outside* the individual, according to which "language is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual"[187]. And, according to Derrida, Saussurian above noted idea 'implies that the subject (self-identical or even conscious of self-identity, self-conscious) is inscribed in the language, that he is a "function" of the language. He becomes a *speaking* subject only by confirming his speech […] to the system of linguistic prescriptions taken as the system of differences […] by confirming to that law of language which Saussure calls "language without speech".'[188] Therefore, the difference that is in play not only related to language when it is considered as a *re*-presentation of the thing that is out there in the world, but also is related to the strict opposition between speech and language that is maintained by Saussure.[189] In this sense, as Derrida remarks, "certainly, the speaking or signifying subject would not be self-present, insofar as he speaks or signifies."[190]

Nonetheless, if language is *outside* the individual and used by individual as a "code for expressing his own thoughts"[191], it can be viewed that there is an individual or a being, who is present in his self-presence *before* speech. It is this idea emerged through Saussurian argument that is problematized by Derrida relating it to the idea of consciousness: "can we not conceive of a presence and self-presence of the subject before speech or its signs, a subject's self-presence in a silent and intuitive consciousness?"[192] Thus, if there is such possibility of being whose self-presence is present to himself *prior* to speech or any sign, it supposes that, as Derrida argues,

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[185] Ibid, p. 138
[186] Ibid.
[187] Saussure, 1960, p. 14
[188] Derrida, 1973, pp. 145 - 146
[189] Ibid, p. 146
[190] Ibid.
[191] Saussure, 1960, p. 14
[192] Derrida, 1973, p. 146

"even before the distribution of its sign in space and in the world, consciousness can gather itself up in its own presence."[193] Then, what appears as being in and through speech is not the presence of the self — *self-presence*, but, the "differed-presence".

2.1.1 Differed-presence and *Différance*

The notion of *differed-presence* derived from the idea of presence that is privileged by Metaphysics has been able to construct and manifest all kinds of binary oppositions, such as body/soul, physical/mental, living/nonliving, intentionality/unintentionality, form/matter, signified/signifying, intelligible/unintelligible[194], confirming the existence of a thing *as such*. Consequently, the existence of a thing *as such* has been made as the referential point, from where and which everything is generated or derived, due to which it has become *the ground*, *the seed* or *the genesis*. It is within this conceptualization of the possibility of self-presence that Heideggerian philosophy of being/Being is constructed, and this opposition is made taking the idea of *difference* into strict consideration. Moreover, this difference is assumed with regard to the *possibility* of *presence* of a thing *as such*¸ which remains, according to Heidegger[195], "concealed" in the everyday-life and everyday-language. Therefore, *differed presence*, in a way, sounds something like Heideggerian "inauthentic being", who is visible, audible, and available through idle talk, yet cannot really *present* the "authentic being". In that sense, what Heidegger tries to do is to return to the "authentic being", who is also the forgotten being, due to "Dasein's" character of "Being-with"; and, it is this "authentic being" that is considered as "primordial being" — the being *as such*, the *pure* being, the un-contaminated being, the being without "they", therefore, being in *itself*. However, though Heidegger's philosophy is questionable in the context of assuring such a possibility of self-presence, certainly, Heidegger is also another victim of the already existed philosophical tradition that carried the idea of self-presence unquestioned. Therefore, Derrida demands the exigency of *wounding* the canon of such philosophical tradition through posing the

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[193] Ibid, p. 147
[194] Derrida brings these oppositions with reference to Husserlian views on language in the footnote that he wrote for his essay "Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language" that appears in his *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, 1973, p. 113
[195] Heidegger, 1962

question: "has not the entire history of philosophy been authorized by the "extraordinary right" of the present?"[196]

The "extraordinary right" of the present has been demanding the essentiality of deciphering the thing-in-itself, which remains otherwise covered by the "differed presence". Therefore, the task to which one is assigned is to unveil the veiled, uncover the covered or to remind to not to forget the thing *before* any code, sign or representation. On the other hand, in the context of "differed presence", what is there as *there is* not what it *is*. It is something *differed* in comparison to the *thing itself*, due to which it necessarily *lacks* something, since something is missed out in the process of representation. Therefore, what is presented through representation always remains *incomplete*. It is this *assumed lack* that is determined as *the* difference, though the very lack is not *identical* or *traceable*. However, the difference that is calculated through comparison made between the thing *before* the sign and the thing *with the sign* or presented *through* the sign also conveys the idea of *ideal*, where the difference between *what* the thing *has to be* and *what* the thing *is* for the present or *now* in the context of representation is highlighted. Accordingly, in his comparison between the "authentic being" and "inauthentic being" or "primordial time" and "now time", Heidegger has undoubtedly ended up establishing the idea of *self-presence* and the idea of *the ideal*. So doing, he also has conveyed his own *nostalgia* about past, where the *pure* being or *pure* entity *as itself* resides. Accordingly, the thing that has caused Heidegger to be so *melancholic* and *nostalgic* is, in Derridian point of view, the *disappearance* of *the trace* that could have left some traces of the difference, which is the difference between Being and being. On the other hand, for him, what is more tragic is the very *disloyalty* that came from metaphysics by forgetting such a difference that inevitably reasoned for "the very trace of difference" to go away from the sight.[197]

Then, what is this difference?

The *difference* and the *trace* of that difference that Heidegger discusses here is the ontological difference or the truth of Being. Accordingly, it is a difference between the *presence* and the *present*, where *present* is considered as *not* Real,

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[196] Derrida, 1982, p. 38
[197] Derrida, 1973, p. 155

because the Real or the Truth lies far away from the *present*. This analysis presented by Heidegger in his *Being and Time* thus demands the necessity of maintaining this difference in analyzing and understanding the meaning of Being. Therefore, Heidegger must have taken the question of Being formulating it as "what is Being?", probably not in order to analyze *what is* Being but to emphasize the very fact that there is a difference that lies between the Being-presence and the being-present. In Heideggerian words, it is the difference between "Ontological Being" and "Ontic being", respectively, in which case "that which is ontically closest and well known, is ontologically the farthest and not known at all"[198]. However, this difference cannot be grasped, because "Heidegger indeed says the difference could not appear *as such*"[199]. Yet, it is a difference that definitely has a trace, and, for Heidegger, it is this *trace* of difference that is *erased* in the closure of Metaphysics, due to which he emphasizes the need of breaking away from the Metaphysical Text. Therefore, what bothers Heidegger is the *erasure* of the *trace* of difference. Nonetheless, here, suggesting the disappearance or *erasure* of the *trace of the difference*, Heidegger too has produced another text of Metaphysics through determining a trace *as such,* consequently, locating the idea of trace and difference once again in the context of *presence*. So doing, he has mastered the idea of presence *as such*. Hence, Derrida argues that 'the determinations which name difference always come from the metaphysical order. This holds not only for the determination of difference as the difference between presence and the present (*Anwesen/Anwesend*), but also for the determination of difference as the difference between Being and beings. If Being, according to the Greek forgetting which would have been the very form of its advent, has never meant anything except beings, then perhaps difference is older than Being itself. There may be a difference still more unthought than the difference between Being and beings.'[200] Then, the difference is something that precedes the question of Being itself. If so, it is also a difference, which precedes the very language in which the question of Being is constructed. Hence, as Derrida notes 'beyond Being and beings, this difference, ceaselessly differing from and deferring (itself), would trace (itself) (by itself) – this

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[198] Heidegger, 1962, p. 69
[199] Derrida, 1982, p. 66
[200] Ibid, p. 67

différance would be the first or last trace if one still could speak, here, of origin or end'[201].

However, this "*différance*", which is "older" than Being itself cannot be named in language, in and through which the question of Being is constructed and sheltered. Thus, according to Derrida, 'if it is unnamable, this is not simply provisional; it is not because our language has still not found or received this *name*, or because we would have to look for it in another language, outside the finite system of language. It is because there is no *name* for this, not even essence or Being – not even the name "differance", which is not a name, which is not a pure nominal unity, and continually breaks up in a chain of different substitutions.'[202] Nevertheless, 'what is unnamable here is not some ineffable being that cannot be approached by a name; like God, for example.'[203] Instead, 'what is unnamable is the play that brings about the nominal effects, the relatively unitary or atomic structures we call names, or chains of substitutions for names.'[204]

According to above argument, if there is such a "différence", which is older than the difference between Being and beings, presence and absence, and what we are left with is only a trace that has no name *as such*, for there is no a trace *as such*, how can speech be considered as authentic, pure, or the very essence of the presence? How can speech be considered as the immediacy of self-presence when the presence itself is a presence of a trace which has no reference *as such*? Then, to what extent writing can be excluded from language – speech - considering its non-immediacy to voice and thereby the presence, when speech itself cannot be recognized as self-presence? Thus, not only writing, which has already been projected as that which contaminates language as it brings out something *other than what it is*, but also speech itself is something other than itself, since speech, which is the movement of signification, is possible only through "différance".

What is "différance"?

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[201] Ibid.
[202] Derrida, 1973, p. 159
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.

The idea of "différance" invented by Derrida "is neither a *word* nor a *concept*"[205]. Rather, it is a strategy, which is different from *difference*. Also, it is before all the known differences that make the system of coupled oppositions, such as presence/absence, nature/culture, form/meaning, intelligible/sensible and so on, on which philosophy and language is based, function. According to Derrida, 'as distinct from difference, differance thus points out the irreducibility of temporalizing. […] Differance is not simply active (any more than it is a subjective accomplishment); it rather indicates the middle voice, it precedes and sets up the opposition between passivity and activity. With its *a*, differance more properly refers to what in classical language would be called the origin or production of differences and the differences between differences, the play [*jeu*] of differences. Its locus and operation will therefore be seen wherever speech appeals to difference.'[206] However, "différance", which is prior to difference, does not govern or rule any sort of presence or absence, since "différance" has no *reference to point out* or no *reference point* unlike the ontology does in terms of being and being*ness*. Thus, it does not *derive* from anything. As Derrida argues, the thought of différance questions the determination of being in presence. 'It commands nothing, rules over nothing, and nowhere does it exercise any authority.'[207] Consequently, "not only is there no realm of différance, but différance is even the subversion of every realm."[208] Thus, since "différance" is older than the ontological difference or the truth of Being, it is not tied to the idea of *essence*, which presupposes the presence of the thing *as such*. Hence, 'there is no essence of différance; not only can it not allow itself to be taken up into the as such of its name or its appearing, but it threatens the authority of the as such in general, the thing's presence in its essence. That there is no essence of différance at this point also implies that there is neither Being nor truth to the play of writing, *insofar* as it involves différance.'[209] Since it does not appear *as such*, there is also no disappearance *as such*. Yet, it is a movement or a play that produces differences.

The idea of "différance" presented by Derrida through a graphic intervention that is deliberately made in writing the word *difference* with *a* instead of *e* has to be

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[205] Ibid, p. 130
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid, p. 153
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid, p. 158

understood in the context of the verb "to differ". According to Derrida, the verb "to differ" is able to give two significations. "In the one case "to differ" signifies nonidentity; in the other case it signifies the order of the *same*."[210] However, as he explains "there must be a common, although entirely differant [*différante*], root within the sphere that relates the two movements of differing to one another."[211] Consequently, the name "différance" refers to "this *sameness* which is not *identical*"[212]. In Derridian view, "by the silent writing of its *a*, it has the desired advantage of referring to differing, both as spacing/temporalizing and as the movement that structures every dissociation."[213] The graphic difference introduced in writing the word *differance*, which is *a* in the place of *e*, remains purely graphic; which means whether it is written or read, it is not heard. Moreover, it is not heard because it *cannot* be heard. Thus, the "a" of *difference* remains silent, secret, and discreet, and it can be discussed only with regard to an indirect speech about writing.[214] However, as Derrida analyzes, 'doubtless this pyramidal silence of the graphic difference between the *e* and the *a* can function only within the system of phonetic writing and within a language or grammar historically tied to phonetic writing and to the whole culture which is inseparable from it.'[215] It is in this context that the difference, which is introduced in writing the word *différance*, is considered as a purely spelling mistake that happened due to a violation of the rules governing writing. However, these rules violated by *differance* are those, which are considered only in constructing the *system of phonetic writing* and maintaining the same. Accordingly, whatever that stands *outside* the phonetic writing is excluded as *non-phonetic writing* so that phonetic writing becomes *pure* phonetic writing. Hence, at this point, what matters for Derrida is the very belief that asserts the possibility and availability of such *pure phonetic writing*.

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[210] Ibid, p. 129
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid, p. 130
[214] Ibid, p. 132
[215] Ibid, p. 133

2.1.2   What is writing?

According to Derrida, the exclusion of writing from speech recognizing speech as primary to writing is determined by the concept that is rooted in the ground of "phonocentrism" that binds the *signifier* and *truth* together privileging the "phoné". In his view, 'the privilege of *phoné* does not depend upon a choice that could have been avoided. It responds to a moment of economy (let us say of the "life" of "history" or of "being as self-relationship"). The system of "hearing (understanding) –oneself-speak" through the phonic substance – which *presents itself* as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore noneempirical or noncontingent signifier – has necessarily dominated the history of the world during an entire epoch.'[216] Moreover, as he explains, in pre-Socratic sense or in pre-Hegelian or post-Hegelian sense, the original and essential link to the "phoné" has never been broken due to its essence of immediate proximity to thought. In Aristotelian words "spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbol of spoken words"[217]. The idea that is emphasized here is the relationship between voice and thought. Accordingly, voice has been understood as the most immediate and essential proximity to mind, and the producer of the first signifier is not only a simple signifier among others, but it also signifies ""mental experiences" which themselves reflect or mirror things by natural resemblance"[218]. In that sense, it is believed that "there would be a relationship of translation or natural signification; between mind and logos, a relationship of conventional symbolization"[219], and the first convention that is immediately related to the order of natural and universal signification is produced as spoken language. In such a context, written language is expected to be the establishment of the conventions interlinking other conventions with them.[220]

The privileged position given to the "*phoné*" before the dawn of modern linguistics could maintain its position *systematically* and *scientifically* within the domain of linguistics, which "wishes to be the science of language"[221]. According to the science of linguistics, language has been defined 'as the unity of the *phoné*, the

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[216] Derrida,1994, pp. 7 - 8
[217] [Aristotle] quoted in Derrida, 1994, p. 11
[218] Derrida, 1994, p. 11
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid, p. 29

glossa, and the *logos*. This determination is by rights anterior to all the eventual differentiations that could arise within the systems of terminology of the different schools (language/speech [*langue/parole*]: code/message; schema/usage; linguistic/logic; phonology/phonematics / phonetics/glossematics). And even if one wished to keep sonority on the side of the sensible and contingent signifier […], it would have to be admitted that the immediate and privileged unity which founds significance and the acts of language is the articulated unity of sound and sense within the phonie.'[222] And, within this unity of sound and sense in speech, writing has incessantly and inevitably become "derivative, accidental, particular, exterior, doubling of the signifier: phonetic"[223] in the vocabulary of modern linguistics. Therefore, Derrida goes on to argue that the declared purpose of general linguistics is to confirm "the subordination of grammatology, the historico-metaphysical reduction of writing to the rank of an instrument enslaved to a full and originary spoken language"[224].

Considering the notion of writing in the above mentioned epoch of Western philosophical tradition, it can be understood that the idea of writing has been reduced to the *phonetic writing*, since the nonphonetic writing "menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis"[225]. Bringing the Hegelian and Leibnizian views on nonphonetic writing in which Leibiniz'z views on nonphonetic writing is criticized by Hegel[226], Derrida argues that '[I]f the nonphonetic moment menaces the history and the life of the spirit as self-presence in the breath, it is because it menaces substantiality, that other metaphysical name of presence and of *ousia*. First in the form of the substantive. Nonphonetic writing breaks the noun apart. It describes relations and not appellations. The noun and the word, those unities of breath and concept, are effaced within pure writing.'[227]

However, in his argument, Derrida makes Saussurian linguistics responsible for the general notion of writing that prevails in the present scenario due to the

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[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid, p. 25
[226] Ibid, pp. 24 - 25
[227] Ibid, p. 26

limitation of the number of systems of writing into *two*. These two systems, ideographic system and phonetic system, appear as representation of the oral language, "either represent-ing *words* in a synthetic and global manner", such as Chinese, "representing *phonetically* the elements of sounds constructing words".[228] In this sense, Derrida says, for Saussure, 'there is no "symbolic" writing, no figurative writing; there is no *writing* as long as graphism keeps a relationship of natural figuration and of some resemblance to what is then not *signified* but represented, drawn, etc.'[229] Then, Derrida brings out the second but "massive limitation" introduced by Saussure through limiting his discussion "to the phonetic system and especially to the one used today, the system that stems from the Greek alphabet"[230].

Considering the project of Sassure that governs the *exclusion* of writing, it is, in Derridian point of view, "a profound ethnocentrism privileging the model of phonetic writing, a model that makes the exclusion of the *graphie* easier and more legitimate", since it constitutes "the distinction between people using writing and people without writing", through reducing all kinds of writing into two systems, out of which *phonetic* system is appreciated and privileged due to its popularity in terms of *use*.[231] And, it is this division that leads for Lévi-Strauss to find Nambikwaras as people *without writing*. Therefore, Derrida finds, in linguistics as well as in metaphysics, *phonologism*, which is "however an ethnocentrism"[232], is not only "undoubtedly the exclusion or abasement of writing" but is "also the granting of authority to a science which is held to be the model for all the so-called sciences of man. In both these senses Levi-Strauss's structuralism is a phonologism"[233].

Nonetheless, viewing the above analyzed notion of phonetic writing that is put forward by Saussure as "an enormous prejudice"[234] and problematizing the canon that constructed such a prejudice, Derrida argues that 'there is no phonetic writing. There is no purely and strictly phonetic wrting. What is called phonetic writing can only function — in principle and *de jure*, and not due to some factual and technical

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[228] Ibid, p. 32
[229] Ibid.
[230] [Saussure] quoted in Derrida,1994, p. 33
[231] Derrida,1994, p. 120
[232] Ibid, p. 120
[233] Ibid, p. 102
[234] Derrida, 1973, p. 133

inadequacy — by incorporating nonphonetic "signs" (punctuation, spacing, etc.); […] If, then, there is no purely phonetic writing, it is because there is no purely phonetic phone. The difference that brings out phonemes and lets them be heard and understood [*entendre*] itself remains inaudible.[235]   A similar critique on the idea of phonetic writing as Writing can be seen in Roy Harris's *The Origin of Writing*[236]. According to him, the notion that equates writing with alphabetic writing is a "fallacy", because "various civilizations with a long history of writing never developed systems comparable to the alphabet"[237]. Therefore, he argues that 'alphabetic representation of articulated sounds is actually irrelevance as far as the origin of writing is concerned. There is no evidence that anywhere in the world writing began with the alphabet, and plenty of evidence that it did not. Once one sees the fallacy of equating writing with the alphabetic writing, the whole question of the extent to which and the sense in which writing is a representation of speech at all becomes more debatable than Aristotle, or modern Aristotelians, would acknowledge.'[238]

2.1.3   Writing and Ethnocentrism

In Derridian view, the logocentrism, which is the metaphysics of phonetic writing, is nothing but the most original and powerful ethnocentrism that imposes itself upon the world; subsequently, it is this ethnocentrism, everywhere and always, that has controlled the concept of writing.[239] Hence, as Derrida argues in the chapter "The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau"[240] in *Of Grammatology*, it is this ethnocentric imperialism rooted within the phonetic writing that has governed Lévi-Strauss's anthropological study on the Nambikwara, which affirms the dichotomy of nature and culture. Showing the importance of creating a conjunction of Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau in order to understand the ethnocentric views of the West, Derrida explains how Levi-Straussian approach and description on the Nambikwara

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[235] Ibid.
[236] Harris, 1986
[237] Ibid, p. 27
[238] Ibid.
[239] Derrida, 1994, p. 3
[240] Ibid, pp. 101 - 138

becomes "a declared and militant Rousseauism"[241]. According to Derrida, the relationship between nature and culture, which also already presupposes the dichotomy of nature and culture, is an idea posed by Rousseau, who is the "founder" and "prophet"[242] of modern anthropology. Lévi-Straussian glorification of Rousseau, considering himself as Rousseau's modern disciple quoting Rousseau's lines written in *'Essay on the Origin of Languages, Chapter VIII'* in his work *'The Savage Mind'*, is brought by Derrida marking it as "the most systematic homage" given to Rousseau by Strauss.

Nonetheless, considering Lévi-Strauss's study, the Nambikawara are identified as one of these people *without writing*, since "they do not use of what *we* commonly call writing", though he finds some ""few dots" and "zigzags" on their calabashes". Here, as Derrida points out, Lévi-Straussian rejection of those "few dots" and "zigzags" to be considered *as* writing is determined by the alphabetic writing. "Lévi-Strauss tells us: "That the Nambikawara could not write goes without saying"[p.288]."[243] And, according to Derrida, for Lévi-Strauss, this incapacity and inability of the Nambikawara, which is also a feature of the particular community, can be thought and defined, "within the ethico-political order, as innocence and a non-violence".[244] However, as Lévi-Strauss describes, it is he who interrupted this "non-violent community of Nambikawara" by his forced entry with his "Writing Lesson". In Lévi-Strauss's view, as Derrida shows, he is the one who has insinuated the idea of writing to the Nambikawara, which is 'only an innocent community, and a community of reduced dimensions (a Rousseauist theme that will soon become clearer), only a micro-society of non-violence and freedom, all the members of which can by rights remain within range of an immediate and transparent, a "crystalline" address, fully self-present in its living speech, only such a community can suffer, as the surprise of an aggression coming from without, the insinuation of writing, the infiltration of its "ruse" and of its "perfidy".'[245]

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[241] Ibid, p. 106
[242] Here, it is not Derrida who considers Rousseau as the founder and prophet of anthropology. Rather, it is the way in which Rousseau has been viewed by Lévi-Strauss, and this reading of Strauss on Rousseau has deeply been discussed by Derrida in his *Of Grammatology*, 1994, p. 105
[243] Derrida,1994, p. 110
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid, p. 119

According to above analysis, the Nambikawara are the people who can import *from abroad* "the exploitation of man by man", which is writing and the violence. Then, the Nambikawara are not only a community that is *without writing*, but also a community *without violence*. Introducing *writing* to such an innocent community through his "Writing Lesson", as Lévi-Strauss says, he has *introduced* violence to them. Therefore, as Derrida analyses, Lévi-Strauss, whose ideas shaped by the value of such a distinction between speech and writing, considers 'the passage from speech to writing as a leap, as the instantaneous crossing of a line of discontinuity: passage from a fully oral language, pure of all writing – *pure*, innocent – to a language appending to itself its graphic "representation" as an accessory signifier of a new type, opening a technique of oppression.'[246]

However, Lévi-Strauss tries to admire the natural goodness of the Nambikawara while accusing "the writing cultures of the Western type"[247] of which he is also a part, confirming his approach as a critique of ethnocentrism, therefore, a critique of the West and the Western culture. However, Derrida is suspicious about this "anti-ethnocentrism" of Lévi-Strauss that is influenced by Rousseauism. According to Derrida, 'the critique of ethnocentrism, a theme so dear to the author of *Tristes Tropiques*, has most often the sole function of constituting the other as a model of original and natural goodness, of accusing and humiliating oneself, of exhibiting its being-unacceptable in an anti-ethnocentric mirror.'[248] The anti-ethnocentrism, appeared "from a certain eighteenth century at any rate" affirming the need of going "beyond" Europeans and, there by taking "Non-European people" as the "object" or the field of study, considers "Non-Europeans" "as the index to a hidden good Nature, as a native soil recovered, of a "zero degree" with reference to which one could outline the structure, the growth, and above all the degradation of our society and our culture".[249] In Derridian point of view, this desire to find the "Naturalness" and "the dream of a full and immediate presence closing history, the transparence and indivision of a parousia, the suppression of contradiction and

[246] Ibid, p. 120
[247] Ibid, p. 121
[248] Ibid, p. 114
[249] Ibid, pp. 114 - 115

difference", which is embedded in anti-ethnocentric movement navigated by "anthropology", is "a teleology and an eschatology".[250]

Nevertheless, as Derrida explains, the anti-ethnocentrism suggested by Rousseau and Levi-Strauss is yet another "ethnocentrism", since their ideology proposed through their approaches is grounded on "[t]he traditional and fundamental ethnocentrism which, inspired by the model of phonetic writing, separates writing from speech with an ax"[251]. Thus, having been considered the appearance of writing as "instantaneous" that says: the "possibility of writing does not inhabit speech, but the outside of speech"[252], writing as "violence"[253], writing as "corruption"[254], writing as "exploitation"[255] and writing as "social inauthenticity"[256] through the ethnocentric lense of Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss in spite of their effort of "legitimate denunciations"[257] of ethnocentric notions, Derrida recognizes the need of *problematizing* the *concept of writing* — the general concept of writing.[258]

2.2 Derrida on Writing

Taking Lévi-Strauss's viewpoint on Nambikawara, which suggests the possibility of a language, community and a knowledge that is completely excluded from violence and writing, as a controversial point of controversy, Derrida *problematizes* this *possibility*, which is *excluded* from writing and *violence*.[259] In his view, the belief of Lévi-Strauss that accuses his own self as the culprit for introducing violence to Nambikawara is a myth, because, "violence did not wait for the appearance of writing"[260], for writing is not *alien* to language; it is not *imported* or *borrowed* from abroad artificially. Instead, he says, "writing has always begun in language"[261]. But, he too, like Levi Strauss

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[250] Ibid, p. 115
[251] Ibid, p. 121
[252] Ibid, p. 126
[253] Ibid, p. 107
[254] Ibid, p. 134
[255] Ibid, p. 119
[256] Ibid, p. 136
[257] Ibid, p. 121
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid, p.127
[260] Ibid, p.135
[261] Ibid.

does, conclude that "violence is writing"[262]. However, here, Derrida's approach is different from that of Strauss. As he says, this proposition has a radically different meaning. It is no longer supported by the myth of myth, which is the myth of a speech that is originally good, and of a violence that would jump on it as a "fatal accident".[263] 'A fatal accident which is nothing but history itself. Not that, by this more or less overt reference to the idea of a fall into evil from the innocence of the word, Levi-Strauss makes this classical and implicit theology his own. It is just that his anthropological discourse is produced through concepts, schemata, and values that are, systematically and genealogically, accomplishes of this theology and this metaphysics.'[264] Proposing a radically different meaning through the affirmation of "violence is writing", Derrida tries to recognize writing in speech, and "to recognize writing in speech is to begin to think of the lure".[265] As he explains, the idea of social authenticity that is related to speech, which is also one of two indispensable poles of the structure of morality in general, suggests the "ethic of living word". The ethic of speech is the *delusion* of presence mastered; but "there is no ethics without the presence of *the other* but also, and consequently, without absence, dissimulation, detour, differance, writing". Therefore, "the arche-wrriting is the origin of morality as of immorality. The nonethical opening of ethics. A violent opening". [266]

Derridian notion of "différance", "the arche-writing", cannot be thought without the *trace*[267], because arche-writing *cannot* and can *never* be recognized as the object of science, though its concept is *invoked* by the themes of "the arbitrariness of the sign" and of difference.[268] The reason for this inability is its irreducibility to the form of presence.[269]. As Derrida analyses, the notion of arche-writing, which is the "writing before the letter", is at work not only in the form and substance of graphic expression, but also in those of nongraphic expression. 'It is because arche-writing, movement of differance, irreducible arche-synthesis, opening in one and the same possibility, temporalization as well as relationship with the other and language,

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[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid, pp. 139 - 140
[267] Ibid, p. 57
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.

cannot, as the condition of all linguistic systems, form a part of the linguistic system itself and be situated as an object in its field [...]. Its concept could in no way enrich the scientific, positive, and "immanent" (in the Hjelmsleveian sense) description of the system itself.'[270]

Going back to the idea of presence that dominates the primacy of speech over writing, it is important to focus attention on the concept of *experience*, since, as Derrida explains, '"[E]xperience" has always designated the relationship with a presence, whether that relationship had the form of consciousness or not'[271]. The concept of experience which belongs to the history of metaphysics "always corresponds to a certain type of factual or regional experience (historical, psychological, physiological, sociological, etc.), giving rise to a science that is itself regional and, as such, rigorously outside linguistics"[272]. Contrastingly, Derrida brings forth the idea of experience "as arche-writing" while explaining the necessity of discovering a field of transcendental experience, which 'is only accessible in so far as, after having, like Hjelmslev, isolated the specificity of the linguistic system and excluded all the extrinsic sciences and metaphysical speculations, one asks the question of the transcendental origin of the system itself.'[273] It is here that Derrida discusses "the value of the transcendental arche", which must make its necessity felt before both that necessity and that erasure; because, in Derridian point of view, it is needed to refer to a transcendentality in order to escape falling back into naïve objectivism. In his view, 'to see to it that the beyond does not return to the within is to recognize in the contortion the necessity of a pathway. That pathway must leave a track in the text. Without the track, abandoned to the simple content of its conclusions, the ultra-transcendental text will so closely resemble the precritical text as to be indistinguishable from it.'[274] However, the "transcendental-arche" is also the "arche-trace" that is not accepted or acceptable within the logic of *identity*. Thus, Derrida describes that 'the trace is not only the disappearance of origin – within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the

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[270] Ibid, p. 60
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid, p. 61
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.

origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin'. [275]

The originary trace, which is the "arche-trace", cannot be excluded from the interior of the linguistic system, since it is a "passage through *form*" though it is mostly oriented on the "phonic substance", which is considered as the sensible in terms of experience. However, as Derrida explains, "the phonic element, the term, would not appear as such without the difference or opposition which gives the *form*". This appearance and function of difference which presupposes an originary synthesis that is not preceded by any absolute simplicity is related to the originary trace. And, it is this *différance* which is at work in the appearance of meaning. But, according to Derrida, no difference would do its work and no meaning would appear, without a trace retaining the other as other in the same. In that sense, the *éerance* is not a constituted difference in relation to the content. Instead, it is a *différance* that is produced in a movement – "the *pure* movement".[276] '*The (pure) trace is differance*. It does not depend on any sensible plentitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic. It is, on the contrary, the condition of such a plentitude. Although it *does not exist*, although it is never a *being-present* outside of all plentitude, its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls sign (signified/signifier, content/expression, etc.), concept or operation, motor or sensory.'[277] Therefore, this *différance*, which is not more sensible than intelligible, permits the articulation of speech and writing, as it founds the metaphysical opposition between the sensible and the intelligible, then, between the signifier and the signified, expression and content, etc. Accordingly, "if language were not already writing, no derived "notation" would be possible; and the classical problem of relationships between speech and writing could not arise".[278]

However, though *différance* is the formation of form, on the other hand, it is the being-imprinted of the imprint. Taking Saussurian view into consideration, which distinguishes between the "sound-image" and the objective sound, Derrida explains the idea that suggests *différance* is the being-imprinted of the imprint. According to him, for Saussure, 'the sound-image is the structure of the appearing of the sound

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[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid, p. 62
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid, p. 63

[*l'apparaitre du son*] which is anything but the sound appearing [*le son apparaissant*]. It is the sound-image that he calls *signifier*, reserving the name *signified* not for the thing, to be sure (it is reduced by the act and the very ideality of language), but for the "concept" '[279]. Analyzing above notion of Saussure, Derrida asserts on a difference that stands between "sound-heard" and "being-heard of the sound" in "sound-image". Accordingly, 'the sound-image is what is *heard*; not the sound heard but the being-heard of the sound. Being-heard is structurally phenomenal and belongs to an order radically dissimilar to that of the real sound in the world. One can only divide this subtle but absolutely decisive heterogeneity by a phenomenological reduction. The later is therefore indispensable to all analyses of being-heard, whether they be inspired by linguistic, psychoanalytic, or other preoccupations.'[280]

The being-heard of the sound in contrast to the sound-heard is the point where Derrida places his notion of *différance*, of trace and the imprint, through which he affirms the indispensability of preserving "the distinction between the appearing sound and the appearing of the sound"[281]. According to him, the zone between the appearing sound and the appearing of the sound cannot be reduced to any particular recognition *as such*. Though they are indispensably different, *the difference is unheard*. But, it is this 'specific zone of this imprint and this trace, in the temporalization of a lived experience which is neither in the world nor in another world, which is not more sonorous than luminous, not more in time than in space, that differences appear among the elements or rather produce them, make them emerge as such and constitutes the texts, the chains, and the systems of traces. These chains and systems cannot be outlined except in the fabric of this trace or imprint.'[282] In that sense, as Derrida says it is the unheared difference between the appearing and the appearance that becomes the condition of all other differences and traces. Thus, it is "already a trace".[283] Accordingly, the trace is the absolute origin of sense in general and it suggests that there is no absolute origin of sense in general.[284].

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[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid, p. 64
[282] Ibid, p. 65
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.

According to above argument put forward by Derrida through his notion of *différance*, what is in question is the idea of *absolute* origin which has played a pivotal role in Heideggerian philosophy of Being. This idea can be understood with regard to his dichotomous analysis on "Being / being" and "authentic being / inauthentic being". According to Heidegger, the "inauthentic being" is a derivation, due to which it always *lacks* something. And, this *lack* is an idea that he puts forward through a comparison that is made in relation to the being before "falling"[285]. For him, there is a difference between the being who *was* there *before* falling and who *is* there *after* falling, and this difference is so identical to Heidegger that he views the one *after* falling as not original, pure or authentic.Therefore, the *fallen* being happens to the one who *lacks* something that he is *supposed to have*. This particular *lack* has to be comprehended in terms of *losing* something — *losing* what one *already had* in one's own possession. Accordingly, Heidegger's being is the one who is moving ahead in search of what he has lost once in his past. It is this *lost* thing which binds the being *to* future, and, consequently, his *Hope* becomes that which is tied to *nostalgia*. However, Derrida does not deny such an existence of difference. He asserts that difference as a *différance*, which does not refer to any point of origin *as such*; instead, it is a trace, which is already a trace of something that cannot be named or identified, due to which the difference cannot be named as *Being* or *being*. In Derrida's view, "there will be no unique name" [286] for this difference which keeps coming to play. Therefore, it needs to be conceived without nostalgia. [287] When there is no such center of origin from where everything begins, there is no such possibility of "forgetting of Being" that Heidegger has taken into serious consideration. In the play of *différance*, there is nothing lost or forgotten, since *différance* possesses an economic character. However, as Derrida explains, the economic character, which in no way implies that the differed presence can always be recovered, is contrary to the metaphysical, dialectical, and Heigellian interpretation of the economic movement of difference. Here, it needs to be sees as a "game" where whoever loses wins, also where one wins and loses each time. If the diverted presentation continues to be definitively withheld, it is because differance holds us in relation with what exceeds

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[285] Heidegger, 1962, pp. 210 - 214
[286] Derrida, 1973, p. 159
[287] Ibid.

the alternative of presence or absence.[288] If so, there is no such necessity of attempting to decipher the truth of being or "authentic being", because there is no such Freudian kind of Truth which is hidden in the unconscious, since, as Derrida argues, 'the unconscious is not, as we know, a hidden, virtual, and potential self-presence. It is differed – which no doubt means that it is woven out of differences, but also that it sends out, that it delegates, representatives or proxies; but there is no chance that the mandating subject "exists" somewhere, that it is present or is "itself", and still less chance that it will become conscious.'[289] On the other hand, though Heidegger views "forgetting of Being" as "the forgetting of the difference between Being and beings", there is no such Original Being or "kernel" to forget, since there is nothing original to forget. In that sense, what is required here is "to forget that there is nothing to forget, that there has been nothing to forget. But one can only forget that there has never been an intact kernel.'[290]

2.3   Writing, Language, and Being

2.3.1   The Subject and Speech

According to above analysis, it is impossible to view subject, who appears in speech, as the manifestation of its own *presence*. On the other hand, if there is such a subject that is asserted by its voice, that speech cannot be seen as mere language or *pure* language. Instead, it is the language that generates *power* that is released by the *voice* of the *subject*; consequently, language becomes active in the sense that it produces actions and re-actions, and, thereby, becomes *active voice* or *passive voice* [291]. Thus, the *voice* does not mark the proximity of being; rather, it manifests being as *subject*. Accordingly, he identifies himself as *I* in and through language. And, this I – the *I* subject – is the *self-conscious* being, due to which he becomes the *conditioned* being identifying himself with the concrete discourse of community in terms of a *given* language, because, as Lacan shows, 'language and its structure exist prior to the

[288] Ibid, p. 151
[289] Ibid, p. 152
[290] Derrida, 1985, p. 116
[291] Here, the terms *active voice* and *passive voice* should be understood with relation to the lessons of grammar and syntax since they play a major role in deciding the place and the position of the doer of the action and the receiver of the action in a sentence structure.

moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it'[292]. It is on the basis of this *I subject* that the analysis of being has been constituted, specifically, within the domain of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

However, Freudian psychoanalysis is yet important due to his idea of the "letter in the unconscious" that he has discussed in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[293] Accordingly, as Lacan explains, "what the psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language"[294]. Considering being with regard to the *unconscious*, what can be seen is a being that is unaware of its own self and of the actions that it performs. Hence, in the context of the unconscious, there is no such possibility for a *subject*, who is a part of the signifying discourse due to his *entry* that he makes through identifying himself as *I* — the *I ness* that he attaches to himself in differentiating himself from the other *non-I s*. This manifestation of the *subject* as *I* through language is also the manifestation of the *conscious being*, whose actions and reactions are necessarily controlled and conditioned through "disciplines". Therefore, conscious being, who is the subject, is *authoritative* due to the power that he possesses to have the *control* over his own actions and language. This control, which results from being self-conscious, is a requirement that one should fulfill in entering a discourse as a *subject*. As Foucault points out, in a discourse, such a submission is *obligatory*, for everyone is "placed under the authority of a syndic"[295] in which case the individual is under "surveillance" while being locked up in his cage, standing at the window, answering to his name and showing himself when asked.[296] Thus, every *subject* is registered in terms of his name, age, sex and so on, and he will continue to react or respond throughout his life according to this *forced* identity imposed on him by the discourse. Hence, the system to which being has *entered* as a *subject* is an enclosed and segmented space. According to Foucault, 'this enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in

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[292] Lacan, 1980, p. 148
[293] Lacan, in his essay on "Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" (1980) , has discussed about Freudian idea of "the letter in the unconscious" with reference to the book *The Interpretation of Dreams* written by Sigmund Freud, pp. 159 - 171
[294] Lacan, 1980, p. 147
[295] Foucault, 1991, p. 195
[296] Ibid, p. 196

which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.'[297] It is this mechanism of "panopticon"[298] which demands and commands the *subject* to be conscious about his own self and to be *responsible* for each movement that he makes, because, the major effect of the *Panopticon* is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power"[299]. However, this "marvelous machine"[300], the Panopticon, is an important mechanism, since it automatizes and disindividualizes power. Further, the function of this machine does not depend on one particular person, since there is no question of *who* exercises power or *what* motive animates the power. It can be operated by any individual. Therefore, it is a machine that produces homogeneous effects of power.[301] As far as the subjection under this machinery is considered, in Foucault's view, 'a real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behavior, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations. […] there were no more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks; all that was needed was that the separations should be clear and the openings well arranged. The heaviness of the old 'house of security' […] could be replaced by the simple, economic geometry of a 'house of certainty'.'[302]Accordingly, one who is subjected to such a field of visibility and who is aware of the very fact that he is *seen* "assumes responsibility for the constrains of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."[303] Thus, the basic function of a society in which the subject is placed and "arranged" is directed to form a "useful individual" who is *disciplined*.[304]

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[297] Ibid, p. 197
[298] The idea of panopticon that is presented by Bentham plays a major role in constructing and shaping Foucault's argument that discusses the way in which the subject is placed and constantly observed by a system or a discourse. Foucault, 1991, p. 200
[299] Ibid, p. 201
[300] Ibid, p. 202
[301] Ibid.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid, pp. 202 - 203
[304] Ibid, pp. 209 - 210

However, though the subject can be understood as the surrendered to the panopticon mechanism of power, due to which it becomes the one who is thrown *under* the power that is discussed by Lacan with regard to *the bar* [305] in his algorithm S/s and, thus, presenting subject "as a sort of 'negative subject'"[306] due to "'decentering' of the subject"[307], on the other hand, it – the subject - can also be seen as *the center* of generating power due to its ability to have control over itself. This condition of the subject can be well understood when the idea of subjectivity is discussed in relation to Freude-Lacanian psychoanalysis and Husserlian "intentionality"[308] that is grounded on phenomenology.

Nonetheless, according to above analysis, speech is no more a language that is *natural*, because it is a production of the subject, who is already a *disciplined* and *conditioned* being. Hence, neither subject nor speech can be understood as being or language; consequently, none of these can be considered as the manifestation of the *presence* of being or truth of being. It is at this point that the necessity of breaking away from the tradition, which demands self to be self-conscious, needs to be emphasized in order to understand being as *being* and language as *language — pure being* and *pure language* or *raw being* and *raw language —* "the crude"[309]. In other words, it is being and language that is *prior* to subject, which has to be taken into consideration in order to understand the idea of being and language. Accordingly, idea of language and being needs to be discussed with regard to the notion of unconscious, since the unconscious involves ""whole structure of language" existing prior to the subject"[310].

2.3.2 Writing and Translation

Through his idea of literature through *writing*, Blanchot demands the redemption of being and language from the *locus* of subject and speech.[311] However, it could be seen that there is no possibility for the presence of being *as such*; instead, it is only a

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[305] Lacan, 1980, pp. 163 – 164
[306] Manjali, 2000, p. 189
[307] Ibid, p. 188
[308] Husserl on Intentionality http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/husserl/ (accessed on 21.01.2014)
[309] Blanchot, 1982, p. 38
[310] Manjali, 2000, p. 187
[311] Blanchot, 1982

play of *differance*, which leaves only a trace. Moreover, as Derrida notes, 'the trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself.'[312] And, this play of *différance* is possible only through *writing*; therefore, play of writing is play of *différance* or play of *différance* is that which can be presented only through *writing*. Further, in the play of *différance*, there is no specific Truth or Being that is *to be* achieved. Rather, it is a movement without one particular direction, destination or *telos*. It is mere movement which is neither absolute finitude asserted by Heidegger nor the absolute infinity demanded by Levinas. Instead, it is a movement that is "in-finite"[313] and "antigeneological"[314]. In Deleuzian terms it is a "rhizomatic"[315] movement.

To write means to break away from the *I subject* — the *First person* in a lesson of Grammar. Therefore, to write is, as Deleuze argues, "to reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I"[316], because, "writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come"[317]. Thus, since writing is the domain that is away from the role of signification and representation, it is the way through which *crude* being and *crude* word or language can be experienced. Accordingly, being can be seen as language, as writing. As Blanchot explians, 'the crude word is by no means crude. What it represents is not present. […] A word which does not name anything, which does not represent anything, which does not outlast itself in any way, a word which is not even a word and which disappears marvelously altogether and at once in its usage what could be more worthy of the essential and closer to silence?'[318] The *crude* word that Blanchot explains is the word that is *prior* to speech – speech which is considered to be that which re-presents the thought. In that sense, crude word is the thought *itself*, in which case the word does not stand as a mediator or the vehicle of thought. Instead, it is the *immediate*. Accordingly, the distance between word and thought disappears in the sense that word becomes thought and vice versa. They are inextricable from each other. Hence,

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[312] Derrida, 1973, p. 156
[313] Derrida, 1978, p. 114
[314] Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11
[315] Ibid, pp. 3 - 25
[316] Ibid, p. 03
[317] Ibid, pp. 4 - 5
[318] Blanchot, 1982, pp. 39 - 40

thought has to be understood as the "pure word". Thus, since "thought is the pure word", Blanchot asserts that "in thought we must recognize the supreme language, whose lack is all that the extreme variety of different tongues permits us to grasp"[319]. However, in this crude word, being is no more the speaking subject, but the one who speaks through *silence*. Hence, *silence* becomes the most *powerful*. In Blanchot's view, "this crude word is a pure nothing, nothingness itself. But it is nothingness in action: that which acts, labors, constructs. It is the pure silence of the negative which culminates in the noisy of feverishness of tasks."[320] Thus, "in crude or immediate speech, language as language is silent. But beings speak in it."[321]

Nevertheless, when the notion of immediacy is taken into consideration with regard to language of thought in the context of writing, it is not the immediacy that is understood in relation to common language. Considering the idea of immediacy in language with reference to the idea of crudeness, Blanchot differentiates language in writing from the common language of communication. Accordingly, immediate language is a relation with the immediate world. But the immediacy that common language communicates to us is only veiled distance, because language has within itself the moment that hides it due to the force that it has within itself. This power that language exercises by communicating to us the illusion of immediacy, while giving us only the habitual, makes us believe that the immediate is familiar.[322]

The idea of illusion and the habitual that Blanchot has presented in his reference to being and language of the everyday life should not be understood within regard to Heideggerian "authentic being" and "inauthentic being". Certainly, Heidegger does discuss the idea of concealment of the "authentic being" showing that the being, which is encountered in everyday life and language, as a being who is away from the truth or the Real. The problem with his analysis is that he tries to emphasize that there is something to be deciphered in the "inauthentic being" that is lost in idle chatter of everydayness, and this hidden treasure that has to be found out is nothing but the *Self* — the Being, who is cut off from the others in order "to be" the "authentic being". Therefore, his demand of breaking away from the everyday world is

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[319] Ibid, p. 39
[320] Ibid, p. 40
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid, pp. 40 - 41

motivated to find one's own space which is *closed*, so that one could become the *absolute* I — the *absolute interiority*. When compared to Heideggerian effort of finding the "authentic being", Blanchot's effort stands in complete opposition to Heidegger. Accordingly, for Blanchot, it is a demand *to break away from the Self* or the *I* subject to become the other; and, this *breaking away* is, on the other hand, to *open up* to *outside*. This opening up of the *Self* to the other is also the opening up of *language* of the Self to the *other*, which is *outside — outside the given world*, *outside the Self*, *outside the given language*. In that sense, to write means to *destroy* the world through *stepping outside* – outside the *given* world. Therefore, according to Blanchot, to write is also to commit suicide[323]; consequently, writing is the *corpse* that simultaneously produces and demands the "acts of literature"[324]. Hence, for Blanchot, *stepping outside* the *given* world is to *enter* "space of literature"[325] through writing, and this space is always *outside*. In that sense, his idea of writing is not the writing which is to do with alphabetic writing or any other *systems* of wrting that exist in the world, but a writing that takes place *outside*, owing to which literature through writing has to be understood as *writing outside — outside the system of writing and systematic writing*. On the other hand, it can be said that this *writing outside* is also *outside writing*. Therefore, Blanchot's idea of writing is that which demands and asserts "the absence of the book"[326], because, according to Blanchot, the book is that which 'contains knowledge as the presence of something virtually present and always immediately accessible, if only with the help of mediations and relays. Something is there which the book presents in presenting itself and which reading animates, which reading reestablishes – through its animation – in the life of a presence. Something that is, on the lowest level, the presence of the content or of a signified thing; then on a higher level, the presence of a form, of a signifying thing or of an operations that is always there already, if only as a future possibility'[327]. However, declaring the "absence of the book", Blanchot declares the end of "all continuity of presence"[328].

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[323] Ibid, pp. 105 - 107
[324] This is also a title of a book which contains a collection of interviews and essays of Derrida that is edited by Derek Attridge, 1992a.
[325] This is also a title of a book written by Blanchot that is translated by Ann Smock from French to English, 1982.
[326] This is a title of an essay written by Blanchot, and, it appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fictions & Literary Essays*, 1998, pp. 471 - 486
[327] Ibid, p. 472
[328] Ibid.

Accordingly, 'the absence of the book: always diverging, always lacking a present relationship with itself, so that it is never received in its fragmentary plurality by a single reader in the present of his reading, unless, at the limit, with the present torn apart, dissuaded -.'[329] Thus, *writing outside* is to write *outside* the *given* language; consequently, it is also to *step outside* the subject or step *beyond* 'I'. Hence, writing can also be understood as *outside the conscious*, due to which it becomes the space of the unconscious – the *madness*. Yet, this madness is not analyzable with the help of psychologists. It is an unanalyzable madness; because, *there is nothing to analyze* or *to decipher*. In writing, there is no *intended* hidden meaning that is carried by the word, since thought, language and meaning are not separable from each other any more. Hence, there is no such maternal or paternal figure - a figure of psychoanalysis - that is connected to writing. Instead, writing is the unfolding of the unconscious. Also, since there is nothing beyond the unconscious, it is the unfolding itself; unconscious itself; thinking itself while being the thought and the expression itself. Therefore, writing is the life and the living itself; wound and the wounding itself; madness and the cure itself; death and dying itself — thus, it is being itself. Then, as Blanchot writes, "writing would never be man's writing, which is to say it would never be God's writing either; at most it would be the writing of the other, of dying itself"[330].

Consequently, writing is the "violent opening"[331] up of the Self to the other. Therefore, writing can be seen as the *space of the other* and *the language of the other*, where the *other* of the conscious, of the subject and of speech is possible. In that sense, writing is the "writing of the disaster"[332], which is, in Derridian terms, "the nonethical opening up of ethics"[333]. Thus, writing demands the disaster of the *given* language marking the death of the subject in order to experience language and being. Necessitating this disaster, it also demands freedom — freedom which is absolute. Yet, this freedom would not make one produce actions *to transform the world out there*. Instead, it is the transformation of the self through withdrawal and detachment; detachment from all kinds of attachments that would make one act and take decisions

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[329] Ibid, p. 476
[330] Ibid, p. 477
[331] Derrida, 1994, p. 140
[332] This is also a title of a book written by Blanchot that is translated from French to English by Ann Smock, 1995b.
[333] Derrida, 1994, p. 140

— "detached from everything, including detachment"[334], which is a *complete withdrawal* from the Self. Therefore, in this freedom, there is no such project of gaining or achieving anything as victory or profit. There is no goal. It is a freedom that would not bring anything *particular*; it would bring *nothing*. Since it brings nothing *specific*, it also could bring *everything*. It is the freedom that *does not negate anything*; that does not limit anything — the *unconditional freedom*, which is the "negation of negation"[335]. Therefore, this freedom is that which makes one *absolutely passive*. Yet, this passivity is also the most powerful in powerlessness — in the condition of not being able to act anymore. It is the passivity of death or corpse that makes only demands without giving any response from its side. Thus, writing is the demand that knows no bound; it is the demand that does not demand anything *particular*; hence, demands everything.

Accordingly, since writing does not produce anything *as such*, Blanchot says that 'the act of writing is related to the absence of the work, but is invested in the Work as book. The insanity of writing – the insane game – is the relationship of writing, a relationship established not between writing and the production of the book, but, through the production of the book, between the act of writing and the absence of the work. […] Writing as worklessness (in the active sense of the word) is the insane game, the indeterminacy that lies between reason and unreason.' [336]

Blanchot shows literature through writing as the "salvation"[337] of being and language. This idea of Blanchot is completely different from Sartrian view of literature[338] in which literature becomes another powerful institution that can put its power into practice in order to transform the world. According to Blanchot, literature is not an *institution*, but a space that is constructed through writing, in and through which one could become anything and everything and say everything, since it is not bound by the institution called Law. Rather, it is "exterior to the form and the requirements of the Law" since "the act of writing has a relationship of otherness",

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[334] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 12

[335] Blanchot discusses this idea in his essay "Literature and the Right to Death" that appear in *The Work of Fire*, 1995a.

[336] Blanchot in "The Absence of the Book" that appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 1998, p. 473

[337] Blanchot, 1982, p. 62

[338] Sartre , 1950

which is the relationship that is "alien to every relationship of presence and to all legality".[339] Thus, since writing can be understood as the exteriority of *given* knowledge, it is also that which ""precedes" any interior"[340]; hence, precedes any Law. Accordingly, the Law is nothing but, as Blanchot remarks, "writing itself which has renounced the exteriority of interlocution to designate the place of the interdicted. The illegitimacy of writing, always rebellious towards the Law, hides the asymmetrical illegitimacy of the Law in relation to writing."[341] Moreover, considering the nature of the Law, which is conditioned by "it must be", Blanchot notes that "It must be" applies to no one or, more deliberately, applies only to no one. The nonapplicability of the law is not only a sign of its absence force, of its ineshaustible authority, of the reserve it maintains. Incapable of saying thou, the law is never directed at anyone in particular."[342]

Nevertheless, literature cannot be understood as that which has no power, but as the *power itself*, since it is the "Law itself". Therefore, according to Derrida, literature is yet another *institution*; but, it is a "strange institution", which is "an instituted *fiction*" and "a *fictive institution*", that "allows one to say *everything* in *everyway*".[343] In that sense, it is an institution that "overflows the institution".[344] The idea of *overflow* suggests going *beyond the given borders*. However, this constant overflow is not teleological. Though Blanchot brings out the idea of "pure" with reference to being, language and exteriority, this *pureness* is not directed toward any purity *as such*. It is the *pureness* in terms of *crudeness*.

On the other hand, for Blanchot, the salvation of language through writing, is possible only through death – death of the Self, or through madness, which are disasters and destructive, since death and madness are seen as "edge"[345] and "outside" the *I* subject. Thus, in search of crudeness as pureness, Blanchot demands a movement which "risks everything" and in which "everything is lost". However, in

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[339] Blanchot in "The Absence of the Book" that appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 1998, pp. 480 - 482
[340] Ibid, p. 475
[341] Ibid, p. 482
[342] Ibid, p. 484
[343] Derrida, 1992a, p. 36
[344] Ibid.
[345] Blanchot in "The Absence of the Book" that appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 1998, p. 478

losing everything, one does not fall in Heideggerian sense — falling *negatively*. Rather, it is falling into the "edge of the abyss". At this point, where one has reached is the *point's edge*, "one cannot climb back up from exteriority as law to exteriority as writing: going back up, in this context, would be going down"[346]. In that sense, as Blanchot argues, writing is "the summit", because it is the law; "the law is the summit, there is no other"[347]. While Blanchot yearns for such a summit through literature, Benjamin asserts the possibility of "pure language"[348] through *translation*. In Benjamin's view, pure language is that "which no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages" and, in this pure language, "all information, all sense, and all intention finally encounter a stratum in which they are destined to be extinguished".[349]

General idea of translation considers translation as *secondary*, for it always comes *after* the original. The evaluation of translation *as* good or bad is a result of comparison between *the original* and the *translation*; and, this comparison is made on the idea of *fidelity* — fidelity to the original text. However, since there is a demand for the translator to *be faithful* to the original while presenting a *good translation*, the act of translation cannot be understood *as* easy. As Benjamin writes, translation is a "task" that is assigned to the translator at the very moment he attempts to translate, because to translate means not just to translate the subject matter that is in the original, but to be placed himself in two languages at the same time without letting himself to be grounded on any of these already existing languages. Therefore, to translate is to be at the *edges* of two languages. It is in this space that the translator and his work can survive. Hence, in the act of translation, translator *wounds* two existing texts of two languages and takes a flight in another language that is *neither* original *nor* secondary; rather, it is a language that is detached from all *given* languages, while being born in relation to them. According to Benjamin, the task of the translator is to liberate the language that is "imprisoned in a work through his re-

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[346] Ibid, pp. 485 - 486
[347] Ibid, p. 486
[348] Benjamin, 1999, p. 80
[349] Ibid.

creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language"[350].

However, translation is necessarily *another text* that manifests the basic idea of translation that is connected to the event of the Tower of Bable, which brings the double command of God on men. As Derrida remarks in his *Roundtable on Translation*[351], this double command of God is "translate me and what is more don't translate me", which suggests, according to Derrida, "I desire that you translate me, that you translate the name I impose on you; and at the same time, whatever you do, don't translate it, you will not be able to translate it.'[352] This idea emphasizes the very *impossibility* of translation. However, it is this impossibility of translation that becomes the imperative for translation. Yet, this impossibility that is inseparable in the context of translation, due to the very fact that there is always something untranslatable in the original text, does not claim for an absolute closure of the original text in order to remain as secret and maintain its secret and sacred nature in its *interiority*. Instead, it yearns for translation just to emphasize the very untranslatability or impossibility of *One Final* translation that could be judged as *the* best, *the* faithful and *the* successful. In other words, as far as a translation is considered, there can never be *The Best* translation. Thus, since "a translation never succeeds in the pure and absolute sense of the term", Derrida notes that "a translation succeeds in promising success, in promising reconciliation".[353] Accordingly, there are translations which do not even manage to promise. Nevertheless, a good translation is that which enacts a promise — a performative. Consequently, it is the coming shape of a possible reconciliation among languages that one sees through the translation.[354] Therefore, referring to Benjamin's idea of "pure language" that is demanded and manifested through translation, Derrida argues that pure language is not that which has been purified of anything. Rather, "it is what makes a language a language, what makes for the fact that there is language. A translation puts us not in the presence but in the presentiment of what "pure language" is, that is the fact that there is language, that language is language. […] We learn that there is language, that language is of

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[350] Ibid.
[351] Derrida in "Roundtable of Translation" that appears in *The Ear of the Other*, 1985, pp. 93 - 161
[352] Ibid, p. 102
[353] Ibid, p. 123
[354] Ibid.

language, and there is a plurality of languages which have that kinship with each other coming from their being languages."[355]

Hence, in the act of translation, something certainly *happens* to the original text, though what happens to it *cannot* be measured or calculated. It is *imperceptible*. Moreover, this transformation that happens to the original text in the act of translation cannot be related to a notion like *losing* something that was there in the original; because, such notion gives primary and higher status to the original, creating a hierarchy between the original text and the translation — the hierarchy that makes the original powerful or better than the translation, when compared. On the other hand, translation cannot be considered as that which could be gained fully and completely; rather, it is the "game" of *différance*, where one keeps losing and gaining simultaneously. It is a game that admits "whoever loses wins and where one wins and loses each time".[356] Due to this *economic* character that a text possesses through opening up to *outside* through translation, it is no more a text that could remain *the same* in its "self-centered" closed space. In other words, a text cannot survive through "auto translation"; it can survive to its infinity only through opening up to outside. It is always a text so long as it lives *outside* its *given* or constructed space, for text is that which "produces other ears, in a certain way – ears that I don't see or hear myself, things that don't come down to me or come back to me"[357]. Therefore, as Derrida remarks, a text does not come *back*. Here, in Derridian point of view, texts can be juxtaposed with children in order to understand how their movements happen through *moving out* or stepping *out* from the space that was once identified and inhabited under the parental care. Hence, he suggests 'It's better to produce texts that leave and don't come back altogether, but that are not simply and totally alienated or foreign. One regulates an economy with one's texts, with other subjects, with one's family, children, desire. They take off on their own, and one then tries to get them to come back a little even as they remain outside, even as they remain the other's speech.'[358] Therefore, text is like a child for 'child is not only that toward which or for which a

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[355] Ibid, pp. 123 - 124
[356] Derrida, 1973, p. 151
[357] Derrida, 1985, p. 156
[358] Ibid, p. 157

father or mother remains; it is an other who starts talking and goes on talking by itself, without your help.'[359]

Considering above analysis that has been trying to deal with the question of being and language with reference to writing, literature and translation, it can be understood that neither being nor language can be grasped as subject, also as speech, since being and language cannot be reduced to any identifiable presence in its form of appearance. As well as, it cannot be fixed into a structure or a defined space, since being and language is *like* writing that keeps overcoming any kind of *givenness*, through *becoming* the *other*. This idea of overcoming the *given* would be discussed in the next chapter with reference to the idea of community, where community is addressed in terms of nation, religion and gender.

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[359] Ibid.

BEING, GENDER, AND IDENTITY

3.1   Identity and Language

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is impossible to fix being and language into any structure. However, despite this impossibility, it could be seen that how everyday world with its power-politcs attempts to fix being and language in terms of *identity*. Hence, the present chapter would address the question of identity in relation to gender, wherein the idea of subject would be discussed with regard to culture and discourse.

It is significant to discuss idea of identity, since the given idea of being is unavoidably linked to the notion of identity. The philosophical tradition from Plato to Heidegger has attempted to bring out a particular identity in order to define being *as such*. Considering the philosophy of being in the history of Western philosophy, it is obviously centered on the philosophy of *man*. It suggests that to discuss *being* is to discuss *man*. Consequently, the question "what is being?" is focued on understanding and identifying *what* or *who* man *is*. This desire to identify *what* man *is* has accelerated the necessity of defining man through recognizing *that* which makes him a *man*. In other words, it has tried to recognize *what* the *essence* of man is. So doing, it has constructed the *ideal* of man that is to be achieved by everyone[360].

The word *man* has been defined differently in various fields — field of science, social sciences, humanities, etc.   Despite these differences in respective fields, mainly due to the differences that lie in their focus, there is a common idea that is shared by all of them in understanding and defining the word – *man*, and that is derived through *negation* and *exclusion* – exclusion of *what it is not* in order to understand *what it is*. Accordingly, what is negated in constructing the meaning *of* the word *man* is that which falls under the category of *non-man*. Here, *non-man* is, first of all and necessarily, animals; that too, beasts[361]. However, since man has also been

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[360] Here, everyone has to be taken under the category called humans without following any other divisions that appear in terms of gender, caste, class, race and so on.

[361] Derrida, in his *The Beast & The Sovereign: Volume 1*, (2009), brings up a discussion on humanity

identified as an animal, there has to be another way to differentiate him from other animals. Hence, it necessitates the use of another word — *beast*, which finds its greater significance in maintaining hierarchy between animal and beast; because, the later is often used with derogatriness. Accordingly, man is not considered as beast, but as an animal. (However, outside the formal context, there are instances from everyday life where people bring some beastly analogies when they describe some fellow human's behaviour or in abusing someone.) Secondly, the *other type* that falls under the category of *non-man* is all sorts of supernatural figures including God. Thus, man is neither beast nor God. As Nietzsche writes, "man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman – a rope over an abyss"[362].

Hence, the image and the meaning of man that is formed with reference to *non-man* is yet another construction resulted in *exclusion*, which is majorly of two kinds: one is the *exclusion* of animals (especially *beasts*), for man is more than *what animal is*; because, man possesses some features that animal do not have; hence, he is considered to be *superior* to all other animals. The other is the *exclusion* of the *supernatural*, especially *God* that can include even angels, ghosts, monsters, devils, etc., for the imagination or understanding regarding God varies in different religions and cultures. In this case, man is posited in relation to God not in terms of hierarchy, though God is considered as *mighty*, *strong* and *above* the humans in the discourse of religion, but in terms of the quality that is called *natural*. Accordingly, man is *natural* while the God is *super*natural.

However, according to this demarcation, the identity that is given to animals is not favorable and it is a result of viewing animals as *inferior* to humans[363]. Yet, since the identity that is assigned to God is based on the opposition of natural/supernatural, it is important to see how contradictory and misleading this dichotomy is. The word

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and animality in analyzing the idea of power in the context of Law and sovereignty. Here, he explains how the idea of enemy is configured within the Western philosophy, especially in political philosophy and theory, with reference to beasts in order to show enemy as the "Being-outside-the-law". However, throughout his Seminar titled "The Beast & The Sovereign", Derrida attempts to involve in an interrogation with an interpretation of man as a "political animal" – an idea firstly presented by Aristotle.

[362] Nietzsche, 1969, p. 43

[363] In the essay "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)", presenting his views on animality, nudity, shame and truth, Derrida says, "The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to another living creature" (p. 392) in *Critical Inquiry* 2002c (Winter), Vol. 28, No 2, pp. 369 – 418

natural, which is an adjective, means relating to or concerning nature, owing to which it is neither artificial nor an imitation. Accordingly, man is considered as *natural*. But, what kind of meaning does the word *supernatural* carry? In general, the word refers to a thing that does *not* exist in nature; also, it *cannot* be subjected to natural laws, since it is not available in physical or material form. Accordngly, God is considered as supernatural due to his unavailability in a particular form or figure *as such*; also, due to the belief that, especially in different religious contexts, God cannot be subjected to natural laws because of the power that God possesses encompassing all the other powers in the world.[364]

However, in understanding the idea of supernatural, it is, at first, important to look at the word *supernatural*, linguistically. Following the morpho-syntactic rules of English language, the word is constructed combining two words together: *super* and *natural*. When the word *super*, which is a prefix in the present context, is fixed to the word *natural*, the former becomes an *adjective* that describes the later. Here, *super* is referred to a *degree* and it is used for heightening the quality; it enhances the degree of the *natural*-ness. Accordingly, the word *supernatural* suggests something *more* natural — more *than* natural, the *superlative* of natural. In that sense, whatever/whoever that is named as supernatural should be the *most* natural, due to this *superlative* that is marked in language. (However, this type of analogy is possible only if such a thing that is called *natural* exists.)

The above argument raises some questions in the context of seen God as supernatural: is the *supernatural* God more natural than *natural* man? Or should *the supernatural* be considered as *the natural*? If the supernatural is that which is not tangible, locatable, visible, and so on, why cannot we understand man or any other being as *supernatural*? If man is understood as suggested above, how long can we follow the dichotomy of natural/supernatural that has been one of the major criteria in constructing the existing system of knowledge? Moreover, if God is invisible, unimaginable and unlocatable due to his *supernatural* nature, how do we read and relate ourselves to worldly religions, which present diverse Gods that appear in

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[364] Walter Benjamin describes this power of God as divine power, in his essay on "Critique of Violence" in *Reflections, Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, (1986).

different forms that are resulted from different imaginations in different places and times?

The idea of God as supernatural and man as natural is a *configuration* of language. Not only is it a construction of language but also the fixity of that language through that construction. Therefore, the above understanding on God and man is also a language of understanding, and it is this language that declares *what* God, man, natural and supernatural *is*. Consequently, in viewing the controversy in the dichotomy ,which helps distinguishing man from God, natural from the supernatural etc., it is not adequate to bring the question of *what is man?*, *what is God?* and so on, since the question of *what* itself affirms the existence of the *very* thing/*being* that is in question; rather, it is essential to question the *very* language with which such identities are constructed and fixed. And, this questioning would *break open* the *circle* of God and *circle* of man to see the contradiction that lies within the *method* that is used for calculating and measuring *the difference* between man and God or the natural and the supernatural. In that sense, to open up the existing knowledge and identity through questioning the above mentioned categories is to open up the *language* in and through which such views are *constructed* and *fixed*.

Accordingly, the problem of *identity* is basically a problem of *language*, since identity is a construction of language. Hence, *identity* is not a property that is *inherent* or *intrinsic* to anyone, but a property that is granted *through* language, which creates, speaks, maintains, manifests and legitimates any ideology. Thus, identity, ideology and language cannot be separated from each other. Then, "to be a child of language is to be deracinated. It is the removal of any idea of 'natural state'."[365] The outcome of the removal of "natural state" in the enforcement of identity is to *adopt* an *artificial* state *as a natural* state. It is such *artificially* adopted identity that has been taken as *the identity* that is *proper* to man, and it has governed the destiny not only of man, but also that of God and animals.

Considering the *destiny* of God through the identity that is enforced on him by *man*, God cannot be viewed as man. Also, he cannot reside on the earth; very often, it is considered that God is he who resides *above* — above the earth, due to which God

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[365] Maria-Daniella Dick and Julian Wolfreys, 2013, p. 160

becomes *the most high*. Moreover, since he is possessed with the power that cannot be subjected to any law, he is the *strongest*. The high quality in strength and height has depicted God as the Lord — The powerful, The Almighty. Hence, God is incomparable, and this incomparability due to the supernatural quality – untouchable, unlocatable, undefinable, ungraspable and so on - is also that which makes the God *sacred* and *holy*. This idea has been coming to terms with any community that believes in God following a religion; because God becomes religion and religion becomes God. In this case, even the God himself, herself or itself cannot come out from this *man-made vicious circle* that encloses him, confining him into a particular domain with a particular identity. Thus, within the project of identity construction inaugurated by man in order to define his space, God himself is trapped and has become a victim of man's *ideology*.

The ideology that has depicted God as *the creator* and *the redeemer* of man is a religious ideology that is weaved through language. Yet, despite being a construction, the *effect* that is made by it in shaping human cognition is commendable, since it has been able to penetrate human mind convincing him regarding *what kind of life* that he is required to lead in order to be in the lap of God. The *influence* made by such construction is so strong that people have forgotten the very fact that it is *they* who *invented* God whom they have been referring to. However, here, the god that is referred to is not that which appears in front of us in person; but in language. It is the word *God* that carries the *image* of God with which we are *familiar*. Moreover, the image itself is not *that* which is *willed* and *chosen* by God himself, in order to present himself to humankind; rather, it is that which *willed* and *appropriated* by *man* according to *his will*. Therefore, the God in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or any other religion that has been referred to throughout the history of human civilization is the *man's God*; because, it is through language *of* man that God has been appearing in whatever the form or image. However, this argument does not question the existence of God; neither has it tried to say God does *not* exist. Rather, it attempts to think of God in terms of *if* — *if* there is God; because, *if* does not deal with affirmation or negation; rather, it causes doubt, suspicion or uncertainty. It thus evokes a secret.

Something can be affirmed, negated, denied or analyzed only when there is a *certainty* that confirms the *presence* of the *thing* and its existence *as such*. Things that appear to us, around us or in front of us, in and through language, are different from the very way they are. It is through language that things are deliverd to us and we are deliverd to things. Hence, the world in which we exist and our awareness or knowledge regarding it is constructed in language. On the other hand, except language, there is no other possibility of accessing things in order to know and understand *how* and *what* they are. It is only through language that the *mediation* can be made, where language becomes the *medium* — medium of presenting them to us in their *absence*. Therefore, language is a *mediator* that stands in the space between us and the things. Since it is thus the mediator and the medium, it can neither be considered as *immediate* nor can it be the very thing in itself. It is an interpretation through language, in which either we say *less*, or we say *more* about the thing, but never the *exact* thing. Further, it is impossible to say the exact thing that is in our mind regarding anything due to two reasons. First is that things appear to us or we comprehend things through *touching* — through ears, eyes, nose, mouth and skin; also this touching that happens through five senses is touched by language, because touching itself is a language and language is a kind of touching. The second is the above mentioned idea of inability in expressing the exact thought, due to the intervention of language. In such a situation, as Derrida points out, "you will have said more than you think or something other than you think. […] You said something you did not think you said or that you did not mean to say."[366]

3.2   Touching: Being, Language, and Totality

However, since there is no such possibility of accessing the things through penetrating them in order to decipher *what* they are and *how* they are, they are accessed and presented through language. And, language is a touch. Hence, language touches. Then, *what* is touching, which is nowhere to be found in tangible manner or which cannot be reduced to a touching *as such*? Touching touches without a touch *as such*. Thus, it is a touching that comes from *without* — without a specific touch *as such*.

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[366] Derrida, 2005c, p. 168

However, in Nancy's point of view[367], which is a view that is able to locate the point of *exact*[368] or exact point of making sense through touching, touching is a movement which belongs to every sense, owing to which it needs to be seen as that which is never static. On the other hand, touching or to touch is also to come in *proximity*. He says "proximity is touching"[369]. In that sense, to touch through language in comprehending a thing is to come into proximity with the thing; and having touched in and through language, the thing is moved by language. It is through this touch that we *come to know* about the thing. Yet, *coming to know* about the thing does not mean that one gets to know *everything* about it. Here, everything has to be understood in terms of *totality*, wherein a thing would be viewed as that which is comprised of many things. The togetherness of those is that, which makes the thing as a *whole*. Thus, *thing* is viewed in terms of totality, and this comprehension through the *view* is the way through which the knowledge is found. Accordingly, the knowledge *through knowing*, which has been the discourse of knowledge, has been governing the system of knowledge and truth. According to this formation of knowledge, firstly, the focus is laid on the *totalized form*, since it is the *visible*, *audible* or *tangible*. The next step is to know about that, which is visible, audible or touchable, to which the methods of *analysis* are employed.[370] In the analysis, the *totalized* being needs to be *de*-totalized, and de-totalizing is that, which needs to be there for the *construction* of knowledge. Yet, here, it is not a *de-totalizing* that *de*-totalizes the *totalized-knowledge*; instead, it is a procedure in order to *totalize* the knowledge through *knowing how* the totality is made, where the idea of "whole" and "parts" is of greater importance in the formation of knowledge. It envisages understanding the *totality* in terms of *totalizability*. Accordingly, the being or the entity, which is more like Heideggerian entity[371], needs to be un-covered, in order to see *how* it is made and *with what* it is made — inside.

Foucault explains this method of *opening* and *seeing* the entity (in order to know *everything*) in his *Order of Things: An Archaeology of The Human Sciences*[372]

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[367] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)
[368] Derrida, 2005a, p. 8. Here, Derrida discusses the idea of touching presented by Nancy, in which he says "exact" is the probity of Nancy's signature.
[369] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)
[370] Foucault, 1973, pp. 125 - 165
[371] Heidegger, 1962
[372] Foucault, 1973

and *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*[373], where he raises a critique of knowledge of science and its methods. Nevertheless, this opening up is an *inward* movement from *outside* to *inside*. Accordingly, the study of being and the production of knowledge regarding that being through analysis can be operated from *macro* level to *micro* level, employing different methods — be it inductive or deductive. Seeing and analyzing the ways in which parts are connected to each other in support of the existence and function of each other while producing the birth and the existence of the thing *as such* — the totality or totalized being, the system of knowledge has tried to affirm the *presence* of the being *as such*, also the *approachability*, *analyzability*, *definability* and *predictability* of *being*. Thus, it is an effort of defining *who we are*[374]; consequently, the system of knowledge – be it philosophy or science – is an "essential *explanation*"[375] of *who* we are. This inward movement in the context of being, wthin which being is seen as an entity, has been launched in order to know that which is *hidden* inside. For Heidegger, this inner side, which is the concealed, is the "authentic" side of being. However, if this thirst for knowledge through knowing is a thirst to know the thing inside through deciphering, it is also a thirst for knowing the *secret*, since what is hidden is that which is not *out*, owing to which it becomes a *secret*. If the secret is defined as that which is not-out, it also suggests that secret is that which is out *as* not-out. Then, is there a secret here? If there is a secret, is there a possibility of knowing, defining and reaching that secret? If there is a secret that has been identified *as* a secret, can it be a secret? Is there a possibility to have a secret within being or within us with the *very* awareness that *it is a secret*? If it *is*, does it become a secret to self? Leaving aside the idea of secret to be dealt later in the present chapter in relation to being and knowledge, let's get back to the idea of touching with regard to knowledge and knowing.

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[373] Foucault, 1994

[374] This statement "who we are" is used here with reference to Derrida's *Of Spirit,* (1989). There, Derrida quotes a line from Heidegger that recalls Heidegger on the subject of Sophocles' Antigone: ""Tell me what you think about translation and I will tell you who you are"". Then, Derrida goes on to argue that "who we are" is determined from the opening to the question of Being that is posed in terms of "what is Being?" inscribed in the network of "Being".

[375] Ibid, p. 4

3.2.1 Jean-Luc Nancy: On Touching

Discussing the idea of *knowing through touching*, it is important to see how Nancy views on touching. According to Nancy, "touch is to come in proximity. Proximity is touching"[376]. Then, the next problem that immediately arises here is the question of proximity — proximity with the thing or the object. Nancy says, to be in proximity means "to be near of or to be the nearest", which also means "come to contact". In that sense, touching means to be in contact — to be in *contact* or to be in *touch with*. Therefore, to be in touch through touching is an idea which problematizes the notion of possibility of totality.

The idea of touching challenges the possibility of totality, totalizability, localizability, and locatablity, because, the idea of *to be in touch* presupposes an *already existing* separation. In other words, to be in touch presupposes a separation, in which case one is not *inside* the other; because, touching can happen between the things that stands apart from each other. It is only then one can *come to* contact with the other; it is only then *coming* of something or someone is possible. Thus, so long as things are detached from each other, there is always a possibility to be *in touch*. At the same time, it is this *distance* that unfolds between the things which are detached from each other, which accelerates the desire to come closer or nearer to each other. Therefore, the idea of totality has to be preceded by *in-completeness*, wherein totality is yearned for. However, in such a context, it is important to see whether this desired totality can ever be realized. Also, if it is realizable, what is that totality which we *realize as* totality?

Approaching the question of totality in terms of touching, what is significant here is not the idea of totality but the idea of touching through which the totality is attempted. Thereby, what is of importance is not the touch *as such* since there can never be a touch *as such*, but *the way* in which touch is made. In other words, *how* does one touch, when one touches something or someone and *what* does one touch when one touches something or someone? Also, *what happens* when someone is touched? Is there any particular way of touching? In Nancy's point of view, touching includes ' "skimming, grazing, pressing, pushing in, squeezing, smoothing,

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scratching, rubbing, *stroking*, palpating, grouping, kneading, massaging, embracing, hugging, *striking*, pinching, biting, sucking, wetting, holding, letting go, licking, jerking, looking, listening, smelling, tasting, avoiding, kissing, cradling, swinging, carrying, weighing". '[377] Any touch of this sort supposes the proximity with the thing that is being touched, yet, this proximity, which is the closest proximity, is still a *distance*, though it is a narrow distance. Here, the narrowness in the distance cannot be determined, quantified or evaluated. It is an *irreducible* distance, which lays in-between *touching* and the *touched*, owing to which touching remains as that which happens from *outside*. Therefore, to touch also means to remain *outside*, according to which *touch* is that which *coming* from *outside*. Consequently, following Nancy's view, it can be said that touching is a way through which a relation is made to a thing. However, Nancy's touching becomes problematic when he differentiates touching from *penetration*. He says that proximity is also not to be inside. Penetration seems to be inside the body; inside in the anatomical sense. When penetration happens, it hurts and hurting is no longer touching. Touching is aesthetical and the aesthetic is surface. Therefore, touch is a relation to a thing as it is in a nearest manner, but not in inside. It is not penetrating.[378]

According to the above views of Nancy, it seems that there is some kind of model, schema or definition that is followed by Nancy in understanding and analyzing the notion of *touching*. That *schema* seems to be influenced by "the theoretical touch" that appears in "the philosophy of touch"[379]; or, it appears to have employed some phenomenological approach. If not, how does he distinguish between touching and penetration as two different things? Moreover, in his view, since penetration is hurting, hurting *cannot* be considered as touching. On the other hand, he describes touching as a sense, and sense is a motion and an emotion, because, through touch, one is *moved*. "We are moved by touching", for the effect of touch is moving. [380] Nancy's view regarding touching in relation to sense is quite *contradictory* here. In fact, touching is something to do with sensing or sense; also sense is that which is to do with touching. Therefore, touching and sensing cannot be separated from each other, and, certainly, Nancy too does not attempt to separate them. However, his idea

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[377] [Nancy, 2008, p. 82] quoted in Derrida, 2005a, p. 70
[378] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)
[379] Derrida, 2005a, p. 76
[380] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)

becomes contradictory when he excludes *hurting* from touching, considering it *as* not-touching; so doing, he ends up excluding *hurting* from the idea of sense or sensing. How does he do that? What does make him differetiate hurting from sensing? Is not hurting a sense? If it is not a sense, how do we hear utterances like "I feel hurt", "I get hurt" etc.? Is not hurting a feeling, an emotion and a motion with which one is moved? Does not hurting make one move? Moreover, what is the criterion to recognize penetration as *not* touching? Nancy says that penetration is not touching since it is inside the body. Here, inside the body in the anatomical sense, in which case penetration is that which is going *through* the body. This view of Nancy suggests that touching has to happen at the *surface* level or over the surface. Yet, the effect of that *surface touch* is able to *move* someone *emotionally*, also inwardly and outwardly. However, though Nancy does not describe much about the movement that is resulted in touching, the movement is not necessarily *superficial*. There is no surface for the *movement* — it could be a physical movement that is visible to our eye or could be an *inner movement* that is do with *heart*; and, the later is not *visible* or *audible*. As far as the movement is concerned, one is able to say only one thing: movement is that which *happens* due to the *effect* or along with the effect. Here, it is difficult to say whether movemnts happens *after* the effect, since *the point* of beginning of the movement cannot be tracked down, because, the moment that the *effect* begins to be felt cannot be *centralized*. It cannot be *focused*. It can be a movement through an effect that can happen at the *moment of touching*. But, again, this moment cannot be *a point*, since touching cannot be *exactly captured* to a point *as such* — the "exact point" that Nancy tries to highlight. This impossibility is due to the *irreducibility* of the *effect* that is made *by/through* the touch or touching and the *incalculabity* of the *depth* or the levels of touching. With the *effect* that is emitted through touching, *something happens*: and, that is the effect *of* touching and *in* touching — *touching-effect* and *effect-touching* happens at the same time, which is a time that is far more different from the clock time. Thus, *touching*, *effect* and *movement* are inextricably attached to each other, and *the nature* of touch, effect or movement can neither be calculated, perceived, or recognized, since every touch, therein every sense and emotion has its own *singularity*, of which the depth cannot be reduced to *this* or *that*. On the other hand, touch is that which *pierces* body. And, this piercing can be painful, hurting, enjoyable, pleasurable, blissful, and so on. In that sense, any kind of touching can be

taken as a *penetration*. Here, it is not necessary to take *penetration* in sexual terms supposing as if penetration can happen *only* in sexual intercourse. If we do so, we delimit not only the word *penetration* into certain domain, but also the sexuality and sensuality in sexuality. It also reduces sexual intercourse to be *mere* painful act. In his view that casts *hurting* is *different* from touching, Nancy appears to be influenced by the dichotomy of good/bad, happy/sad or positive/negative with regard to touching; because, going through his list of touching, it is obvious that he favours some kinds of touching, which do not appear to be hurting or painful in general sense. They are kinds of *touch* which are *pleasing*, therefore, *positive*. In so doing, he sketches hurting in a *negative* sense. Accordingly, penetration and hurting are not qualified enough to be under Nancy's list of touching. In such a situation where the idea of touching is inscribed through enlisting certain ways of touching, it is important to bring the question in that is posed by Derrida with regard to Nancy's idea of touching: "Why does he end his list here? What right has he to do so?"[381]

Moreover, in presenting his views on touching, Nancy proposes the *presence* of the body and the possibility of presenting the body for touch. He suggests the availability of the body for touch, whereby his idea of "limit of touch"[382] is asserted. To touch means to be in contact. For Nancy, this contact is something that happens at the *limit*, according to which to touch means to contact the *limit* of something or someone — of body, body of something or someone. That could be the reason for him to say that touching is a movement along the surface, because, the limit that he brings out in relation to touching is the *bodily limit*, which is visible and tangible. Therefore, it is a visible, tangible and surface *limit* which is touched by Nancy's touching. It is the limit *of* the *surface*; it is the limit *at* the surface that is *in* contact *in a contact*, through which *a relation* is made. If so, should we see all kinds of connection or relations that we make with others as those, which are made through contacting or touching the limits – limits of the body i.e. limit of the skin – the outer skin? Then, are all of them going to remain as relationships made at the very limit — limit as a border, which marks the distance in terms of proximity?

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[381] Derrida, 2005a, p. 70
[382] [Nancy] quoted in Derrida, 2005a, pp. 271 - 274

If the limit is that which brings the proximity into Nancy's idea of touching, the proximity that he asserts is also a sensible, visible, and touchable proximity; because, it is proximity at the *limit* and proximity of *limits* – proximity of two limits, two limits of two bodies. Therefore, proximity is that which lies in-between touch and touching; the *in-betweenness as proximity* and *proximity as in-betweenness*. This zone of proximity, which lays in-between two borders and the two bordered-bodies, is the zone of sharing[383], where two bodies involve together and simultaneously to *share*. Then, it is a sharing that happens at the verge through touching when the two limits touch each other's limits. For Nancy, this touching of limits is the "exact point where sensitivity, sensuality and sense get together"; subsequently, touching-point of two limits is "the point of sense"[384]. Accordingly, this point of sense can also be *the sensing point* and *point-sensing*. This point, which is the touching point, is seen by Nancy as *the point*, through which one *enters* another. He says "we enter through touching". In that sense, it is also the *point of meeting* and *meeting point* — meeting point of two bodies, the "exact point" where the "exact" meeting happens. It is also *the point* where the meeting "exactly" happens; also, that is the "proper" meeting, because it is the *exact meeting* of meeting *exactly*.

Nonetheless, can we set a limit for touching? How do we know the *exact* point of touching? Also, more importantly, is there a limit *of* touching, *for* touching or a limit *in* touching? If there is a limit, is that a limit drawn in terms of time or space — duration or depth of the touch that is touching? In Nancy's point of view, there is a *limit* of touching, and that limit is the limit of the *body* – "corpus"[385]. Therefore, in his analysis, Nancy specifically presents us the *presence* of bodily touching through *touching bodies*; accordingly, it is a touching resulted in *body-touching*. When two bodies are touched by each other through touching, where the "exact point" of touching is located by Nancy,"the point of sense" is *touched*. This sensing point *of sense* and *sensing point* of the *point of sense*, as Nancy shows while seeing it by himself, is a *point of losing*, where one "loses the intelligence […], but it is not anti-intellectual; it is the one which is not intellectual as such"[386]. Therefore, even there is

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[383] Nancy, in *Inoperative Community*, presents his views on the idea of sharing in relation to literature, wherein he discusses the idea of "being *in* common". 1991 pp. 43 - 70
[384] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)
[385] Nancy, 2008
[386] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)

a sensing point of sense in touching, Nancy emphasizes that "'[T]here is no 'the' sense of touch'"[387]. However, Nancy's attempt of analyzing the idea of touch, touching, sense, and sensing appears to be grounded and haunted by phenomenology and metaphysics of presence — *presence* of touch. According to Derrida, Nancy's understanding of touch is grounded on the ""European" question of touch"[388] that involves the "organ of touch"[389], which is *hand* — the organ that has the touching power. However, Derrida does not place Nancy's view of touch in the "European question of touch", directly; he does so analyzing the way in which Nancy's ideas are influenced by Phenomenology that unfolded in Germany and France. More specifically, the phenomenological terrain in which Nancy is caught up is that of Merleau-Ponty's, whose ideas are founded upon the opinions of Maine de Bairan , though, as Derrida sees[390], Merleau-Ponty has not cited or given reference to Maine de Bairan in his *Phenomenology of Perception*.

The general notion of touching, which is also the phenomenological idea of touching, is related to the idea of proximity, and, for Nancy, touch is a relation to a thing as it is in a *nearest* manner. This nearness that he emphasizes is the immediate proximity, owing to which touch and touching becomes the most immediate relation. But, what is this immediacy? Is it a bodily immediacy in terms of the presence of the bodies or the touch as the most immediate since it is *mere* touch, a *plain* touch, or *pure* touch — a touch that is not touched by anything? Then, is it a *holly touch*, for it is not contaminated due to its *immediacy*?

If the idea of purity is understood in terms of not-being manipulated or touched by anything, which is the general idea that exists in relation to the notions of *pureness*, *holiness*, *essence*, or *authenticity*, we cannot go very far without running into contradictions and confusions; because, to believe in such a possibility and availability is to believe in the idea of *origin* and *the original* — the Genesis. As far as touching is concerned, in general, one tends to imaging a touch *with hand* – a manual touch; also, like Nancy says, it also brings the dimension of proximity – proximity of two things or objects. But, this proximity is the proximity that is visible, which fits to

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[387] [Nancy], quoted in Derrida, 2005a, pp. 138 - 139
[388] Derrida, 2005a, p. 138
[389] The privilege given to hand as the "organ of touch" by Maine de Bairan is interpreted and analyzed by Derrida in his *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, 2005a, p. 140
[390] Ibid, p. 143

perception, in which case, like Derrida says, "movement gets an upper hand". Therefore, touching appears to remain in the sphere of *immediacy*. Accordingly, the five senses on which all kinds of known senses are based are the touches of immediate and immediate touches. Seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling are the five kinds of senses that one gets to experience through those five organs of sensing, and they are the direct or immediate ways of sensing. But, can there be such thing called *holy* touch or *pure* touch that is immediate?

The idea of *immediate* is determined by the idea of the *presence* – the presence of the thing *as such*. In accordance with that, to be present is to *be there* in the world, in which case not only the presence of the thing but also the presence of the world is emphasized. However, as discussed above, to touch means to bring two things as much as near to each other confirming the presence of the existence of two things *in* present. Thus, in a way, touch is also that which can confirm the presence of the thing – the thing that is touched. But, the problem in the idea of *immediacy* in touching is that whether there is a possibility of having something *immediate* without any mediation. When we see things from the point of our *view point*, we tend to believe in *what* we see. We are driven by the belief that we *see* things *directly*; also, we can be clearer with the thing that we *see* when we are *near* it as much as we can. In fact, this is applicable not only to the domain of seeing, but also that of hearing which is to do with the ear. It is believed that closer we see things through our eyes or hear through our ears, especially the sound of speech, more is the *clarity*, *proximity, presence* and the confirmation of the *very* existence of the thing. This is also the idea that makes the ground for empiricism that suggests the existence of *empirical* being. In the wake of modern science along with technology, as Foucault says, this is done with the help of the microscope[391]. The lens of the microscope is to be believed and affirmed as the *eye* that is *able* to *pass through* the object to be analyzed, when the power of the man's eye is inadequate to see through. Thus, being is taken as an *analyzable* entity, which is an idea preceded by the notion of the *presence* of being. Accordingly, there is a belief, which is, however, no more a belief since it has become *the truth* and *the* ground, on which the knowledge is constructed, which suggests that there is being *as*

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[391] Foucault, 1973, p. 133

such; he is *analyzable*; and, it is only through the analysis supported by the very possibility of analyzability that the *nature* of being can be understood.

However, coming back to the idea of touching, the proximity which is discussed earlier is a *proximity* that is counted in terms of corporeality. The sense resulted in touching is a corporeal sense, which can be located somewhere in one or many of the five organs of sense. In Nancy's argument, it could be seen that touching, through which the *exact* point of sense is felt, and through which the birth to presence of somebody is struck, is a point of *awareness*; because, through touching, he makes a point that is able to *center* the *sense* – the point of sense and a center- point, which sounds like the function fulfilled by an vacuum cleaner, where things are absorbed into one particular *center*. His point of sense is *sensing point* of the sense, which is *able* to *bring* the *sense* into *presence*. To talk about a point is to talk about a kind of *center*. This center that appears in the point of sense is that which is able to *gather* entire the body into a center – "the exact point where sensitivity, sensuality, sensibility and sense get together"[392]; yet, certainly, it is *not collected* in order *to hold together*, instead it is *collected* in order *to release*; in other word, it is *collection* that is meant *to disperse* or it is a *meeting to depart*. Hence, it also sounds like a *get-together* to bid *farewell*. Touching — the moment of saying *Adieu*; the last-supper before the betrayal — the moment where everyone and everything comes together knowing it is the togetherness of everyone and everything; knowing it is *last* point of getting together; getting together finally with the very awareness that everything and everyone is *there*; last point of meeting *to* depart. However, though the last point of meeting, which is the *exact point* of sense, is a point of losing everything, yet it is a meeting. Certainly, Nancy does not bring the sequence in terms of *after* or *before*. He talks only about an "exact point" of touching, which is the exact point of sense; then, he goes onto explain *what exactly happens* in this exact point of sensing ; thus, explaining what *exactly happens* in touching, he is able to *see* what happens exactly *in* touching and what happens exactly *with* the touch that is touching. In that sense, Nancy's idea of touching appears to be caught up within the tradition that asserts on the *awareness* through *consciousness* — knowledge of the "exact": it is the exact knowledge that makes one *aware* that he is *losing*; the awareness of losing, while

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[392] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikyh2NaY4hU (accessed on 02.06.2014)

losing the intelligence. Therefore, it is also an *awareness* of touch, touching and of touch that is touching.

Nevertheless, can there be a touch or a touching of which one can *exactly* be *aware*? Agreeing with Nancy, it could be said that there is a touch or a touching. Yet, there is no such a thing that one could call or *identify* as touch *per se*. Therefore, Derrida suggests Nancy, "Now, Jean-Luc, that's quite enough, give this word back, […] Leave it to the ancestors. […] Don't keep pretending, as they do, don't make believe, stop acting as if you wanted to make us believe that there is something one could call touch. […] Touch is finitude. Period. Stop at this point."[393]

It is not possible to figure out *a point* in relation to touch; also, there is no point of searching *for a point* of touching; because, simply, there is no such point. One cannot be aware of *what* exactly happens in touching; one cannot be aware of a *limit* in *touching* and a limit of a touch. In other words, it could be said that one does not know *what* happens to one's self *in* touching. That is why, as Derrida does in *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, it is important to bring the inscription in that is written on a wall in Paris, "When our eyes touch, is it day or is it night?"[394], which must have been appearing on the wall with or without the expectation of getting any answer, yet, always, questioning whatever the definitions imposed upon *touch*.

In the task of answering the question "when our eyes touch, is it day or is it night?", one really has to devoid from the tradition of ontology and phenomenology; also, one has to be away from the theories of psychology and intentionality. This breaking away from all such tradition is demanded, since all of them are grounded on metaphysics of *presence*; and this presence is the *presence* of being *as such*, within which rest of the philosophy – even the philosophy of touch – is located. Thus, it is essential to break away from the notions like tangibility, perceptibility, audibility and so on which stem from the idea of presence *of presence* or presence *of absence* in order to address the question of being and question of touching. It is only then there can be a touch that *happens* or *comes* to one's self without *awareness*. It is only then one can say "when our eyes touch". Here, the assertion falls on two terms: *happens*

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[393] Derrida, 2005a, p. 138

[394] This inscription is written on a wall in Paris as follows: "*Quand nos yeux se touchent, fait-il jour ou fait-il nuit?*". Derrida has quoted it in his *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, as it inspired him with the desire to make it an epigraph to what he had long wanted to write for Jean-Luc Nancy. 2005a, p. 4

and *comes*. Accordingly, touch appears as that which *happens to me*; that which *comes to me* without asking my permission, without me having any *prior* knowledge regarding that which *comes* to me; yet, as that which is capable of doing something that is unpredictable. In such situation, *I* – the Self would not even know *where*, *how*, *why*, *what* happened to *me*; *I* would *not be able* to know any sort of *limit* or *point*; thus, it will be a situation where *I receive* "a kiss on eyes or an embrace with eyes"[395], where there will not be any point *as such*; instead, it would be a "point-blank" – "the break of dawn", because, as Derrida remarks, "In the kiss of the eyes, it isn't day yet, it isn't night yet. A nightless, dayless point, still. But day and night themselves are promising each other. One says to the other point-blank: I'm going to give you some. To the point, the break of dawn"[396].

In that sense, touch is that to which one is *open* or *exposed* incessantly. Therefore, touch is also that which is *coming* from *outside* – from the *other*, owing to which it cannot be programmed, foreseen, and so on. However, the present chapter bears the significance of the idea of touching, since it underscores the impossibility of creating any sort of totality *as such*. On the other hand, it also emphasizes the unavoidability of a touch since one is always *open* to a touch; because one is *in* touch – touch *with* the other. Yet, this *exposure* to a touch cannot be related to intentionality, consciousness or awareness. It is not even *thinking to touch*. Thus, touch or touching is simply not *mine*. Rather, it is that which comes from the zone where the *other* comes from, which is also the zone, as Levinas says, where the death comes from. This touch is not the "haptical". Explaining the touch through a kiss of the eyes, Derrida remarks that "when eyes meet – intensely, infinitely, up to the point of the abyss, plunging Narcissus into the chasm – when nothing in the world, not even the third source of a sun, can interpose itself".

3.3   Gender and Identity

When one is open to a kiss of the eyes which touches intensely and infinitely, since one is always *in-touch* with the *other*, how do we hold onto a *self-sameness* that is emphasized by the idea of identity. As discussed above, identity is possible through

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[395] Ibid, p. 306
[396] Ibid, p. 307

identification; one is able to identify one's self as *I* with the very awareness that one says *I*. Then, identity is one's own ability *to see* one's own self. Hence, it is important to ask these questions: what kind of seeing is this? What can one see about one's own self? Is it an analysis done on the basis of the body — a study that is taken up by medical science? If not, is it an analysis of one's mind that is done through following certain methods proposed by psychoanalysis? Otherwise, is it an analysis that is attempted depending on the things provided by history; especially, one's own history about one's own self? If not any of the above, is it some *spiritual journey* that one is able to take following certain ways suggested by *given* religions?

The problem here primarily lies with the act of seeing, where we certainly encounter following problems of *seeing*: *how* to see?; *what* to see?; *who* sees?; *where* to see?; *when* to see and *with what* to see? All these questions are preceded by the very belief that *there is* something – a thing *as such - to see*, and this belief is determined by the idea of *presence*. Accordingly, it is directed toward *to know* the thing that makes it as *the thing as such* – the thing *proper*. It is this particular thing which is sought to be touched or approached *to decipher* the *real* thing, which also has been discussed in terms of *essence*, *core* and *spirit*. That *assumed* real thing is that which makes the *ideal* figure or image of something or someone. Yet, in reverse, it is *this assumed ideal* which is considered and followed as *the real*. The *assumed ideal* that turned out to be *the real*, here, can be exemplified in relation to *gender*.

As discussed above, understanding the idea of man in relation to the question of being, it could be seen that how certain formula or form has been constructed in order to identify man distinuguishing him from all other animals. The first segregation is thus made between man and animals following an *identified difference*, which is undeniably based on facileness. In that sense, our form or figure, which is human, can be compared with that of *other* animals. However, this human that is analyzed here is necessarily *man*; consequently, to understand man is to understand human. Thus, the discourse of man is, at first, a domain that is sketched to place *all human beings*, to which both men and women fall together, distinguishing them from rest of the animals. Accordingly, discourse of humanism[397] centered on *mankind* is also a discourse that is constructed, shared and participated in by both men and women,

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[397] Humanism occupies a strong position along with its political formation during the time of modernity. The present day humanism that is popular in every sphere is that which was founded in the context of modernity.

despite the difference marked in terms of their *gender*. Then, it is humanism *against* animalism. However, it can be seen that there is another division *within* this discourse of man, which is based on the difference that is marked in terms of *gender*.

The major difference between men and women is identified in relation to the *sexual difference* that is marked *biologically*. Therefore, the biological *sexual difference* has become *the ground* on which the identity of man and of woman is primarily *constructed*. In other words, man and woman are identified with reference to their *sex*, owing to which their difference is majorly centered on their *body*. Then, the sexual difference that has been governing the discourse of men and that of women is a *bodily difference*. It is this bodily difference which has constructed two different worlds within one world: *men's* world and *women's* world within the world of *humans*. However, the biological difference is undeniable and unavoidable. On the other hand, that is certainly what we also need to remind ourselves — the difference that everyone carries with their *individual* bodies. Therefore, the bodily difference has to be viewed as *common* to everyone and, it really *matters* to everyone — "bodies that matter"[398]; it is a difference that comes *prior* to any other difference that is marked in terms of sex. However, the bodily difference noted here should not be taken in terms of biological difference, because, biological difference appears to be very reductive and more specific. As well as, it is based on the body *proper*, following which it brings out the idea of *nature* of the *proper body*. Therefore, biological difference is *perceived* identifying a body *as such*. The *bodily difference* that is intended to assert here underscores the more individualistic and irreducibly personal body, which cannot be centered on one particular organ; which cannot be *totalized* according to the way in which a particular organ functions, biologically. It is a body full of *singularitites*. It is a body that does not contain any person *as such*, due to which it is a body that is *im-personal*. Hence, it is a body of which one cannot be *aware* despite the fact that it is *one's own* body *in which* one lives and *with which* one lives. Thus, the bodily difference highlighted here is a difference which is not known *by* the body itself though the difference is *carried* by and within that body; it is a body that carries a difference which is always *foreign* to itself, owing to which the difference becomes that which makes the body *appear*; yet, the difference does not appear, since it always *remains* as a *différance* that *differs* from any sort of *presence* or *appearance*. In that

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[398] This phrase finds its direct reference to Judith Butler's book *Boddies that Matter*, 2011.

sense, it is also the difference which does not let anything to appear in its fullness. The *impossibility* of the *presence* of the thing in its fullness is not due to any particular reason — a reason of "thrownness", "fallenness", "inauthenticity" and so on that is explained by Heidegger[399]; Lacanian reason of pressure that pressurizes the "infantile sexual desire" to mother's body[400]. The *full presence* of the thing is impossible, because there is no such *fullness* of a thing. *Fullness* or *totality* is something that can never be there. Instead, as Derrida says, there can be only "différance" which "makes the presentation of being-present possible, it never presents itself as such"[401]. Therefore, the presence of the body cannot be viewed as the *presence of presence*.

However, considering the views which outline the *figures* of the *female* and the *male* identifying them *as* men and women, it is the mere presence of the *sex organ* that has become the *decisive* factor. Accordingly, it can be said that all the ideas that determine the identity of man or of woman revolve around *the organ* and the way in which it functions. Then, is this identity based on "the data of biology"[402]? However, despite how controversial the data of biology could be, it seems that it is *those data* that have been able to declare *what* is *proper*[403] to *female* body and *what* is *proper* to *male* body, through which the identity of man or woman is recognized. Thus, it – "the data of biology" - has been able to say *what* is *proper* to man and *what* is *proper* to woman, presenting the ideal of man *proper* and of woman *proper — proper man* and *proper woman*.

Problematizing the idea of "gender identity", it is necessary to place the individual in the discourse of culture, in order to see how such *typifications* are constructed. However, it is not just the individual, but the *individual with* its *body*. In general, the term *individual* is taken *superficially* and the *irreducible singularity* of

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[399] Heidegger, 1962

[400] Lacan, 1977

[401] Derrida, 1973, p. 134

[402] The phrase – "the data of biology" – refers to the detailed account given by Simen de Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* (1953). It also appears as the title of the first chapter of the text.

[403] In this regard, it is important to see the way in which Derrida, in *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy* (2005a), discusses the idea of proper in relation to name, psyche, body, flesh and touching. However, while Derrida's discussion involves in questioning the idea of proper that operates in Western Philosophy in configuring being, Judith Butler, in her *Gender Trouble* (1999), presents the idea of proper that operates within the formation of gender identity. Though she does not underscore the term *proper*, she involves in an analysis which questions the idea of *proper* that unfolds in terms of "essence", "nature", "core" and so on in the context of gender, through which she attempts to dismantle *the proper* in gender, showing it as a cultural construction that is imposed on individuals.

the body is ignored. Considering the body despite its gender, it is a body that is exposed to *outside beyond* its visible physicality. Yet, when it is identified interms of its *sex* and placed it in the context of *culture*, which is comprised with socio-political-economic and religious dimensions, it is no more a body that can be discussed in relation to *unconditional exposedness*. It becomes a *conditioned body*, since it is already a *gendered* body or a *sexed body*[404]. And, it is this gendered body that is *viewed*, *described*, *analyzed*, and, then *prescribed* by *language* of culture. Hence, it is necessary to draw our attention on language, since any culture or community is a construction of language. However, certainly, the importance that is given to language projecting it as the ground on which culture, community and identity is based would not be accepted by the system of *compartmentalized* knowledge. This projection would not be favorable for those who want to maintain essence, spirit, authenticity and pureness of a culture or a community. Also, it would disappoint those who search for *the origin* of a particular culture, community or of a language. At the same time, it would jeopardize all kinds of systems that are operative with the assumption that *there is* a culture or a community *as such*, which is to be protected, taken care of, developed and maintained. In that sense, what would be at a risk is the knowledge system that is produced and legitimized by all kinds of disciplines that appeared with the project of modernity. Some of the sociologists, anthropologists, historians, economists, political scientists, archaeologists, psychologists, linguists and so on will lose their own grips if they have to accept the fact that culture, community and identity is nothing but *language*. It would be a great blow to the entire system that makes the world run making us believe that *there is* a world *as such*. Certainly, the idea that claims language as the means by which the world is constructed suggests that there is *no culture* or *community as such*. And, this suggestion would give the

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[404] The present chapter does not differentiate the difference between the two terms sex and gender. Certainly, they must be carrying two different kinds of meaning, if one is really interested in defining the terms. The difference between sex and gender especially discussed in the feminist discourse, where sex is perceived as that which is biological while gender is that which is culturally constructed. Judith Butler brings this discussion in her *Gender Trouble* (1999) with reference to feminist subject, yet she does not give the importance to this distinction since the distinction becomes vaguer when it is taken beyond the realm of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Thus, in her text, Butler uses both the terms very often, simultaneously –ex: "sex or gender". Yet, it seems that she prefers the term gender in her discussion since it does not take any side *as such* – feminist or anti-feminist, since her concern is to view gender identity as a cultural construction that is imposed on being, and that being who appears in Butler's discussion does not revolve around female or male subject. Instead, it operates in terms of idea of subject, subjectivity and gender identity, where the idea of multiplicity that unfolds in the context of being is addressed.

upper hand to all the linguists in a way that they would rush to promote studies on structural linguistics. Yet, when we assert the impossibility of language *as such*, the whole project of *modern linguistics* would collapse, for its concern revolves around language *as such*. Therefore, it is important to note that the significance given to language is not to create any hierarchy among the disciplines. Also, neither it tries to *reduce everything* to language. Rather, it emphasizes the impossibility of any reduction, since language resists and disables all reductions.

Hence, taking the gendered body as that which is described and analyzed by the language of culture, it foregrounds the question of gender identity (in fact, any kind of identity) as a question of language. It is language that weaves culture and community together in the sense that they are inseparable. However, cultures or communities are not entities or objects. They all are "imagined"[405]. Yet, it is these imagined communities consisted of individuals that have appeared as *real* entities, and they have become the ultimate reality that one *has to* accept and follow. However, this scenario becomes dangerous, *when* people *forget* that all these cultures, communities and identities are mere *constructions*. Moreover, these are not constructed by *God*, but by humans. All of them are *human* inventions and constructions. Even the very privilege that is given to God, making him the creator of *everything*, and, thereby, appointing him as *the guardian* of the world is a *position* that is *invented* and *imposed* by humans. Nevertheless, there is no issue regarding *constructions*, because, there is nothing other than a construction. In fact, one should make an attempt to construct in order to realize the very *impossibility* of constructing something for *eternity*; also of constructing something with totality.[406] Therefore, here, the idea of construction, invention or imagination is not underestimated. But, it

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[405] Benedict Anderson, in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), views community as something that is *imagined*. Especially, in the introduction that he wrote for the book, he presents four major reasons for his claim that describes nation, which is a community, as an imagined community. pp. 1 - 7

[406] In this regard, Derrida's idea of translation that appears in his *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation* (1985), is significant for he asserts on impossibility of translation. Yet, this impossibility that he discusses does not create a space for absolute impossibility, wherein all the translations would become useless. Instead, this impossibility is that which demands for translation through which the impossibility of a complete translation is emphasized. Thus, each translation appears as an attempt to translate the *very* untranslatable through which the life or the survival of a text would go into infinity. Similar idea can be seen in his idea of forgiveness discussed in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001c) and idea of hospitality in *Of Hospitality* (2000), where the very impossibility becomes the demand that desires for a possibility. In any of these contexts, nothing remains as absolute possibility or absolute impossibility; instead they become a play that survives through play of "difference".

becomes problematic when such constructions are taken as *the truth*, *real*, *essence*, and *nature*. Accordingly, the idea of identity in the context of gender is yet another *construction* that is determined by *constructed* cultures of *constructed* communities.

Positing the human body that is identified with the sex in the discourse of culture, it is not the individual that becomes the matter of concerned, but the culture, in which case the discourse of the culture becomes more influential on individual in terms of its *effect*, though it is an invention invented by individuals[407]. Now, the problem to be raised with regard to culture is that whether a culture operates equally on everyone in a given community. Also, if there is a culture that is at work, *whose* culture is that? It is here the idea of *power relations* which unfolds in any given cultural context has to be interrogated, asserting that every culture operates through certain procedure of *exclusion*, *inclusion*, *repression*, *rejection* and *confinement*. Hence, no culture can be exempted from power-politics, owing to which no identity can be exempted from the same. Discussing the power relation opertaive in the context of culture, the manner in which the bodies are marked with a particular sex is of importance.

There are two different ways that are employed by any culture in reading *female* body and *male* body. And, this reading actually views *particular body* in a *particular manner*. But, if there is something *to be* read or *to be* seen, it also presupposes that there is someone who is *able to* read. As mentioned above, the discourse is invented, governed and maintained by humans, to which only men and women are included. If so, the particular readings that happen *within* that discourse have to be done either by men *or* women or by *both* men *and* women. In such a context, either a *monologue* that can operate only in terms of *I*, or a *dialogue* which can operate as *I* and *You* is at work. Both operate through *seeing — as such*. Someone is able to *see* the other; hence, someone is seen by the other. It is the power which is possessed by the self that is suggested by this idea of capability *of seeing*, *recognizing*, *reading* and *analyzing* the *other*. Accordingly, the knowledge regarding the other becomes a product of the *self*. Thus, other is produced *according* the *view point* of the *Self*. When this discourse of the self and the other is placed with regard to men and women, whom can be taken as the *Self* and whom can be seen as *the other*?

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[407] In this regard, Nietzsche's criticism regarding culture that appears in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1969) is significant. According to him, culture is that which makes people feel proud of them and it distinguishes them from the goatherds. p. 45

Going through the history of the world, be it the Biblical or the non-Biblical history, there has been a *disparity* that unfolds within the discourse of gender[408]. This disparity can be discussed in terms of genesis, which is Biblical[409] therefore, religious; in terms of *strength*, which is biological, therefore scientific, and in terms of *position*, which is more often political and economic. Accordingly, the particular disparity spreads out in placing the woman *next* to man. Here, the term *next* underlines the *seriality*, according to which woman comes *after* man and stands *after* or *behind* man. Thus, woman is considered as "the second sex"[410], and this *secondariness* can be read *vertically* and *horizontally* — vertical in terms of *position* and *power*, while being horizontal according to the Genesis. If woman is the "second sex", *first sex* is man. Therefore, man is the *first* person who comes *before* woman. This *before* is not referred only to show the *seriality*, which is an opinion presented by Bible; but also it shows how woman is posited *before* man – in front of man. Therefore, the woman in this position appears like Kafka's countryman who is waiting for the permission from the doorkeeper standing *Before the Law*[411]. However, this *secondariness* is not a position that is *intrinsic* to woman. Instead, as Simone De Beauvoir shows, "she is defined and differentiated with reference to man."[412] In relation to this differentiation, woman becomes the opposite sex of the man. In fact, it is not just the opposite of the male sex, but also the *opposite* of what the *man is*. Therefore, the image or the definition that is attached to the word *woman* needs to be seen as that which is *opposite* to man. In that case, what is made to be *certain* here is not the woman, but man, for he is the *reference point* from which woman is *derived*. The particular disparity thus has projected man as *the completed* and *the certainty*, wherein the woman, being the *opposite*, becomes the *in-completed* and the *uncertain*. There are many examples that show how woman is analyzed and viewed throughout the history. *The Second Sex*, the detailed account given by Beauvoir in her argumentative approach to emphasize the need of *Feminism*, can be taken here as a major source that presents such plethora of examples. These examples and other incidents that we come

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[408] See Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray in *French Feminists on Religion*, 2002.
[409] Genesis 2 explains the way through which the woman is created: "[…] he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh. He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him."
[410] This is the title of the book *The Second Sex* (1953) written by Simen de Beauvoir. Also, it is the position that she analyzes as women's position throughout the history.
[411] Kafka, 2005, pp. 3 - 4
[412] Beauvoir, 1953, p. 16

across in everyday life show how women are discriminated in the society. And, it is a society which is grounded on *patriarchy*. Then, the next question that can be posed here is: what is the position of the woman in *matriarchal* society? Certainly, in such societies[413], woman is considered as *strong* since she has certain *rights* that are accepted socially and legally, in which case, man's monologue is *checked* and *balanced*, controlling his domination over her. In such a context, matriarchal system can be suggested, (if one is interested in doing so), as a way to come out from the male dominant system that operates through suppressing women, cutting her image in comparison to what she "lacks"[414] and what she desires "to have". In fact, it is this belief of "lack" and of the desire "to have" that has become the major fact that decides *what/how the woman is* and *what/how the woman should be*; subsequently, it has produced *the ideal* of woman and the very law which is capable of directing her to that ideal[415]. However, taking the position of woman in a matriarchal society into account, it can be said that woman in such a society has *more* freedom when compared to the one living in a patriarchal society. Also, in observing how woman leads her life in a matriarchal system, one would say that the woman in matriarchy is *stronger* and *dominant* than men and her position is *safe* and *secured* along with her *rights*; because, the whole issue of identity in terms of gender revolves around the idea of *freedom* and the *desire for freedom*. Certainly, if freedom or liberation from any suffering, oppression or discrimination is enumerable or definable *as such*, then, the notion that the woman in matriarchy or the popular notion in contemporary world that suggests the *European woman* and the economically viable woman as *free* woman or *independent* woman has to be taken as a model that can be followed for the emancipation of all the women in the world. This kind of idea is put forward by certain kind of feminism, which operates in terms of "descriptive and normative

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[413] Nairs in Kerala, Mosuo living near the border of Tibet in the Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, Minangkabau living primarily in West Sumatra, Indonesia, Akan in Ghana, Bribri living in the Talamanca Canton in the Limon Province of Costa Rica, Garo in North-East Indian state of Meghalaya, Nagovisi living in South Bougainville, an island west of New Guinea are some examples for matriarchal systems in the world. For further details regarding these socities, please see the following website:
http://mentalfloss.com/article/31274/6-modern-societies-where-women-literally-rule (accessed on 30.04.2016)

[414] This is an idea unfolds in the domain of Freudian psychoanalysis that is descriptively discussed by Beauvoir, 1953 pp. 72 - 73

[415] Derrida in his *The Politcs of Friendship* (1997), writes that in order to be included in fraternity the ideal of woman has to become a brother. It is only then she would be included in the space of fraternity that is shared only among brothers.

claims"[416]. In this regard, there are two questions that can be raised. The first one is whether these women, who are seen as *free*, *strong* and *independent* due to their position along with the ensured rights, are *actually free* and *independent*? The second question is that whether the feminist project (certain type of feminism[417]), which operates for the emancipation of women, can stand away from the power-politics that it tries to overcome?

Addressing the first question, the significance is drawn on the idea of freedom. Here, the freedom intended to discuss with regard to women is connected to the notion of *subject*, wherein the unavoidability of the *force* that comes from the cultural discourse in constructing and shaping the mindset of the individual is weighed. As discussed in the previous chapter, every individual is a *subject* of a particular discourse; therefore, one is subjected to the "order of the discourse"[418]. As Foucault points out, there are multiple and parallel discourses that are at work in every society; yet, among them, one discourse becomes more powerful and effective than the others, owing to which the power of the other discourses are suppressed or subdued. Thus, the one that becomes more powerful becomes *the order*, which prevails over the society constructing *the* system of knowledge. However, these discourses are bound to *change*. In Foucault's terms, there are "shifts" of discourses, which also introduce shifts of systems of knowledge. However, before seeking what kind of shifts have happened with regard to the problem of gender, it is important to see which sort of order that has been there in the prevailing discourse of gender.

It is the order of *patriarchy* that has been prevailing in the society, in which *the power* of taking decisions is enjoyed by men. These decisions are not related only to law and governance since men have especially been involving in the state affairs centered on political power[419]; their decisions are related to all kinds, for they have been the ones who involved in making the law of the society, which had been there before the formation of new nation states in 19th century Europe.[420] However, there must be few examples which could stand for the systems and societies that were ruled

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[416] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-topics/ (accessed on 15.07.2014)
[417] Some ideas presented by Irigaray and Kristeva can be from such division of feminism.
[418] "The Order of Discourse" is an essay written by Michel Foucault. The essay that is refered for the present study appears in *Untying the Text: A Post Structuralist Reader*, edited and introduced by Robert Young, 1981, pp. 48 - 78
[419] Plato, 1974
[420] Ibid, p. 69, 89

by women. Yet, concerning the majority, it is definitely men who have been playing the major role in making decisions and controlling the society accordingly. In such a context, the perception that they had regarding women, which is oriented on the *sexuality* of woman, got manifested in the society and continued to remain *as if* it is *the general truth* regarding women. According to this *general* truth, woman is known to be *weak*, *stupid*, *seductive*, *unreliable*, *talkative*, *emotional*, *provocative* and so on, and, therefore, it is justified that woman should be kept under the *vigil* of man, to which figures of *father*, *brother* and *husband* are included. Accordingly, the woman – from her childhood to death – was kept under the control of man, through which he became the *guardian* or the *caretaker* of woman. On the other hand, it would not have been possible for this male dominant discourse to prevail for so long in such a strong manner, if it were opposed by women strongly or if it were questioned by women constantly[421]. Definitely, it must have been opposed and questioned by women. Also, there must have been some men who opposed and questioned the same. Yet, this opposition or the question might not have come out from them in an *effective* manner or might not have come *at all*, due to some *fear* which haunted them — fear of *questioning*, *opposing* and *resisting,* also fear of *losing* one's own ground on which one is already standing *frimly* and *steadily*. On the other hand, there must be another reason for women to not to come up with such strength to question the above mentioned *typification*, and it could be the very *influence* or the *effect* that the discourse has been able to leave on women, making them not to question the given order, but *to question themselves* with regard to certain kind of *values* and *morals* that *propose*, *fix* and *impose* the particular *image* on them.

As far as the idea of subject is concerned, as Foucault argues, culture is that which practices certain power on its subjects in a very *subtle* manner. The subtlety is such that one is not even aware of his/her own subjection to such a power. Moreover, the power that is transmitted through culture is *invisible*, for it does not use any specific mode of power, such as weapons used by police and army or specific document which is like a constitution of a state, in controlling individuals. In other words, culture is something that is not inscribed *here* or *there*, because, it does not

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[421] In this regard, it is important to listen to Cixous's interview, where she says not all men are phallocratic, nor are all women anti-phallocratic. Please see Cixous's Interview that is uploaded on May 29, 2007 on https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=+cixous+interview , (accessed on 10.06.2016)

require any inscription *as such* for it to have a legitimized approval. It functions in terms of *ideas*, which are capable of travelling across boundaries that are physically marked, and it is able to creep and invade individual's mind even before he or she realizes it. That is why it is difficult to find out an *exact* point which can be marked as the *entry point for a culture*. It is *everywhere*. It cannot be *located* as such. It is abstract, yet, the most powerful force which is capable of *manipulating* individual's mind. It is beleved that this manipulation is for the betterment of the individual (at least, this is what we are asked to believe). Therefore, this *manipulation*, which is a term that gives the sense of *using power*, is termed in the context of culture and society *as* "taking care of the individual" so that it appears with a *benevolent face*.

Thus, everyone is made to believe that the cultural discourse is ultimately meant for the "care of the self"[422]. This model of taking care of the *self* is highly influenced by the value system of a culture, which intervenes in defining the *good* human being, to which the definition of *good man* and *good woman* is included. Discussing this *goodness* in relation to *gender*, it should be noted that there is no specific *criterion* to *define* the *goodness* of a man. The *schema* that has been developed for measuring the goodness of *man* is the common schema that stands for calculating the goodness of *human being* in general, because, it *seems* that to be *human* means, first and foremost, to be a *man*. May be this assumption is not correct; yet, in general, the discourse of *humanism* is often discussed using the word *man*. However, it is undeniable that the *talks* going on *in general* are anyway rooted within the discourse that operates through certain *generalizations*. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the above mentioned schema has not been applicable and adequate for women. This *inadequacy* is decided by the *nature of the sex* with which she is born. Here, my argument is that this definition and the image that have come up in identifying woman *as such* – good woman or bad woman – has strongly settled in the mind set of women as well. Consequently, their life and conduct is shaped according to those images that are set by certain definitions. This can be discussed with reference to the idea of questioning one's own self in order to take care of the self that is extensively discussed by Foucault in his *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*[423]. As Foucault points out,

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[422] This is also a part of the title of Foucault's book, *The Care of the Self – Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality,* 1986.
[423] Foucault, 1997

the concern of the self to *take care* of the self is an "ascetic practice"[424]. Here, he takes "asceticism in a very general sense – in other words, not in the sense of a morality of renunciation but as an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being"[425]. Woman, who is already a subject of the ongoing discourse that is *suspicious* about her, tends to take up such "ascetic practice" in order *to become* a good woman that is defined by the society with reference to certain qualities and conduct. In this *self-taken* practice, she attempts to *tame* her mind and the behavior to become better *as* a woman. There is already some model that is made to exist in the society for her to look up to, which mostly stands as *the ideal woman* in respective societies.[426] These ideals[427], mostly grounded on some religious elements, are the *telos* for women to achieve in order to *complete* their *womanhood* in the most admirable and pleasing manner. It is not only the pleasure and award that she can grant to her own self, but also to the society in which she flourished. Her dedication or the attempt to fulfill such a task is rewarded with the *social honor*, which can come to her *before* or *after* her death; may be, in certain cases, both before *and* after death. However, the responsibility of encouraging and training woman in this regard is taken not only by her family, but also by the education that is given to her through various kinds of institutions, such as schools, temples, churches, hospitals and so on. Foucault, in his *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, describes this project of education in terms of "discipline" – the act of disciplining – that is enacted to *tame* the individual as a subject. In fact, as mentioned above, such disciplining is appeared to be operative for the *wellbeing* of the individual; but, in reality, it is at work in order to defend the society rather than to care for the individual; because, at the end, "the society must be defended"[428]. However, in such a *setting*, it is not required for any of those institutions to be there to *invigilate* how the procedure of taming is taken up and followed by the individual. The implementation, continuation and invigilation of

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[424] Ibid, p. 282
[425] Ibid.
[426] See Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray in *French Feminists on Religion*, 2002.
[427] Mary, mother of Jesus in Christianity, Goddess Paththini in Hindu and certain Buddhist socities known to be the one who maintained her celibacy and faithfulness to husband, Goddess Venus known to be the goddess of beauty and love in Roman context, and so on are some of such ideals. However, many more examples in this regard would be brought with reference to Srilankan Sinhala Buddhist society that is to be discussed in the next chapter.
[428] Foucault, 1997, pp. 59 - 65

disciplining and disciplines are to be performed by individual itself with "technologies of the self"[429]. Technologies of the self are navigated by the individual with the very *awareness of the self*. These technologies move with the idea of "know yourself"; and, this necessitates one to be *conscious* to check *who* he or she *is*. However, the answer for the question has already been *given* by the society, and one is supposed to compare and analyze whether one *fits* into the *given* model, structure, image, definition, form and content. If it does not fit, but *contradicts* with what is *already given*, one is required to *alter* one's self according to *the given*. It is only then he/she will be accepted, included, and appreciated by the society. No society can escape from this tradition of *self-taming*. In early societies, it must have been done with the help of punishments that are physically performed[430]; but, as Foucault points out, in modern societies, the self-taming is more and more *invisible*. It is to do with one's own *mind*. However, my argument is, in such kind of self-taming tradition, it is not easy for a woman to come out from the mentality, which resists *breaking* away from the already *inscribed* images and definitions that have continued for longer period of time, manifesting them as *the* truth about women — universal truth. Even one tries to do so, she is not able to succeed in it, since the *self-questioning* with regard to right/wrong, good/bad, good/evil and so on keeps creeping into the mind, compelling her to be *judgmental* on her own self. In such a case, even within a matriarchal system, woman *cannot* be completely *free* from such norms and perceptions that are held by the society, though she appears to be more courageous in pushing herself to find space for her, when compared to the woman in a patriarchy. They must be ahead in winning *this* or *that* right to make their position more strong, stable and independent.

How are we going to discuss freedom in terms of winning rights? Is it a struggle that *can be* addressed and that is *needed* to be addressed in terms of rights — gaining rights and losing rights? Is it a problem of *having* something and *not having* something? All in all, can this discrimination or disparity ever be addressed *only* through making material provisions available? Taking the oppression and discrimination coming from the society with regard to women, the movement that is

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[429] Ibid, pp. 223 - 251

[430] Foucault, in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1991), brings a description about the way in which the punishment given to Damiens, the condemned, was performed. Also, he explains the nature of punishments given to the accused in early societies. pp. 3 - 31

lead by feminism has highlighted the essentiality of viewing woman in terms of *other than the given* — other than the way she is viewed by ongoing male dominant discourse. So doing, it has emphasized the necessity of *overthrowing* the subordinated position that is given to women, in order *to gain* a position that is *equal* to men. This *equality* that is demanded here is related to *position* that is given to women, to men, and that which is aspired by women in terms of *other than the given*. According to some feminists such as Simen de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, Julia Kristeva, the position that the woman aspires to achieve is a strong one: and, this strength, first of all, psychological, then, economic, political and social. Certainly, there is no asserted hierarchy among the last three – economic, political and social; yet, all of them emphasize some aspect of psychology in their analysis on women, though most of them attempt to break away from popular psychological models such as "Oedipal Complex", "Electra Complex" and so on. Judith Butler, in her *Gender Trouble*, brings a critique on those views that unfold within the discourse of feminism. According to Butler, demands that rise from the feminist discourse are centered on "women as the subject", wherein a certain category called "women" is highlighted.[431] In her view, "it would be wrong to assume in advance that there is a category of "women" that simply needs to be filled with various components […]."[432] The problem of considering women as a *category* is that it instates some universal basis to identify women *as such*, and, Butler views it as a "political assumption". Accordingly, she writes, 'the political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination.'[433] However, this critique does not seek to undermine the important role that is played by feminist movement in addressing the question of gender identity in the context of women. Also, it does not discard any attempt that has been made to win and protect the *rights of women* within the larger discourse of *human rights* in order to grant some freedom for the oppressed women. Instead, it tries to bring problematic of certain feminist ideology into the light in order to assert the *inadequacy* of the same in addressing the question of gender identity that unfolds

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[431] Butler, 1999, pp. 1 - 44
[432] Ibid, p. 20
[433] Ibid, p. 6

in various manners; because, feminist ideology itself functions as another apparatus of exclusion that operates within the mechanism of domination and subjugation. Thus, it stands as another *monologue*, which excludes men projecting them as the *absolute Other*; Therefore, feminism becomes another *closure* of the *Self*. While it is operative for the betterment of women, on the other hand, it constantly attempts to suppress, resist, exclude and define the space of men. In this function, it does not differ from the male dominant discourse, since it too aspires to gain the *same power* that is enjoyed by men. Hence, feminism *cannot* stay away from the "will to power"[434], though it initially emerges as a struggle of those who have become the *victims* of man's "will to power". Another significant aspect that can be seen in feminist discourse is its stand regarding *lesbianism* — another sexual practice that is going away from the schema of "naturalized heterosexuality"[435]. In this regard, it operates to assert that the *psyche* of a woman could be well understood by another woman rather than by a man, through which typification of feminine role within the domain of *heterosexual* relationships is contested and rejected. In the discourse of lesbians, according to feminist account, the *feminine subject* becomes a *universal subject*, for it stands as the ground where the masculine-feminine category is denied. Therefore, within lesbianism, there is a "loss" of feminity and, it is accepted by women while developing repulsion toward men.[436] Defining the lesbian, Simen de Beauvoir remarks, "[T]he lesbian, in fact, is distinguished by her refusal of the male and her liking for feminine flesh; but every adolescent female fears penetration and masculine domination, and she feels a certain repulsion for the male body"[437]. Consequently, Beauvoir views homosexuality as that which "can be for woman a mode of flight from her situation or a way of accepting it"[438]. According to Beauvoir's argument, in homosexuality, woman wills to change herself into a "passive object", for it is an attempt "to reconcile her autonomy with the passivity of flesh"[439]. So doing, woman seeks to cultivate the treasures of her feminity[440]. However, here, as Beauvoir points out, "To be willing to be changed into a passive object is not to renounce all claim to

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[434] Nietzsche, 1969, pp. 136 - 139
[435] Butler, 1999
[436] Beauvoir, 1953, pp. 424 - 444
[437] Ibid, p. 427
[438] Ibid, p. 426
[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid, p. 436

subjectivity: woman hopes in this way to find self-realization under the aspect of herself as a thing; but then she will be trying to find herself in her otherness, her alterity. […] Between women love is contemplative; caress are intended less to gain possession of the other than gradually to re-create the self through her; separateness is abolished, there is no struggle, no victory, no defeat; in exact reciprocity each is at once subject and object, sovereign and slave; duality becomes mutuality.'[441] Such kind of analysis on women and women's homosexuality that unfolds within the feminism does not seem to deny the idea of *identity*; it denies the identity that is already given by patriarchy. So doing, it promotes *another identity* that is constructed by women about themselves. Therein, women become those who have the right to talk about women, their desires, behavior, strength, whims and fancies, love and so on; because, they are aware of their nature *as* women. In this sense, when compared to the previous identity, the one that is constructed by women for themselves differs only in terms of form and the content. Thererfore, it is another attempt of manifesting *this* or *that* identity believing in the *possibility* of *owning* and *claiming* for *an identity*. Hence, the struggle of feminism is not to break away from all kinds of identities, but to win a *sovereign* space with its own specific identity, so that women can speak about them in terms of "We", while seeing men – the opposite and the opposition – as "They". The existence of *We* and *They* is undeniable in the configuration of gender identity even within the framework of feminism. May be it does not try to enter the main discourse of men defining and typifying men into such and such identity. But, it definitely operates as a different and a powerful discourse that stands for taking care of *their own* identity and space, ensuring the emancipation of women. In that sense, though they are two different discourses, feminism can also be compared with post-colonial scenario that operates with regard to two major categories – "the Orient" and "the Occident", "They" and "We" – that is extensively discussed by Edward Said[442]. In both the context, what can be seen is the *Self-same* discourse and language that is closed *within*, though they are identified as the *discourse of the Other* which is identified within the *concept* of the Other[443]. Nonetheless, the idea of the Other that

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[441] Ibid.

[442] Said, 1985

[443] In his essay "Violence and Metaphysics" that appears in *Writing and Difference* (1978), Derrida brings a critique on the concept of the Other, that is written with the Capital letter. According to his argument, there cannot be a concept of the Other, because, other cannot be taken in terms of a noun, adjective, or a pronoun. As he shows, it is a substantive, "but a substantive which is not, as usual, a

appears in such discourses are different from that which is discussed in the philosophies of Foucault, Derrida, Cixous and Butler. Here, it seems to be a *categorical Other*, in which case other too owns an identity *as* Other. And, this discourse of the Other is another discourse of the Self. It posits itself within the discourse that is viewed in terms of *I* and *You*[444], which operates through seeing, reading, analyzing, and defining. Moreover, it functions as a device which tries to go *against* the *given*; it stands majorly for rejection, negation, annihilation or exclusion. Subsequently, it becomes another world that comes to manifest another *system* of knowledge and another *order* that provides the guide lines *how to read — how* to read a text.

However, if there is such intension of rejecting, annihilating, or resisting the *given*, this intension stands as another ideology that intends to exclude or suppress the other. Then, can there be a passivity, tolerance or ethics even in the approaches claimed to be *non-violent*? Hence, the questions to be raised in this regard are: should we *yearn* for *another* system, order, structure or form just *to retaliate* for what has already happened? Should we try to make someone be *responsible* and *accountable* for the current scenario? Is it a matter of seeking to *go against* what is *given*? Is it an attempt to bring already existing discourse to a complete hault, so that a fresh and new discourse can be thought? Are we able to engage ourselves in a *new* thinking while borrowing thoughts from past? If we do so, would not this *new* thinking carry the traces of what has already existed? In addressing the question of identity that unfolds with regard to various aspects, the importance should not be given to any attempt that operates with the intension of going *against/for* certain ideology or discourse; instead, it is needed to focus on an effort that tries to emerge *breaking through* the thick canon of the *given* order that rules individuals and their thoughts, demanding them to identify themselves with *this* or *that* identity. However, the effort to be taken would not go to *this* or *that* direction; it is neither *front* nor *back*; nor is it that which can be

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species of noun: neither common noun, for it cannot take […] the definite article. Nor the plural." pp. 104 - 109

[444] Levinas, in his *Totality & Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969), brings the idea of I and Thou presented by Martin Buber showing how his (Levinasian) discourse of the self and the Other differs from that of Buber. pp. 68 – 69. However, according to Derrida in "Violenece and Metaphysics" that appears in *Writing and Difference* (1978), Levinasian notion of I and You that unfolds in the context of the self and the Other still remains within the tradition of metaphysics of presence, owing to which Derrida analyses Levinasian ideas in terms of "transcendental violence" in which he explains the idea of violence related to light. pp. 79 - 154

read as going *against*: also, it is not advancement from *primitive* society to *modern* society. Rather, it is an *opening up* of the *closure* to *outside* - the outside of what is *given*; hence, it has no particular direction, because *outside* is not a direction, but a *space*. Accordngly, what is demanded here with reference to gender identity is the urgent necessity of opening up the *given* gender discourse and its identity that appears with the *choice model of two*, "either/or" — *either* man *or* woman; *either* male or *female*.

However, this demand would *not* stand for claiming *another identity*; it is a demand to *not to* search for one particular identity[445]; also, it is a demand to *welcome* whatever that appears *as* identity so that *nothing* is rejected, suppressed, or denied as *false*, *wrong*, *evil*, *abnormal*, *artificial*, *inauthentic*, *blasphemous* and so on — socio-cultural epithets that are based on certain code of *ethics* that is constructed and defined in terms of virtue. Such *unconditional* opening up is essential not because we are able to account for all what is coming on our way, but because we are *not able to* be accountable for anything that is *to come*. It is so, since we are *unaware* of *what* is *to come* or what we are *exposed to*. We are unaware of *what* future holds for us. Here, future is that which comes from *outside*, of which *no predictability* is *possible*. This particular unawareness cannot be dealt by being *self-conscious*. Neither it can be taken care of applying "technologies of the self", nor can it be *avoided*, since it is not within the domain of the self, but in the *other*. This other is not *categorical*; it cannot be viewed, grasped or analyzed in terms of a *concept*. It does not have even a face that is described by Levinas in his philosophy of the Other. Neither can it be associated with *light* nor with *darkness*. It is *unpredictable*, *undecidable*, and *unperceivable*. This exposure of the self to the other is a context where the above quoted question in relation to touching is applicable: "when our eyes touch, is it day or is it night?"

The discourse of the other puts self-identity in *trouble*, because it constantly transforms the self. Further, these transformations are not perceivable; they are not empirical. Also, they cannot be accounted with *reason*, *logic* or *truth*. Questions of *why*, *what*, *who*, *where*, *when*, *which* and *how*, which arise regarding such *metamorphosis* due to the exposure to the other, cannot be supplied with an *adequate* answer; because, it is a *movement* that is *constant*. In Derridian terms it is a "play or a

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[445] For a better understanding regarding this idea, please listen to Judith Butler in 'TPP2014: Judith Butler, When gesture becomes event', published on Oct 11, 2014 on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuAMRxSH--s (accessed on 17.05.2016)

"game ", "where whoever loses wins and where one wins and loses each time"[446], in which case, nothing can be considered in *absolute* terms. Such absoluteness – as *absolute self* or *absolute other*, which is a *totality* – in the context of *being* is not possible, since the *being* is all about the *relation* between the self and the other. Hence, there cannot be any fixed identity in terms of gender that can be placed as *male* or *female*. Also, there cannot be any *appropriate* term *to place* being within the matrix of everyday language that functions as the language of *this* or *that* identity, because, being *cannot* be *appropriated* to anything or anyone *as such*. Then, neither woman nor man can be appropriated to anything or anyone *as such*, depending on their *sex* that is marked biologically. Therefore, the gender identity that is highly operative in everyday discourse is yet another *construction* made available for the *easy* governance. It functions as a *device to avoid complexities* and *chaos* that any system has to deal with. Then, gender identity is another system and a structure that operates not for the benefit of the individual, but for strengthening and confirming the successful, durable, unchallenged and unshakable power-center and its clarity and efficiency in function. Yet, how far can such a system exist? How long can it maintain its power unchallenged, unquestioned and unshaken?

In addressing these questions in relation to gender identity, Butler's views are of greater significance. According to her, "[G]ender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time. An open coalition, then, will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purpose at hand; it will be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure."[447] If gender is thus unintelligible, the ongoing idea of intelligibility regarding gender is a *cultural construction*. It is within that cultural matrix through which gender identity has become a *truth, possibility*, and a *compulsion*; in that, only certain kind of gender identities are *allowed*. What is allowed is considered *as legal*, *lawful*, *appropriate*, *ethical*, *healthy*, etc. So long as those identities stay *within* the *given* structure or the system, the tendency of the structure running into *risks*, due to complexities and confusions, is far less. Thus, more the gender identity is meticulously and carefully defined, fixed and imposed,

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[446] Derrida, 1973, p. 151
[447] Butler, 1999, p. 22

more the continuity and the safety of the structure is affirmed. Further, it is not a matter whether the particular system is *patriachal* or *matriachal*. However, any such system feels threatened not by what is allowed within itself, but by what is *not allowed* within it. As discussed earlier, there are multiple and parallel discourses within a society, and their existence *cannot be negated*. Yet, they are/can be *prohibited* by the mechanism of power. Accordingly, certain identities "in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which practice of desire do not "follow" from either sex or gender"[448] *cannot* exist. Here, explaining the term "follow", Butler remarks, "[F]ollow in this context is a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape of the meaning of sexuality. Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of gender identities fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility; they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within the domain."[449] According to the culturally established and regulated meaning of sexuality, it is the gender identity that is based on *heterosexuality* that has gained the acceptance in socio-cultural and legal terms. It is the *gender* that follows from *sex*; it is the *desire* that follows from *sex*. Hence, the institution of marriage revolves around this discourse of heterosexuality; and, it defines the sanctity of love and desire. Thus, the idea of desire, love and sex that is discussed in the cultural mileu is essentially *hetrosexualized*. Moreover, it is assumed that the *hetrosexualized desire* is *the natural* desire that the human being possesses, and it is through this assumption that the *heterosexuality* is *naturalized* and *the nature* is *hetrosexualized*. This *naturalized* hetrosexualty has become a *compulsion*, which is to be followed in constructing ethics and norms that are to be practiced by the subject. As far as the function of this model is concerned, no one in the society is exempted from it. It is the cultural law that prevails for both men and women, in which case neither male nor female is allowed to adopt another sexual practice which is *other than* or *different from heterosexuality*. The question of gender identity especially appears when the *naturalized hetrosexual* discourse cannot tolerate *other* sexual practices such as *homosexuality and bisexuality*. In such a context, more often, even the discriminations, which appear in patriarchal or matriarchal systems of heterosexuality, would yet be tolerated, neglected or adjusted by men or women, so

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[448] Ibid, p. 24
[449] Ibid.

long as their bodies find the desire and pleasure *within* the *given space* of so called *natural heterosexuality*. Problems of adultery, prostitution, abortion, rape, etc. would yet be taken care of by implementing some model of discipline and punishment, since they are belived to be the possibilities that could occur within the *hetrosexualized desire*, because all these become a part of *the identity* of the *natural hetrosexual practice*. Contrastingly, as far as *homosexuality* is concerned, it is *that* which is *impossible*. It *cannot* exist, and this impossibility is majorly determined by the assumption that suggests *homosexuality* is *not* natural. This assumption projects homosexuality as *negative* and *repulsive*.

Homosexuality, being such an *unintelligible* practice, does not fit into the given definition and image of *the ideal* man, woman and human. It stands away from the *idealized sex* of *heterosexuality*. However, the problem of gender identity again becomes more problematic and complicated when another kind of sexual practice that is called *bisexuality* enters into the picture. *Bisexuality*, which is neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality, is yet another desire. These unexplainable and undefinable desires cannot be tackled by any system that operates in and through identities, because they are desires that cannot be identified as *this* or *that*, for desire keeps moving and changing — a *play* of desires. The question regarding social acceptance of such desires arises when the particular desire is made to undergo through the reading and interpretation of "panoptican"[450] culture, wherein it would be subjected to identify itself with the prevailing order of the society. Yet, what is more important here is not the acceptance, but the constant *emergence* and *existence* of such practices within the society *despite* all these orders that prescribe *what* is *possible* and *what* is *impossible* in life and living. When the system of identity *declares* possibilities and impossibilities that are based on the *assumed proper* and *mobilizes* the individual for reaching that *proper*, which is also the *ideal*, on the other hand, the above discussed practices of sexuality keep appearing through *overcoming* the so called *proper*. So doing, it constantly *de-constructs* the *given proper* asserting the fact that there is no any proper *as such*. On the other hand, if there is a desire or a demand for *the proper*, that is a proper which is "*in-finite*". Subsequently, there can only be a "différance" in relation to *proper*, which makes *every* appearance and *every* practice *proper* to being, through which everyone becomes irreducibly *singular*. That

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[450] Foucault, 1979, pp. 195 - 228

properness that is brought through the play of "differance" cannot be fixed due to its constant moving. It cannot be named and defined as *this* or *that*, fully and completely, for it cannot be *appropriated* through language, because language itself is nothing but a play of differences. Therefore, each appearance and each practice that unfolds within the context of gender continues in marking *the failure* and *inadequacy* of the *givenness* and demands for something *other than given* which would *suffice* for *now*. However, the failure or the inadequacy does not exhaust the given system completely; instead, it necessitates for the system to seek *another* system to capture that which *cannot* be captured — *being*. It is this never ending *play* and the *force* of "différance" in being and language that has been making cultures, societies, systems and laws survive[451], throwing them into tensions, constantly.

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[451] Analyzing the function and the possibility of law, Derrida, in his *Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"*, (2002b), brings out the way in which new judgments are made and issued by judge where he says that "law is deconstructable". Accordingly, possibility of law is possible as law is always deconstructed each moment making or issuing new judgments. Even it is true that the judge depends on or goes through previous cases and judgments when the time of making new judgment comes to him or her, the moment he makes a new judgment he or she breaks the order of linearity. It is the moment of new interpretation of previous judgments, wherein new judgment always bring the death of the previous judgments. Thus, law does not rest on anything but on themselves. Explaining the very nature of law, Derrida writes: "since the origin of authority, the founding or grounding, the positing of the law cannnot by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground. This is not to say that they are in themselves unjust, in the sense of "illegal" or "illegitimate". They are neither legal nor illegal in their founding moment. They exceed the opposition between founded and unfounded, or between any foundationalism or anti-foundationalism." p. 242

RELIGION, NATION AND GENDER: FREEDOM IN THE CONTEXT OF SRI LANKAN SINHALA BUDDHIST WOMEN

4.1   Sri Lanka: "Save the Name" [452]

Despite the above discussed play of *différance*, there is a demand for identity in order to recognize being *as such*. It is on the basis of this recognition, through which *this* and *that* identity is constructed, that the system of knowledge and truth about/of being is declared. Consequently, *to identify* means *to know* and *to know* means *to identify*. This recognition and knowledge, which is resulted in a procedure[453], has legitimized the existence of cultures, nations, religions, races, etc. in the form of *as such*. Accordingly, they are perceived as entities. These entities are further identified, localized and focalized in and through the names with which they are named. Hence, all kinds of communities that appear *in* the world and appear *as* the world in terms of nation, religion, race and so on has got a name — proper name[454]. Thus, the world is full of such names; also, *play* of such names; interaction and inter-action of such names. For example, names of nations such as British, American, Indian, etc., names of religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and so on, names of race such as Hindu, Muslim, Jew etc. can be mentioned. However, the idea that is intended to note here is that it is through the names that these entities are constructed, identified, perceived, viewed and maintained. Thus, the name of a particular community becomes the ambassador, which presents and re-presents that community and its identity. Therefore, the name of a community always bears a greater significance. However, it is believed that the name – name of a community - has its own identity; and, the people who are inhabited by this name and who inhabit the name through constant use and reference while participating in it aspire to maintain this identity. So doing, they try to *save the name* — save the name for future, through which the future of the name is fore-decided, forecasted, planned and programmed *in*

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[452] This sub-title finds its reference to a chapter titled "Sauf le nom" in *On the Name*, a text written by Derrida, 1995a, pp. 35 - 85

[453] Foucault, 1973, pp. 125 - 165

[454] See Derrida in his essay "Des Tours De Babel" that appears in *Acts of Religion*, 2002b, pp. 104 - 133

advance. On the other hand, this identity is considered as that which is identical to itself. Therefore, it is an identity that can be possessed by its own self. It is this *identity* that is expected to be grasped and carried ahead by the people. The problem that arises in this regard is can there be such identity that is identical to itself? Is there any community that is capable of identifying its own nature, essence, or identity *as such*, so that it could own and project a well-defined image, form and meaning of its own? Hence, taking the idea of name, naming and identity into consideration, the present chapter intends to address the idea of violence in the context of nation, religion and gender keeping Sri Lankan society as the backdrop.

At the very outset, the above mentioned phrase, Sri Lankan society, is problematic in terms of its meaning and reference, since it poses certain unavoidable questions such as: Which Sri Lankan society? Whose Sri Lankan society? When and where is Sri Lankan society? However, these questions do not necessitate answers, but demands the opening up of language that presents something called *Sri Lankan* society. The phrase is constructed by joining the two words: Sri Lankan and society. Here, there are at least two things that are brought together, and they are, *linguistically*, two nouns; because the adjective *Sri Lankan* is based on the noun *Sri Lanka*. Yet, they appear together not majorly with the support of the conjunction *and*, which, according to Derrida, is capable of bringing two different or mis-matching things together, but through the suffix [-*an*] added to the noun Sri Lanka, forming its adjectival form *Sri Lankan*. Thus, on one side, there is something called *Sri Lankan*, while, on the other side, there is a thing called *society*. Further, the adjectival form, *Sri Lankan*, is used to describe the noun *society*, according to which, the society is presented as *Sri Lankan*. Then, as next step, one could pose another series of question: *what is Sri Lankan* in the society that is named, identified and described as Sri Lankan society? Is there anything in that society which *makes it Sri Lankan*? Is there anything that can be recognized *as Sri Lankan*? If there is any, then, more importantly, *what is that* which makes it Sri Lankan? Is it identifiable? If so, is it a thing or a person; in other words, is it *who* or *what*? Moreover, if it is a person or a thing, where does it exist — inside or outside the land called Sri Lanka or both inside and outside Sri Lanka? How are we going to see, identify, define, locate, present and represent this *Sri Lankan* — the Sri Lankan*ness* of a Sri Lankan or Sri Lankan*ness* of that society? Is it – the Sri Lankan*ness* - something intrinsic to Sri Lankans?

The word *Sri Lankan*, which is both noun and adjective, is derived from the noun, Sri Lanka – a country and the name of the country – proper name. Accordingly, the word Sri Lankan[455] (with the suffix "an") shows, presents or denotes some idea of relativity toward the name Sri Lanka and the country, Sri Lanka. It presents the idea of belonging, possessing, dwelling, etc. Hence, the term *Sri Lankan* becomes the marker of the nationality that is held by those who are born in Sri Lanka or those who share some Sri Lankan origin. However, before engaging in a discussion that questions certain tradition that has been dominant in shaping the so called Sri Lankan society, it is important to have a brief understanding about the island, especially its geographical location and its social stratification.

Sri Lanka, an island situated in Indian Ocean, is located just below India. Subsequently, willy-nilly, Sri Lanka and India are neighbors. This neighborhood, especially India as Sri Lanka's neighbor, is important since it has been playing a pivotal role in shaping socio-cultural, economic and political spheres of Sri Lanka. Taking a quick look into the ethno-socio stratification of Sri Lankan society, there are three major ethnicities: Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims. Apart from these three major groups (major in the sense of the number), there are other ethnicities, namely *Veddas* and Burghers. Here, *Veddas* are believed to be the indigenous people of Sri Lanka, and most of them are, by now, assimilated to Sinhalese and Tamils. Burghers are the Eurasians, who have descended from the Portuguese, Dutch and the British. However, these ethnicities can further be categorized according to their religions. Accordingly, Sinhalese are basically identified as Buddhists. Yet, it is important to mention that there are Sinhalese who are known to be Christians. Especially, most of those who live along the Western coastal belt are considerably Christians in terms of their religion. Tamils are known to be Hindus, though there are also Tamil Christians. Many Tamils from the fishing communities are known to be Christians. The Muslim follow Islam and the Eurasians are mostly Christians. The indigenous people, *Veddas*, are either Buddhists or Hindus; it is so, due to the above mentioned assimilation. However, apart from these ethno-religious and political stratification that could be

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[455] Sinhala word for the English word *Sri Lankan* is *srilankeya* or *srilankika*. Here, following the morphological rules in Sinhala language, it can be said that both the words mentioned here bear *srilanka* as the stem, and [*-eya]* and [*-ika*] are suffixes that are added to it. These two suffixes are used to construct the adjectival form of the particular noun and they carry the idea of possessiveness, belongingness, ownership, dwelling, etc.

seen in the context of Sri Lankan society, the other important stratification has to be seen in relation to caste, which is predominant in Sinhala community and Tamil community. These stratifications have formed Sri Lankan society as a *whole*. Accordingly, anyone from Sri Lanka will bear a name, which refers to a particular community of ethnicity or religion. However, the present chapter does not go into a deeper analysis regarding the configuration of Sri Lankan society. Instead, it attempts to see how the same society is constructed with regard to gender. One of the major arguments intended to be placed here is that though the society consists of such many categories and layers due to the differences in respective ideologies, all these communites share a *common* ideology regarding gender. In other words, the idea that the society holds with regard to gender – male and female – does not vary or differ significantly, when compared to major differences that strongly appear in the society with regard to ethnicity, religion, language, caste, and class. Hence, what is this gender discourse or discourse of gender that is *shared together* (here, it is important to note that there are those who do not share or do not want to share the common or ongoing treatment of the society regarding gender), *in spite of* the other ethno-politico-religion and economic differences? Also, does this shared ideology affirm the fixity of some notion of gender in a way that it never changes its form, figure, image or meaning? The idea of gender here is drawn upon the generalized idea that the society holds with regard to men and women. In other words, it is important to see how the man and the woman are understood, defined, depicted, conceptualized, and placed within the Sri Lankan society; and, in this perception, how above mentioned categorical differences are neglected or uncounted in a manner that whole society produces *momologue* in analyzing women. Consequently, it produces some essence of Sri Lankan men and Sri Lankan woman and that particular *essence* is believed to generate the *essence* and the *spirit* of Sri Lankan culture and its society. Thus, it seems to believe that there is a certain Sri Lankan*ness* that is to be found among all men and women, who are identified as Sri Lankan(s).

As discussed above, the problem with the Sri Lankanness *as such* should not be (also cannot be) reduced to the sphere of gender, since it is difficult to think of such feature that is *common* to *every* citizen of Sri Lanka, despite the *identified categorical differences*. On the other hand, since the particular kind of Sri Lankanness expected in the context of gender is together-shared by all such communities, it is

necessary to highlight the problematic of this commonly-held notion. Moreover, this ideology regarding gender, especially on women also could bring out politics of some socio-economic, political and religious aspects that have been running through the concept of Sri Lankanness that is governed by *dominant* discourse of Sri Lanka.

Therefore, in addressing and analyzing the question of gender, it is better to approach it not from the side of the gender discourse, but from that of dominant discourse, through which the Sri Lankan society is known to be found, known or recognized. And, the *very* ideology regarding gender, especially on women, is already a construction and a production of that dominant discourse. Hence, at first, it is important to inquire what this dominant discourse is, since, as Foucault says in his *The Order of discourse*, driving force of the society is governed by the "dominant discourse", according to which the mindset of the society is shaped.

According to the written history, it is a *heterosexually-oriented-Sinhala-Buddhist-masculine* discourse that has dominated the society for more than two millenniums. Here, the phrase, *written history*, is referred to the history that unfolds basically in Sinhala great chronicle, known as *Mahavamsa* written in the 5th or 6th century CE. The *Mahavamsa* is significant and popular, since it is believed to present and represent (*though such a thing is not possible in practical terms*) the *entire* history of Sri Lanka, of Sinhalese, and of Sri Lanka as a land that *belongs* to the Sinhalese. However, leaving aside the question of taking this written history as *the* history, therein, *the* truth *of* and *about* Sinhalese, Sri Lanka and so on in order to be addressed later in the work, the focus should be directed toward the historical account that is offered by the chronicle, which has been playing a major role in constructing the above mentioned discourse and, subsequently, making it the dominant one. On the other hand, many scholars from various disciplines, especially of the social sciences and humanities, have referred to this great chronicle to legitimize what they present in their research works on socio-cultural-politco-economic history of Sri Lankan society. Giving such an authority to the chronicle, Nandadeva Wijesekara, in his book *The Sinhalese*, notes that '[T]here were some scholars and there may be some even today who have attempted to discredit the authority of the ancient chronicles like Mahavamsa. […] Western scholars of great repute have confirmed the authenticity of

the Mahavamsa by positive proof from archaeological finds.'[456] Due to such claims especially made by scholars, the chronicle *Mahavamsa* has gained a significant position in all spheres of Sri Lankan Sinhala society. Moreover, it has become the unavoidable text in understanding the current that runs beneath the present-day politics of the Sri Lankan state.

4.1.1 *Mhavamsa* and the Sinhalese Origin

According to *Mahavamsa*, the Sinhalese originate from the legendary king Vijaya, who had migrated from North India to Sri Lanka in 6th century B.C. Since Vijaya was an Aryan king with reference to whom that the Sinhalese find their *origin*, Sinhalese are *also* considered as an *Aryan* race, which "followed an Aryan way of life"[457]. Here, following the story given by the *Mahavamsa*, the author of *The Sinhalese* attempts to show how this tradition that has passed on to Sinhalese from the Aryans does not find its relation to Dravidian cultures spread in the Southern part of India. He notes, 'Vijaya and his followers maintained and developed close marital, social and cultural relations with their erstwhile kinsmen of the Sakyan race. Nothing was heard of the people living in the South Indian region. No mention is made about their cultural attainments. The Sinahalese adopted and developed Sakyan political systems, social organizations and cultural values on the basis of Aryan Hindu Culture.'[458] According to the above analysis given by Wijesekara following the *Mahavamsa* (because his work finds its reference to *Mahavamsa*), there are, at least, two significant facts that support the argument of the present work, which highlights the dominant discourse as that of the dominant race called Sinhalese: 1. the first group of migrants to Sri Lanka had come from Northern India; 2. the Hindu culture on which their value system and social organization is based. The former leaves no room for any Dravidian trait to be found in Sinhalese, so that the Sinhalese can be recognized as a *separate* ethnicity or race differentiated from any Dravidian race, especially, the Tamils. And, this idea has undoubtedly prepared the ground for the recent war that *visibly* remained for more than three decades. Hence, it necessitates Sinhalese to be identified as *non-Dravidian*

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[456] Wijesekara, 1990, p. 22
[457] Ibid, p. 21
[458] Ibid, p. 25

Hindus. But, would this kind of reading – *Sinhalese as non-Dravidian Hindus* - be preferred by those who *want to identify* themselves as *Sinhalese*? Certainly, it would take, hypothetically though, Dravidian traits away from Sinhalese, and it would be preferred and admired by those who boast about and yearn for a *pure Sinhala* identity, had the problem been merely that of ethnicity and formation of nation in relation to that ethnicity. However, the problem is far more complex, since it is also connected to religion.

In general, majority of the Sinhalese are considered to be Buddhists. And, the rest of Sinhalese, who do not follow Buddhism as their religion, are Christians or Catholics. As far as the Sri Lankan Sinhala society is considered, it is rare to find Sinhalese following Hinduism or Islam as their religion. On the other hand, the fact that some Sinhalese becoming Christians or Catholics cannot be considered as a very old tradition; it is a recent phenomenon, which finds its beginning somewhere in the colonial times (which would be discussed in detail later in the chapter). Hence, before Christianity, according to the *Mahavamsa*, all the Sinhalese had followed Buddhism as their religion.

However, though the *Mahavamsa* and the scholarly works produced by some scholars like Wijesekara, who consider the chronicle as the *storehouse* of *truth* about Sinhalese and Sri Lankan history, declare that the Sinhalese are descendants of Aryan prince Vijaya, none of them lets Hinduism to become the religion of the Sinhalese. Although the Aryan culture is given such prestigious status, the thread which could have easily connected Sinhalese with Hinduism is nowhere to be found. Hence, does not this *strange* and *sudden leap* cause some doubt here? What could possibly be the reason for that? Here, since nothing can exactly be said regarding this particular point, we will have to conjure a hypothesis for the present analysis, in order to understand some complex under currents that always lie in writing history[459], and it is here that the author of the *Mahavamsa* becomes significant.

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[459] E. H. Carr, in his *What is History?,* (1961), Explains how the historian's decision affect in constructing history, where he highlights the decision making done by the historian in selecting some events among many as historical. Accordingly, he writes as follows: 'The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides which facts to give the floor […] It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Caesar's crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all. The fact that you arrived in this building half an hour agon on foot, or on a bicycle, or in a car, is just as

Who wrote the *Mahavamsa*? In which language was it written? These two questions evoke two significant ideas: writing and translation. However, according to historical account given *on* the *Mahavamsa*, the author of the text is a Buddhist monk who is known as Mahanama. Keeping *Pali Attakatha* as the source, he wrote the *Mahavamsa* in Pali language, and later it was translated into Sinhala, and also to English. Sinhala language to which the text was translated is different form the present-day Sinhala language. It is a different type of Sinhala, which is known as *Old Sinhala*, and it cannot be understood by present-day Sinhalese[460]. Therefore, it is not only a translation from Pali to Sinhala, but also a translation from *old Sinhala* to *new Sinhala*. However, let's withhold the problem of translation that undeniably emerges in this context for later investigation, while focusing the attention on the text and its author.

The author of the text being a Buddhist monk is very significant in building the hypothesis which would be brought in to see how Sinhalese, happened to be descendants from Aryans in their genealogy[461], became Buddhists. However, as far as the text is concerned, author being a Buddhist monk *should not be a problem*, for a text can be written by *anyone*. Yet, here, the text and the author become more important when *what* is written in the text is taken as the *ultimate* truth about Sri Lanka, Sinhalese and their history: when it becomes *decisive* in the context of Sri Lankan history; when the history of Sri Lanka is *appropriated* to the one in *Mahavamsa*. In other words, when the content of the text becomes the driving force and the ground on which knowledge and truth about Sri Lankan history is based, it is important to investigate the socio-cultural and political discourse within which the particular text has been constructed. And, that is where the author being a Buddhist monk becomes the central problem. Hence, it demands the necessity of understanding the politics of writing the particular text.

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much a fact about the past as the fact that Caesar crossed the Rubicon. But it will probably be ignored by historians.' 2008, p. 11

[460] Old Sinhala which carries plethora of Sanskrit and Pali words is taught to students in government schools, especially those who prepare for the tenth standard examination and those who take up Sinhala language and Literature as a subject under the stream of Art, for university entrance examination.

[461] For a descriptive argument with regard to this Aryan myth which constructs Sinhala identity, also Sinhala Buddhist identity, please see *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politcs and Violence in Sri Lanka*, Tambiah, 1992

However, the hypothesis is that the monk must have deliberately cut down the link that could have connected Sinhalese to Hinduism, and it is so not because he found some problem with Hinduism; instead, it could be due to the political problem that would come along if Sinhalese are found to be the followers of Hinduism. The political problem here is that it would necessitate the Sinhalese and the Tamil to be considered *together* with reference to their religion, because religion of Tamils is anyway Hinduism. Keeping such a space for them to share the same religion would have created the ground for the two ethnicities to share some *common* traits, and it would necessitate to justfy both sides with regard to the claim for the ownership of the island. It would have linked them – the two ethnicities - together in a manner that Dravidian and Sinhalese becoming *blood-relatives*. And, creating such a connection would certainly risk the purity of the *pure* Sri Lankan Sinhala dominant discourse. Therefore, the monk might have compiled the text leaving no room for such a possibility. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the monk had followed the story that came down to him through *Pali Attakata* when he wrote the *Mahavamsa*; therefore, there is no such personal politics involved in his project of writing the history of Lanka. But, how would such an argument hold the water when it is questioned in terms of politics that involves in *taking decisions*? Having ancient Sri Lanka experienced invasions by different Dravidian kings who came from southern part of India and destroyed lot of Buddhist temples and monasteries, the *then* society lead by Sinhala Buddhist kings, who, very often, used to seek advices and guidance given by Buddhist monks in ruling the country, must have determined to protect its space while operating against the influence of Dravidians. Therefore, while compiling the work, the monk must have been in a mission to *take care* of Sinhalese discourse as a *pure* Sinhala and *pure* Buddhist discourse. Thus, through the *Mahavamsa*, he must have tried to present a refined version of Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka.

However, the paradox that lies within the text or in the history that is generated by the text cannot be ignored. As far as the origin of Sinhalese is concerned, there is no controversy in accepting the North Indian ancestry as the root of the Sinhala race. And, according to that legendry ancestry, though Sinhalese are known to have a *beastly* origin, since king Vijaya's grand-father happened to be a

lion, Sinhalese seem to be proud about this *beastly* ancestry[462]. It *might* also be the reason for Sri Lankan national flag to bear the symbol of a *lion* holding a sword. If not, *why* only a lion among many other animals manages to get such a respect? Why not a tiger, elephant, horse or any other animal taken as the symbol of the national flag? However, this beastly origin does not seem to matter to Sinhalese at all, though beast is, in general, considered to be lower in its status when compared to man. Instead, what seems to be a grave matter for them is to find the so-called ancestral origin somewhere from South India, in relation to some Dravidian lineage[463]. This strong aversion towards Dravidian lineage with regard to Sinhalese's origin can be seen in Wijesekara's following lines: 'Two factors may have prompted certain scholars to presume that later immigrants at least the lower orders may have had some Dravidian connections. One may have been the place name of Madura from where Vijaya got down king Pandu's daughter as his bride. […] The other factor may have been the presence of Dravidian words in the Sinhala language of later times. Vocabulary is no criterion to determine language affinities. The structure is the determining factor. Also Orissa and South Bengal of ancient times had no Dravidian elements. The supposed Dravidian element in the eastern stream of early immigrants is not supported by epigraphical, physical, psychological, social or historical evidence. […] In Vedic literature, ancient Buddhist literature or Mauryan records the kingdoms below the Narbada river find no mention at all. […] Therefore, it would be illogical and unreasonable to argue from the presence of Dravidian elements in the Sinhala Language of later times that some of the earlier immigrants belonged to Dravidian stock.'[464] The argument for Sinhalese's Aryan origin thus happily and proudly connects them to some beastly origin, and they are happy to be recognized along with beasts, but *certainly* not with Dravidians. Is not this notion racial and ethnocentric? Does not it suggest that, for Sinahalese, beasts are better and higher *than* Dravidians — Tamils? So doing, has not it ended up projecting beasts *as* Aryans or Aryans *as* beasts? Then, have we been heading to a discourse where beasts, bestiality and animality is praised and elevated, while undermining the discourse of

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[462] The Mahavamsa (Sinhala), 2003, pp. 32 - 33

[463] In this regard, see following links for detailed arguments which are very recently posted:
http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130329/jsp/nation/story_16723882.jsp#.VT3aRE3NmIU,
http://www.khazaria.com/genetics/sinhalese.html,
http://www.sangam.org/2011/08/Aryan_Theory.php?uid=4446 (accessed on 27.04.2015)

[464] Wijesekara, 1990, pp. 27 - 28

humans or man? Or else, have we realized some problematic in the human discourse? Certainly, the author of the text, the *Mahavamsa*, also the other scholars, who follow the same ideology, must not have thought that the ideology could thus lead to such a disastrous end. (Here, I do not mean to create any hierarchy between beasts and humans in a way that humans are kept in the highest position. What I intend to mean through employing the pharse 'disastrous end' is referred to the general notion that prevails in human discourse regarding animals or beasts, where some negative idea is developed in relation to beasts, especially due to some danger and disaster that they could carry because of their unpredictable behavior.) They must not have realized the very writing through which they prove their Aryan origin would beare and become the very disaster of what it attempts to create or construct. In other words, they must not have realized that the particular construction carries its own deconstruction within.

Another paradox is that though Hinduism is not considered as the religion of the Sinhalese, the *Mahavamsa* does not deny the influence of Hindu culture in shaping Sinhala culture. Yet, it is not *just* Hindu culture, but, as Wijesekara writes, it is the "Aryan Hindu culture". However, if entire Sinhala race follows Aryan Hindu culture sharing Hindu values, how can they be exempted from becoming followers of Hinduism? Does it try to mean that religion is not a part of culture? If religion is not a part of culture, how do we find the line that separates them from each other?

Before the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, the religion that was practiced among those who followed king Vijaya could probably be some form of Hinduism, because king Vijaya must have been a follower of Hindu religion (if not a follower, he must have been a son to those who followed some form of Hinduism during then society). Hence, Hinduism could be the religion to which Sinhalese were exposed, at first. It is only almost after three centuries from Vijaya's arrival in Sri Lanka that Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka. Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in 247 B.C., which is 3rd century B.C. Describing how Sinhalese spread as a community within this time period that lays in between Vijaya's arrival and arrival of Buddhism, Wijesekara writes, '[T]he Sinhalese occupied the island as a single ethnic group for well nigh 700 years. In the 3 rd century B.C. the Sinhala population embraced Buddhism and the entire population continued as Buddhist for nearly a 1,000

years.'[465]   As he describes, the religious transformation that took place with the introduction of Buddhism is "a peaceful religious revolution", and, '[T]he result was the birth of a social and cultural revolution. The moral standards conformed to Buddhist norms. Karma (deeds) and rebirth (punarbhava) formed the basis of righteous living. The attention of the Sinhala Buddhists was directed to good deeds beneficial to the present life and life after death.'[466] It is from this point on ward that the Sri Lankan history seems to revolve around Sinhala Buddhist discourse, projecting Sinhalese as the owners and caretakers of the island, also of Buddhism. This claim has been made due to Sinhalese becoming the majority among other ethnicities, especially when compared to Tamils in Sri Lanka. Consequently, Buddhism, which is the religion of majority, has become the dominant religion in the country. Moreover, after Vijaya, the country had always been ruled by Sinhala kings, except during the time when pre-colonial Sri Lanka was invaded by some invaders from Southern India. However, with the arrival of Buddhism, Sinhala kings had recognized Buddhism as the religion of the state. Here, it is important to mention that, according to the *Mahavamsa*, it is to Sinhala king Devananmpiyatissa, the then king who was ruling Sri Lanka, that Buddhism was introduced, and it came down to him as a *gift* from his friend, Ashoka — the emperor. This gift was sent through Ashoka's son Mahinda, who was a monk, and few of his disciples. Accordingly, Buddhism was firstly communicated to the king of the country, and it is with the king's recognition and patronage that the Sinhalese started following Buddhism.

Certainly, Buddhism is a different religion that emerged in India, while Hinduism was still dominant in the society. Therefore, it is incontestable that when Buddhism came to Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan society had already been influenced by some Hindu religious tradition that must have been practiced by Vijaya and his friends. Hence, considering Sinhalese society, though there is a shift from pre-Buddhist society and its religions to a Buddhist society, is it possible for us to think that the Sinhalese completely left Hindu religion and its practices while embracing Buddhism? If there is such a possibility, it is possible only in a discourse or a project that attempts to construct some *absoluteness* — absolute closure, absolute totality, absolute separation, absolute purity, absolute sovereignty, etc. In this regard, the

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[465] Ibid, p. 28
[466] Ibid, p. 30

Mahavamsa attempts to be precise in legitimizing the purity of Sinhala Buddhist discourse as *solely* Buddhist in its socio-cultural and economic spheres. It appreciates works of kings who attempted to guard Buddhism while making Sri Lanakan society a *Buddhist society*. While presenting and representing the history of Sinhalese, the text has sketched an image of Sinhalese and appropriated it to the wider image called Sri Lanka. As a result, the name Sri Lankan or Sri Lanka has been travestied that its image and meaning that are expected to produce is nothing, but that of Sinhalese and Buddhism. Sri Lanka and Buddhism are thus appropriated to Sinhalese and vice versa. Here, it is important to underscore the phrase - *the sense that is expected*, since the *Mahavamsa* is in a project of creating such a strong Sinhala Buddhist discourse, which has not only the power *to rule*, due to Sinhalese being the majority, but also that which has the right to rule *others*, since they are the people to whom the land should belong: also to whom the guardianship of Buddhism has been entrusted[467].

The chornicle's account stands as *both* witness and creator/doer of making the Sri Lankan tradition, culture, and society *as* Sinhala Buddhist. So doing, on the other hand, the *Mahavamsa* has gained the upper hand in deciding the *essence* of Sinhala*ness*, which is also the Sinhala Buddhist*ness*. It has become the reference in defining, re-defining and understanding the history of Sri Lanka, Sinhalese, Buddhism, Tamils, Hinduism and the history of colonials and colonialism.

However, after taking a long detour, let's return to the question which necessitated us to travel toward the history of Sri Lanka that is constructed by the *Mahavamsa*. The question that is intended to discuss here is the question of gender with special reference to the question of women: that too, specifically the question of Sri Lankan Buddhist women. The current chapter explores how male dominant Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist discourse has influenced in constructing and shaping the space of Sri Lankan women, especially Sinhala women. Further, it would discuss how certain texts like *Mahavamsa* have strongly involved in this *project*. The above discussion has explained how Sri Lankan Buddhist society and discourse became *the* dominant discourse that is capable of controlling all the other discourses that have existed there. Then, the next effort is to explain *how* this Sinhala Buddhist discourse *becomes* another male dominant ideology. And, this analysis would also show how

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[467] The Mahavamsa (Sinhala), 2003, p. 34

impossible for us to think of a pure-Sinhala Buddhist culture and society since it is *already* affected and contaminated by Hindu culture and religion. Consequently, it would discuss how all these religions, despite their ideological differences, come together as a *brotherhood* that practices their power *over* women.

4.2   Women and Sinhala Buddhism

Though many centuries have passed since the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Buddhism still continues as the dominant religion in Sri Lanka. On one hand, constitutionally, Buddhism is given the foremost place; on the other hand, it is followed by more than 60% of the population in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Buddhism has been the dominant religious ideology in Sri Lanka, despite the influence of many years of European colonialism that introduced a different religion, namely Christianity. The belief of the Sri Lankan Buddhists projects Buddhism as a completely different religion, when compared to many other religions operative in the society. Some Buddhists would want even to use the word *philosophy*[468] instead of the word *religion* to refer to Buddhism, and they tend to do so assuming that the word *philosophy* carries some prestige, when compared to the word *religion*. So doing, they opine that Buddhism always stands at the top-most position among worldly religions. This idea is justified through referring to Buddhism as a religion, which is open to everyone coming from all directions; also, that which maintains no hierarchy in terms of caste, class, race or gender. In Buddhist point of view, the society can have only four categories: *Bikku* (monks), *Bikkuni* (nuns) *Upasaka* (male laity) and *Upasika* (female laity), and this division holds no any socio-cultural, economic and political discrimination. And, Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhists would like to highlight this fact especially when they assert on the significance of Buddhism for the betterment of Sri Lankan society. This idea will be discussed at a length when the chapter lays down the discussion on protestant Buddhism and Dhrmapala's agenda of nation building.

Nonetheless, though the general notion held by Sri Lankan Sinhalese suggests that the *version* of Buddhism that they follow *as* the original and the *authentic* Buddhism, it is not so, practically. All the more, it *cannot* be so: because, firstly, there

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[468] Gombrich & Obeysekara, 1988, p. 14

is no such Buddhism that can be identified as *pure*: secondly, there were some religious practices, beliefs and faiths that were already operative in Sri Lanka *prior* to the arrival of Buddhism. In this context, influence of Hinduism on Sri Lankan Buddhism *cannot* be rejected. And, this argument can be supported with the beliefs and practices that the Sinhala Buddhists follow, worshipping gods. In understanding the idea of worshipping gods that prevails in Sri Lankan Buddhism, the analysis provided by Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeysekara in their work *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* is of greater importance. According to their point of view, the kind of Buddhism, within which people are *also* found to be worshiping gods, is "Traditional Sinhala Buddhism"[469]. Buddhist theory or doctrine does not give any significance to worshipping gods. Instead, it highlights on certain principles, and those principles themselves should be taken as a practice of everyday life in order to understand the *chaturarya satya* (four noble truths). And, it is not a practice that can be followed *together* in a group, but *individually*, where every individual is made responsible for his or her own act. Thus, it demands a strong self-consciousness in controlling one's own acts and emotions, for which understanding *dhamma* is made important and necessary. Therefore, it has made clear that worshiping gods, also worshiping Buddha has no any impact on finding solutions for the pain of cycle of rebirth ("*sasara duka*"), which revolves around birth, suffering and death. However, as Obeysekara and Gombrich note, '[T]raditionally Sinhala Buddhists believe in gods (and magic); yet, as monks have repeatedly told us, for them "belief in gods has nothing to do with religion"[470]. Then, from where has it come to "Traditional Sinhala Buddhism"? From where did they come to know of such practice?

Worshiping gods and idols is a major part of Hinduism. Also, it is a religion of of *multiple* gods. Among these gods, Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Skanda, Krishna and goddess Durga are prominent, also popular in everyday life of a Hindu devotee. Now, interestingly, some of these gods, especially Vishnu, Skanda, who is known as *Katharagama deviyo* (god *Katharagama*) among Sri Lankans, and Durga along with some other gods appear in Sinhala Buddhist pantheon, are also worshiped by Sinhala

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[469] Ibid, p. 15
[470] Ibid, pp. 15 - 16

Buddhists. Further, among these gods, Vishnu[471] is very significant since, according to the *Mahavamsa*, he has been entrusted to survive Buddhism in Sri Lanka.[472] Thus, Vishnu becomes the most important god in Sri Lankan Buddhism, and he is important not because he is one of the powerful among *Hindu gods*, but because he is accepted as the guardian of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, certainly not by so called god *Sakra*, but by the *Mahavamsa* or; in fact, by the Buddhist monk, Mahanama, and the tradition to which he belonged. However, Obeysekara and Gombrich associate the practice of worshiping gods, which is prominent in Traditional Sinhala Buddhism, with cosmology. According to them, every society whichever adopted Buddhism has associated with a rich and complex cosmology. 'The cosmologies of all traditional societies tend to equate the natural order with the social order and both with the moral order; and probably none have done so more thoroughly than that of classical India, in its Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain variants. Sinhala Buddhism has inherited that classical Indian cosmology and added only minor local modifications.'[473]

Now, this is an important point. From one side, there is *Teravada* Buddhist tradition in relation to which the Sri Lankan Buddhism is recognized. On the other side, there is a "Traditional Sinhala Buddhism" which entails certain practices, beliefs and rituals that are connected to Indian cosmology. Obeysekara and Gombrich seem to justify this influence to be *only* a cosmological one? Certainly, as they rightly say, it is believed that it is required to worship gods in order to take care of one's life that can be influenced by cosmological influences, which, sometimes, can be fatal. Especially, such ideas could be found earlier in Sri Lankan village societies; but, by now, these ideas and beliefs have travelled towards cities. Nevertheless, the above mentioned two authors bring forth their discussion on spirit religion while finding "a main doctrinal link between Buddhism and the spirit religion"[474]. Here, it is important to note that this particular link that they find between Buddhism and the sprit religion is certainly to do with idea of death and re-birth, where spirit is considered to remain *after* death. And, this belief in some remnants *beyond* death certainly takes the side of Buddhist philosophy, but not the religion called Buddhism that has been differently

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[471] For further knowledge, please see the detailed account provided in *The Buddhist Visnu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture,* by John Clifford Holt, 2004.
[472] Gombrich & Obeysekara, 1988, p. 18
[473] Ibid, p. 17
[474] Ibid, p. 18

adopted by different communities in the world. Therefore, the above reading of the two authors is majorly a philosophical reading on Buddhist philosophy. But, the problem here does not lie in their claim on spirit or the cosmological influence. However, there is no denial regarding the argument put forth by the above two scholars, since both of them underscore the existence of certain *outside* beyond this side of life and the world, which creates and causes tension in everyday life of being. The probelmatic point here is how gods involve in this context and come to play *in between*. Here, there are different kinds of *in-betweenness*: one is in-between people and god; secondly, it is in between or among people, spirits and gods; the third is in between people, Buddha's teaching and god. Among these, the first two are different and they need to be placed with regard to different religions and traditions. Our interest lies in the third, since it is related to what is going on in Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist context.

How are we going to see the involvement of gods in the life of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhists? How do these gods come in between Buddhism and Sinhala Buddhists? Under the sub-heading *Authority in the Cosmos*, Obeysekara and Gombrich describe the number of gods and the nature of their roles, especially in the context of Kandian Kingdom. Accordingly, 'Visnu shares the overlordship of Sri Lanka with three other deities: the territory is partitioned among them. The idea that there are four guardian deities is found in many societies, because there are commonly considered to be four main directions in the compass. What distinguishes the traditional Sinhala Buddhist pantheon is the structure of the system. Thus, although there have always been four such guardian deities (often called the Four Warrant Gods), their precise identity has not been stable through space and time. A set of Twelve Gods below the Four Gods in the hierarchy derive their warrants from them. Again, the enduring feature is the number; the personnel vary. These gods are less powerful and less moral than the Four. […] While most of the higher gods historically derive from India, the Twelve Gods are (whether in myth or fact is hard to determine) deified local lords (*bandara*).'[475] Name of those Four Gods are Vishnu, Saman,

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[475] Ibid, p. 20

Katharagama, and Vibhishana, and they are majorly regarded as the guardians of Buddhism in the island.[476]

As far as Buddhism is concerned, it is another religion or a philosophy that was born in particular time period of Indian history, which is also a part of world history. And, it is difficult to find instances where one religion, especially those, which are considered as major and popular ones, such as Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, was entrusted to another religion for its survival. But, according to the historical account given by the *Mahavamsa*, Buddha has entrusted Buddhism to the hands of a God. Is not this situation highly paradoxical? Buddha, who emphasized '*uppada*, *tithi*, *bhanga*' (which means something coming to exist, its existence, and its destruction or death) in his teaching, seems to have gone out of his own philosophy or dhamma, just because of this *entrusting job* that he had done at the moment of his death. It would certainly be so, if we are to believe the version that is provided by the *Mahavamsa*. In fact, this claim of *Mahavamsa* casts Buddha and his religion as a *self-centered* or *self-same* ideology. Contrarily, Buddha wanted to detach precisely from any such self-centeredness and it is for which that he presented his *dhamma*. On the other hand, why would Buddha appoint any god as caretaker or trustee of his *dhamma*? Nevertheless, this does not mean that Buddha had denied any existence of gods. The intended idea here is that Buddha made his *dhamma* as *the* most powerful, due to which it does not need any protection from anyone or anything. No one has to protect *dhamma*; instead, *dhamma* protects those who follow it – "*dhammo have rakkathi dhammachari*"[477]. Hence, there is no need of any guardian to take care of Buddhism. Therefore, highlighting the necessity of worshiping gods for their contribution in protecting Buddhism, the *Mahavamsa*, by default, seems to have become the manifestation of the following day-today utterance that is popular in everyday Sinhala society: "*buduntath deviyangema phitai*", which means "may god protect Buddha"[478].

However, according to above discussion, it is clear that there cannot be any particular involvement of gods in Buddhism for the very sake of Buddhism — neither

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[476] For a detailed understanding regarding these gods, please see http://www.lankalibrary.com/myths/gods.htm (accessed on 06.05.2015)

[477] http://triplegem.iwopop.com/Dhammapada (accessed on 17.05.2016)

[478] Generally this utterance can be heard when something happens in wrong direction or in reversed manner.

they are required to protect Buddhism, nor are they important to be worshiped and followed. Despite this fact, it has been impossible for Sinhala Buddhists to come out from their beliefs on gods. On the other hand, the *Mahavamsa* and its followers are in an abortive effort of dragging gods, especially Vishnu, into Buddhism, claiming it to be Buddha's will and decision. Certainly, the *Mahavamsa* has to do so precisely because it would otherwise challenge the prevalent ideology in Sri Lankan Sinhala Society that brags Sri Lanka as *the only* country, where *pure* Buddhism is practiced.

This fact necessitates us to think that Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhism is undeniably influenced by Hinduism. The Sinhala Buddhist ideology and its practices do entail Hindu religious and cultural practices, and that can be justified with the support of above discussion regarding worshiping gods. This stance would *dismantle* the *hypothetical* purity of Sinhala Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka. The impossible purity of Sinhala Buddhism due to its *mixture* with Hinduism not only challenges the sovereign space of Sinhala Buddhism, but also the sovereignty of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.

However, despite socio-political and religious attempts that are taken to maintain this ideological purity of Sinhala Buddhism, the everyday life of people in the same society continues to practice worshiping gods *along with* Buddha. Here, the term *along with* gives some sense of juxtaposition of gods and Buddha in everyday religious practices, which would suggest that there is no hierarchy *as such* that could be seen in *following* Buddha and *worshiping* gods. However, it does not mean to say that people do not find any difference between the two. The difference that they discover revolves around the *effect* that they experience in *following* Buddha and *worshiping* god, and this effect is basically *confusing*. In this regard, it is worth referring to the discussion presented by Obeysekara and Gombrich, since it is capable of depicting the complexity behind the two terms: *following* and *worshiping*. Accordingly, the two authors write, "Buddhism is still seen as the only true soteriology: gods, magic, and other agencies may provide benefits for this life, but only following the way taught by the Buddha will finally solve the miseries of worldly existence.'[479] Hence, Buddhism appears as the means of salvation — *nirvana*, and it is a long route to be taken by the individual with utmost consciousness

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[479] Gombrich & Obeysekara, 1988, p. 29

regarding his or here own acts. It does not offer any *quick* solution for any of the worldly matters; it is a practice that has to be taken up by one's own self. But, as Obeysekara and Gombrich have rightly mentioned, Sinhala Buddhists too expect benefits for the present life. These benefits are basically based on certain demands and expectations, where people find the necessity of worshiping gods, since they believe that gods are quick in replying to their questions, grievances, demands and commands.[480] And these questions, requests and so on made by people are very often related to various kinds of domestic matters, such as serious health issues, delay of marriage, fertility, jobs, theft and so on. Though this relationship constructed by people between god and them appears to be almost like *a deal* where certain giving and receiving takes place, those who are deeply involved in it do not really find any need for logical or rational thinking in order to justify their belief or faith. They believe in it because they feel those respective gods are really responding to their prayers, and nothing can absolve this strong belief. In this regard, not even Buddha's teaching or *Dhamma* can intervene here, *effectively*. This unshakable stance held by majority of Sinhala Buddhists can be exemplified with reference to a specific religious movement that was lead by Gangodawila Soma – a Buddhist monk from Colombo area. He is a recent figure who came up with a severe resistance towards worshiping gods by Sinhala Buddhists. He brought valid arguments to support his movement, which condemns those Sinhala Buddhists who believe in gods. His preaching and discussions were transmitted by various Sri Lankan television and radio channels. Such programs usually happen on full moon *poya* days[481], which are

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[480] It is important to see how Sinhala language casts different styles in the context of prayers. Some usage of language makes the prayer appear like a plea, and that can be exemplified as follows: *kiyanu menavi*! (please tell!), *karanu menavi*! (please do!), *rakinu menavi*! (please proect!). Here, the word '*menavi*' makes it sound like a formal, but submissive request. But, there are some styles which sound almost like a command or a demand, such as . '*kara denu*!' (do it!), *kiyanu*! (say it!), *maranu*! (kill it!) etc. and *karapiya*! (*do* it!), *kiyapiya*! (*do* say!), *marapiya*! (*do* kill!) etc. In the case of former – (*kara denu*) etc. the word '*denu'* stands as a marker used in making demands, and this type of usage in Sinhala language is very common in protest demonstrations where people shout slogans. However, the word '*denu*" can yet be seen as a part of making formal requests, yet *not* submissive. But, in the case of second, where the suffix [-*piya*] is used along with the infinitive, the language sounds like a command that is made with some threatening power. As far as the usage of such type is concerned, it is mostly used in attempts of addressing and reaching gods who are known to carry lot of evil power especially in relation to taking vengeance and cursing evil on wrong-doers. Goddess Kali, and god *kadavara* are some of the examples for those who are known to be harmful in extreme sense. For a detailed account in this regard, please see Obeysekara and Gombrich. However, language of prayers is a very significant in understanding the way in which Sinhala Buddhists, also Sinhalese in general sense, which includes even Sinhala –Christians/Catholics, believe, respect and worship gods that of all kinds.
[481] *Poya* day is a public holiday in Sri Lanka. For more details regarding the significance of Sri Lankan

very significant for Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhists. In his ideology, the monk demands the removl of gods' idols from the main shrine of the temple, since the shirne is meant *only* for sheltering Buddha's idol.[482] However, the present chapter does not to go into a detail discussion on Gangodawila Soma's *project*.[483] Rather, it emphasizes how most of Sinhala Buddhists *could not* come out from their belef in gods, despite such *awareness projects* taken up by Buddhist monks. There can be instances where people must have taken idols of gods away from the main shrine and re-locating them in a separate space, yet *within* the temple premise itself. Also, there are many temples where these *devalayas* (the abodes of God(s)) are already built separately just next to the main shrine, in which Buddha's idols are kept. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that such configurations are implicit application of *exclusive* mechanism of Sinhala Buddhist dominant discourse that is operative while resisting other religions, especially Hindu religion, which is the religion of *the political enemy* of the Sri Lankan state.

Nevertheless, this effort seems to be *superficially* succeful, since it has managed to keep idols of Hindu gods away from the space of Buddha and his teaching in order to maintain a *pure* Sinhala and *pure* Buddhist discourse. Moreover, despite all the foreign invasions in history, especially those which marked the entry of Western colonialism, it has been able to maintain this strong saying in controlling the overall scenario of Sri Lankan society. However, there is one aspect that shakes this strong ground of purity and autheiticity manifested by Sinhala Buddhist ideology and it is the aspect of gender.

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poya days, please visit http://www.srilankaheritages.com/significance_of_poya.html (accessed on 17.05.2016)

[482] In many Buddhist temples, idols of Buddha and of gods are kept together within the main or same shrine, and monk Soma highly objected and criticized this aspect while advising people to take those idols of gods away from the main shrine which is considered as the space of Buddha.

[483] For a better understanding regarding the Sinhala Buddhist nationalistic project led by Gangodavila Soma and his objection and resistance regarding worshiping gods by Sinhala Buddhists', please refer to the essay titled "Resisting the Global in Buddhist nationalism: Venerable Soma's Discourse of Decline and Reform", by Stephen C. Berkwitz, appeared in *The Journal of Asian Studies Vol. 67, No. 1 (February)* 2008, pp. 73 – 106.

4.2.1 *Religious* Gender

Consdering the prevailing view regarding gender, especially regarding women, the so called Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist religious ideology is neither *so* Sri Lankan, nor *so* Sinhala, also not *so* Buddhist, (if there is any such Sri Lankan*ness*, Sinhala*ness* or Buddhist*ness* exists and, many believe in possibilities of such existence). It is because it cannot be separated from the ideology that has *already* existed in the society – the wider society, which is certainly wider than the insular Sinhala Buddhist society; also that is the society *before* Sinhala society, also *before* Sinhala Buddhist society. Hence, what is that society and ideology from which the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist ideology could not find a complete break in order to create its own Ideology regarding women? This question necessitates the urge of referring back to ancient Indian society, since Sinhalese are believed to be the descendants from Indo-Aryans, and they had adopted *Aryan way* of living.

If Sinhalese followed "Aryan way of living", it is undeniable the influence that *Aryan way* made in shaping the cognition and perception of Sinhalese regarding various aspects of life. In any case, following the *Mahavamsa*, Wijesekara had testified that the value system that the Sinhalese adopted is *Aryan*. Hence, the basis of the Sinahalese knowledge system is *that* of Aryans, and that is a system constructed by *male dominant Hindu Brahmin tradition*. Accordingly, it is the patriarchal Hindu Brahmin perception that had been decisive in defining good and evil, right and wrong, truth and false, justice and injustice, holy and unholy, etc.[484] And, Buddhism emerged in ancient India as a challenge to the ongoing Brahminical teaching and doctrine. It

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[484] In her essay titled, "Equality and Inequality in the Religious and Cultural Traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism" that appears in *Equality and the Religious Traditions of Asia*, edited by Regi Siriwardena, Nirmala S. Salgadoo explains, referring to Rg Veda, how women were treated in Vedic society, where woman was identified to have weak mental capacity, due to which they were considered as those with whom "there can be no lasting friendship: hearts of hyenas are the hearts of women." However, as she points out, despite this lack in her mental capacity, women were allowed to participate in religious rituals. Yet this condition changes negatively, when Brahmins' ideas regarding religious rituals, especially related to sacrifice become rigid. Describing the situation of women at that time, she writes, 'The place of woman in this period was considerably lower than before. She was now considered to be in the same category as the sudra, the dog and the crow. […] In the Brahmanic texts we may say that woman was considered inferior to man, and that she was impure in religious terms. She was recognized as necessary for the procreation of sons, who, unlike daughters, were capable of and indispensable for performing funerary and other rites, which ensured the happy after-life of the father and ancestors.' 1987, pp. 55 – 57. Also, Nalin Swairs's book The Buddha's Way to Human Lbertation: A Socio-historical Approach offers a similar kind of analysis on how women were discriminated within the Aryan-patriachal tradition that feeds on Brahmanic texts. 1999, pp. 160 -175

attempted to *dismantle* certain Brahminical teaching which had been operative to suppress and exclude, basically, the low caste and women. Thus, it is said that those who were down trodden under the Hindu-Brahmin ideology in then society could find some recognition under the shelter of Buddhism as it was open for everyone. It highlighted social equality and justice in its philosophy. Also, according to Buddhist literature, which carries events and examples to show how Buddha's teaching helped especially those who were ill-treated in the society, Buddhism has been the way through which the vulnerable sections of the ancient Indian society could find emancipation. Now, the problem here is whether the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist society could come out from that male dominant Hindu-Brahmin perception held regarding women. If they have managed to come out from the same, up to what extent have they been able to do so? It is in relation to this question that the role played by Sinhala Buddhist literature in constructing and shaping up the perception regarding Sri Lankan Sinhala women becomes significant.

As noted above, Sri Lanka received Buddhism as a gift sent by the emperor, Ashoka. The then Sri Lankan king, Devanampiyatissa, who was a friend of Ashoka, received the *gift of religion* as a *gift of friendship*. As *Mahavamsa* shows, before presenting the gift to the king, Mahinda - the son of the emperor, who had become a monk and had attained the mental-status called *arhant* - had asked few questions from Devanampiyatissa, in order to check whether the king is *adequately* intelligent to comprehend Buddhism, since it is difficult to be comprehended by everyone. Having convinced and impressed by the way in which king answered the questions, Mahinda decided to present the gift that was sent by the Emperor. However, the Buddhism that is popular among people in everyday context is different from the Buddhist philosophy or *dhamma*. There are at least two basic reasons for it: one is dhamma is written in Pali language and Sinhalese are not able to read and understand Pali. Therefore, at the very outset, there is inaccessibility to *dhamma* due to the problematic of language. Secondly, it cannot easily be comprehended, since it carries a deep analysis about complexity of being in relation to desire, and this analysis is known as *abhidhamma*. Hence, within this limits, what people perceive as Buddhism in their everyday life is *another version* of Buddhism, which cannot be judged or evaluated as *exact* and *pure* Buddhism. It is rather a Buddhism that needs to be seen

in terms of *more* or *less*[485]. In this context, idea of Buddhism that prevails in Sri Lanka has to be discussed in juxtaposition to the idea of translation that is presented by Derrida. However, keeping aside this idea of translation in relation to Sinhala Buddhism for later discussion, first, let's see *whose version it is* and *how* influential it is, especially in constructing the space and the image *for* Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist woman.

Sinhala Buddhist temples and Buddhist monks play the major role in communicating Buddhism to Sinhalese. Therefore, Buddhism, Temple and monks together have become one strong institution that is closely connected to people in their everyday life. It is the monk who preaches people regarding what Buddha had taught in his *dhamma*. He[486], very often, attempts to bring the simplified version of Buddha's teaching, and the language that he uses here is not Pali, but Sinhala. Besides the role of the monk, Sinhala Buddhist lterautre too plays a pvotal role in communicating Buddhism to people.

Considering how Sinhala Buddhist literature has involved in constructing the image of women, and, thereby constructing an image for Sinhala Buddhist woman, the role played by *Pansiya Panas Jatakaya* is undeniable. Therefore, the present discussion attempts to see how *Pansiya Panas Jatakaya* constructs the image of women[487], while asserting on the impact of Hindu Brahmin patriarchy on Sinhala Buddhist society in building its perception regarding women. *Pansiya Panas Jatakaya* entails around five hundred odd number of *jataka* stories, which depict Buddha's previous births. This book which is written in Sinhala is in fact a translation of *Jatakatta katha*, written in Pali. However, it is believed that there is no *one* translator

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[485] The usage of "more or less" asserts the difficulty of understanding, saying or translating anything in terms of *exactness*. This idea is explained by Derrida, in his *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971 – 2001*, (2002a) and in his essay, "The Truth That Wounds" in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetic of Paul Celan*, (2005c).

[486] Here, I use the third person singular pronoun *he,* since Buddhist monks are dominant and popular in Sri Lanka, in terms of social recognition. Though there are Buddhist nuns, their recognition by the religion, as well as the society is considerably poor For a detailed account in this regard, please refer to *Women Under The Bo Tree: Buddhist nuns in Sri Lanka*, written by Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, (1994).

[487] In this regard, the essay written in Sinhala by Ranjit Perera under the title "*Jataka kathave Niyojanaya vana striya: Stri swabhavaya yanu…..?*" is of greater importance. The Sinhala title can be translated into English as "*Woman represented in Jathakas: The Nature of the woman is …?*". It presents a critical perspective on *Jataka* stories which depict women negatively, while explaining how such stories influence on shaping culture and its perception. The essay appears in *Pravada*, 1994, Vol. 6, (February – March), pp. 7 - 25

who translated all the stories that are entailed in the original; the translation seems to be done by several translators since it carries different styles of language[488].

4.2.2   Women: Form and Content

Majority of *Jataka* stories depict women *pessimistically*. Accordingly, women are evil *by their nature*, because they are *decadent*, *seductive*, *unfaithful*, *stupid*, *talkative*, *cunning*, and so on. Therefore, she needs to be kept under the *vigilance*; also men should not trust her company, for she can bring the disaster to men. Thus, the story teller warns men *to be aware* of women. Not only that, but also he exemplifies how Buddha himself saw this evil nature of women, therein condemned them[489].

Now, how does this affect in shaping the perception on women? Here, one can argue that if such stories affect in constructing an image or identity regarding women, all kinds of stories that have appeared would be able to play a significant role not only in constructing the image of women, but also in *de-consturcting* the same. Certainly, it should be so, *conceptually*; but, practically, it does *not* happen. As an example, different stories that emerge through fictions, movies, plays, etc. have not *always* been successful in constructing a *new* or *different* image or de-constructing the *given* image regarding men or women, religions, communities, races, ethnicities and so on. This difficulty is resulted due to the strict *closures* that have been prevailing through continuity of certain traditions. Hence, the above mentioned idea on women communicated through *Jataka* stories is also such a *traditional idea* that has been prevailing since pre-Buddhist society of patriarchy. But, the controversial fact here is that *how* this idea, which existed before the emergence of Buddhism, seeped into Buddhist literature, when Buddha himself had helped in redeeming women from the discriminated social condition to which thery were confined by Hindu Brahmins;

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[488] Writing the introduction to *Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha* Buddhist monk, Veragoda Amaramoli has mentioned this idea.The text that is used for the present study is published by Sri Lanka Prakashaka Samagama, Colombo 11 and printed by The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taiwan. 1981, p. i

[489] Following stories are some of the examples for such stories which depict women negatively: *Asatamantra jatakaya*, a*nddhabutha jatakaya*, *Kosiya jatakaya*, *Shri Kalakanny jatakaya*, *Sambula Jatakaya*, *Chulladhanurdhara jatakaya*, *Maha palobhana Jatakaya*, *Bilala Jatakaya, khandina Jathakaya* . Ranjit Perera has especially taken up some of these *jatakas* for his work "The woman represented in Jataka story: The feminine-nature is…..?), which appears in *Pravada*, 1994, *Vol. 6*, (February – March), pp. 7 – 25

when Buddha himself had preached no one is wrong or right by birth, but by the action?

However, if we are to believe the image that the *jathaka* story writer presents regarding women, on the other hand, it necessitates us to question Buddhist philosophy; that too not in relation to the stance that Buddha had regarding women, but his philosophy that emerged as a critique of all kinds of social discriminations that range from caste to gender. Certainly, some scholarly works focused on Buddha's position regarding women have showen certain instances that suggest Buddha himself had discriminated women[490]. This fact has been under the discussion especially in relation to the viewpoint that Buddha held regarding women becoming Buddhist nuns. The resistance that he held regarding the request made by Prajapathi Gothami, who happened to be the foster mother of Buddha, seeking the permission for women to become *bikkuni* (nuns), and the rules and regulations that he had imposed on them when he finally permitted the request clearly show certain asymmetry in Buddha's idea regarding gender equality[491]. This particular instance posits Buddhism along with the other major religions in the world which share the *fraternized democracy* that is extensively discussed by Derrida in his *Politics of Friendship*.[492] According to Derrida, the globally operative fraternized democracy is a mechanism that excludes women: in case it includes women, they are not included as sisters but as "modest" sisters or women who can *become* to be considered *as* brothers[493].

Nonetheless, though Buddha had a strong resistance regarding women becoming *bikkunis*, finally, he granted the permission for the same. Yet, this approval came up with some conditions, which necessitate *bikkuni* to be *under the hand* of

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[490] For a descriptive account in this regard, please see some of the works mentioned bellow: *Sri Lankan Woman in Antiquity (sixth century B.C. to fifteenth century A. C.)*, written by Indrani Munisinghe, (2004): *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist nuns in Sri Lanka*, written by Tessa J. Bartholomeuzs, (1994): "Equality and Inequality in the Religious and Cultural Traditions of Hinduism and Budhism", written by Nirmala S. Salgado, which appears in *Equality and the Religious Tradition of Asia*, by Regi Siriwardena, (1987): "Jataka kathave Niyojanaya vana striya: Stri swabhavaya yanu…..?" (which can be translated into English as "The woman represented in Jataka story: The feminine-nature is…..?), written by Ranjit Perera, which appears in *Pravada*, 1994, *Vol*. 6, (February – March), pp. 7 – 25: Religion and Feminism: "A Consideration of Cultural Constraints on Sri Lankan Women", written by Thalitha Senevirathne & Jan Currie, which appears in *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Darlene M. Juschka, (2001).
[491] See the essay "Equality and Inequality in Hinduism and Buddhism" by Nirmala S. Salgado, in *Equality and the Religious Tradition of Asia*, by Regi Siriwardena, 1987, p. 63
[492] Derrida, 1977
[493] Ibid, p. 274

bikku (the monks)[494]. Another instance that exemplifies Buddha's attitude regarding women is the dialogue that happened between Ananda and Buddha. That goes as follows: "'Pray Lord, what is the reason, what is the cause why women neither sit in a court [of justice] (*sabha*) nor embark on business (*kammanta*), nor reach the essence of the deed? (*kammojan*)'. The Buddha replies: 'Womenfolk are uncontrolled, (kodhano) Ananda, womenfolk are envious (issuki) Ananda, womenfolk are greedy (macchari) Ananda, womenfolk are weak in wisdom (dupanno) Ananda. That is the reason, that is the cause why womenfolk do not sit in a court of justice, that is the cause why womenfolk do not embark on business, do not reach the essence of the deed.'"[495] Therefore, it cannot be said that Buddha had wanted the position of women to be on par with that of men. This asymmetry is certainly connected to the power of patriachy that subordinates women. However, the above mentioned few instances of gender discrimination do not certainly permit us to reduce Buddhism to be another institution that strongly opposes women's freedom. Yet, no argument can deny Buddha's *negative* idea regarding women, and that idea finds its immediate connection to Hindu Brahman tradition.

According to *jataka* story teller, the negativity attached to women is not based on her actions, but on her *nature*. Her actions are read as the reflection of her *nature*. Therefore, woman is evil and it is *intrinsic* to her. However, story telling is a fascinating way of communicating Buddha's message to lay people. Lessons of patience, determination, effort, genuineness, truthfulness, faithfulness, etc. are easily communicable through these stories. And, they are narrated or read out in temples especially on *poya* days when the monk preaches devotees who *follow* five precepts or eight precepts; they are also narrated in some other especial occasions that take place in individual houses when a family offers alms to the monks *in the name of* an ailing, aged or dead person. Moreover, such stories are also included in school text books, especially in those that are recommended for studying Sinhala language and literature, also for studying Buddhism as a subject, which is mandatory to be followed by all Buddhist students until their tenth-standard exam. As well as, they are bed-time

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[494] See Nirmala S.Salgado's essay "Equality and Inequality in Hinduism and Buddhism" in *Equality and the Religious Tradition of Asia*, by Regi Siriwardena, 1987, pp. 63 – 64 and the essay "Religion and Feminism: A Consideration of Cultural Constraints on Sri Lankan Women", by Thalitha Senevirathne & Jan Currie, which appears in *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Darlene M. Juschka, (2001).
[495] Quoted in Salgado, 1987, p. 62

stories narrated to children by elders. Another important fact to be mentioned here is that these stories also appear in the form of poetries, plays, movies or *thoran*[496]. All such mediums spread these stories among people and each of them is didactic. They highlight the necessity of *taking care of one's life* through *taking care of one's mind*.

Considering these stories perfunctorily, they appear to be *mere* stories which praise Buddha and his *dhamma*. Therefore, one could argue that these stories have no other significance or function beyond the religious domain, since they actually appear only in any of above mentioned religious contexts. Their appearance in school text books is an exception. Yet, it is an exception *only if* the education given in Sri Lanka, especially by its government schools is not taken as that which is influenced by *the* ongoing religious ideology. On the other hand, if we say that those stories have their significance *mostly* or *only* in the religious domain, it also suggests that religious domain exists separately from other domains. If it exists separately, there should not be any influence of religion on shaping the other domains and vice versa. In a way, it is true that we aspire to experience the separate existence of religion with no influence from other spheres; and, this aspiration appeals for a *pure* religion. But, considering the worldly-function of religion, it *cannot* be confined only to religious domain. It certainly affects other spheres and it is influenced by other spheres, in the sense that religion, culture, politics and economic domains leak into each other "like flvours when you cook"[497]. And, it is at this point that the function of above mentioned *jataka* stories in Sinhala Buddhist religious domain becomes complex and crucial. They become other than *mere* stories, certainly not in terms of content, because content remain the same, but in terms of the *effect* that is generated by them. Now, the

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[496]*thorana* (plural form is *thoran*) is a structure that is made out of woods. Such thorana are erected during three major poya days which are enthusiastically celebrated by Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhists. They exhibit stories about Buddha's previous births, and these stories are taken from *jataka* stories included in *Pansiya Panas Jatakaya*. The entire story is depicted through paintings that are kept and arranged on the wooden structure, numerically. The colorful paintings are surrounded by neon lights. At the center or at the top of the erected thorana, there would be a Buddha's painting. These *thorana* are exhibited only at night and there is a narrator to narrate the story depicted by each section that got a number. This narrator presents the narration, more often, poetically following *virindu or kavi bana* style. These two styles are popular in reciting poetries in Sinhala Buddhist religious context. Meanwhile, the area where the *thorana* is erected looks like a little mela, since there are temporary shops and vendors who sell sweets, toys, clothes, kitchen-wear and hose-wear etc. for lesser prices when compared with the prices of everyday market. Apart from all these, fun-games and adventurous-games like *maraka linda* (deadly well) are also set for the crowd. Thus, watching thoran is an exciting experience and people of every age go to watch them.
[497] This phrase is taken from Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, 2006, p. 44

question to be raised in this regard is: are these stories problematic if we read them only as some literary creations just like other fictions, poetries or any work of art; if we consider them only as a creation of language? Certainly, it is possible to consider them as creations of language; but, it is possible *only if* we are ready to agree with the fact that they *are* creations or constructions. Moreover, if we do so, their existence as stories would be possible since they survive through language. Hence, language becomes the crucial factor for the *survival* of those stories.

However, in the ongoing discourse, they are considered to be *more than* stories or *more than* works of language; accordingly, they are considered as *the* truth that especially emanates from religious domain. And, the truth that comes in the context of religion is more important for individual's inner world, for it talks to individual's inner mind; its effect is more subtle yet powerful[498], when compared to the truth that is derived in the context of law and justice.[499] Accordingly, when *what* these stories narrate regarding men/women is considered as *the* truth, *that* truth becomes the driving force for fixing certain knowledge, image and meaning about men and women.

Hence, this context brings in the question of power and decision making. Who has the power to decide, to choose and to fix an image, identity or knowledge about men and women? Is everyone capable of doing that? Does everyone have the power to decide? If everyone can decide, everyone is powerful, and, in that power, everyone enjoys the prestige of being *equal — equality* in power. Yet, if there can be a symmetry and equality in power, is there any space to think something called *power*? Idea of *power* and the *powerful* can exist only when there is an *asymmetry*; asymmetry in power, which creates hierarchy, delivers the machinery of domination and subjugation. As Nietszche shows in his *On the Genealogy of Morals*[500], the one, who has the power, becomes the master and that power makes him enable in deciding

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[498] In his *Discipline and Punish*, (1991), Foucault explains how new methods of punishment are operative in punishing the prisoners. According to him, the modern way of punishment does not involve physical torture;; instead, it involves metal torture which is done basically through isolating the prisoner or the criminal, where he or she engages in a dialogue with the self, questioning his or her act and understanding the gravity of the deed that was done. In this regard, Foucault asserts that this new method which does not carry out any physical violence is a very subtle way of torturing and punishing, since it is oriented only toward one's own self. Thus, torture is no more a public exhibition; it is more personal, yet strongly effective.
[499] For further knowledge in this regard, please see Foucault's *Discipline and Punishment*, (1991).
[500] Nietzsche, 1996

— deciding on good/bad, good/evil, etc. Hence, who has been powerful among the two in the context of both men and women? As discussed in the previous chapter, the ongoing universal discourse of male dominant ideology[501], which also has been a historical question that has been coming along as the very imperative for the emergence of the question of gender equality, testifies the image, meaning, knowledge and identity that is available regarding women as *the* knowledge, understanding, and image that is constructed by men. It is the discourse of men, therefore, it is the world of men; also the language of men. Therefore, it is a knowledge, understanding and language that is created on the *other* of male gender by the very discourse of men, and this context delivers us to the more wider question of *the self and the other,* where the *relation* between self and the other needs to be addressed in terms of power and the *possession* of power.

Now, could the Buddhist discourse that is operative in Sri Lanka be away from this male dominant discourse, also from patriarchy? If it could, how do such traditional pessimistic ideas regarding women prevail in the society? How do such stories coming from Buddhist literature manage to get space in people's everyday life through winning their reliance on the same?

Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist discourse has not been able to break away from traditional patriarchy. However, this argument could be objected by counting on certain socio-economic and political advancement that the society has made in the context of its women. Very often, such advancements and achievements are considered in relation to the role that is played by woman in socio-economic and political spheres. Then, let's look into the role that is accomplished by Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist woman.

4.2.3   Role of women

Going through scenario of contemporary Sri Lanka, it is difficult to find a hierarchy between men and women in terms of the position and the significance that they bear in socio-economic, political and religious domain. Both men and women have the

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[501] See last two chapters in *ThePolitics of Friendship*, (1977), by Derrida, where he brings out this argument. pp. 227 - 306

freedom to enjoy *equal* positions in education, employment, wage, participation in state politics and so on. These rights are provided and secured by the constitution. Therefore, every sector, such as education, administration, defense, law and governance, state politics, business and trade, entertainment, religious sphere, etc. shows a significant participation and contribution of women. Kumari Jayawardena, in her *Feminism and Nationalism in The Third World*, describes this situation as follows: 'Sri Lanka attracted a great deal of attention in 1960s when Sirimavo Bandarnaike became the world's first woman prime minister; this was widely interpreted, both in Sri Lanka and outside, as an indicator of the role and position of women in Sri Lankan society – a position of equality and independence. To emphasize this interpretation, it was pointed out that women in ancient society had enjoyed a position of importance, that women on Sri Lanka have not had to suffer from many of the social evils that affected women in neighboring countries, such as sati, purdah, child marriage and the ban on widow marriage, and that women in modern Sri Lanka enjoyed a better quality of life than in other countries of Asia – a literacy rate among women of 83%, a maternal mortality rate of 1.2 per 1000 live births, and a life expectancy of 67 years at today's levels, which has been achieved in spite of a relatively low Gross National Product.'[502]

Colonialism has played a major role in expanding the space for women through the enhancement of the quality of their lives, especially in terms of *freedom*. During Dutch administration, women received the chance for education and it expanded further under the British rule.[503] The other significant change that highlights women's freedom *politically* is the women's suffrage. 'Sri Lanka was one of the first countries of Asia and Africa to achieve women's suffrage, this right being accorded to all women of over 21 years of age by the Donoughmore Constitutional Reforms of 1931.'[504] Later the age limit was brought down till 18 years of age. Thus, the opportunity for education and suffrage has really helped women to widen their space, by coming out from the domesticated life to which they had been confined. Since then, they have been actively involving in state politics, especially in the 19th century project of nation building that was lead by Dharmapala against the colonial power and

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[502] Jayawadena, 1986, p. 109
[503] Ibid, pp. 116 - 121
[504] Ibid, p. 128

its West-oriented ideology. In fact, according to Bartholomeusz[505], women have played a very significant role in leading the *colonized* nation, which was *supposedly* a *Sinhala Buddhist* nation, back to its *cultured* society, which is the *pre-colonial Buddhist society*. And, this project certainly shows *what kind* of *woman* that the society has expected *from women* and *what kind of role* they are assigned to play in their lives.

In the project lead by Dharmapala in order to return to the Sinhala Buddhist culture and society, he had understood the significance of women in shaping up the society and its mentality. His viewpoint depicts every woman not *as* a woman, but as a mother or a potential mother.[506] Motherhood or the figure of mother has always upgraded the position of women; it is a universal upgrading, because the idea of mother has always appeared as *sacred* or *holy* since human history. In fact, it is the sacredness that is attached to motherhood which has been able to give some respect for women in any society, despite time and space. As far as the role assigned to woman is considered, she is commonly recognized basically under any of the following identities: daughter, wife or mother. Within this limited and well-defined identity, her role is to accomplish certain *given* duties throughout her life: duties *as* a daughter, wife and a mother. Her life has to revolve around these three stages and three positions, and it is a *given* condition to her by birth. Moreover, she is not expected to go *beyond* this defined territory that is given to her, despite whatsoever her condition in terms of education, ideology, occupation may be. As well as, another disheartening idea is that even within this *compartmentalized space*, there are further compartments, which have got their own boundaries. Accordingly, not only she becomes a daughter, a wife and a mother, but also she has to follow certain role-model that is defined as *the model* for a daughter, a wife or a mother.[507] Therefore, under the *given definition* of woman, there is a *further defined space* for a mother *as*

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[505] Bartholomeuzs, 1994

[506] In this regard, please see*: Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka*,Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, 1994; *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World, Kumari Jayawardena*, (2003); *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Richard Gombirch & Gananath Obeysekara, (1988); the essay"Domesticity and its Discontents" by Malathi De Alwis, that appears in *Resisting the Sacred and the Secular: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, (1999).

[507] Indrani Munasinghe's work, *Sri Lankan Woman in Antiquity (sixth century B. C. to fifteenth century A. C.),* (2004), discusses this idea of three positions that the woman got to play in the context of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist society. Here, she refers to the way in which Sinhala woman has been depicted in Sinhala literature. pp. 130 - 167

such, daughter *as such* and wife *as such*. These figures of *as such* are the ideals that are to be followed by entire women folk and each figure stands as a mechanism of set of duties and responsibilities that is constantly operative. Hence, the question that is to be raised here is whether Dharmapala, who is popular among Sinhalese for his dedication in re-building Sinhala nation as a Buddhist nation during colonialism, himself could come out from this traditional mentality regarding women, despite the interference and contribution that he made in educating Sinhala women and making them such important figures in the task of nation building. Certainly, Dharmapala must have played a significant role in constructing the present-day Sri Lankan nation and there must be many those who appreciate his love for the nation *to be a Sinhala Buddhist nation*. Especially Dharmapala is a national hero for those who believe in Sri Lanka as a land *belonged* to Sinhalese, especially Sinhala Buddhists[508]. However, in this effort, Dharmapala highlighted the role of a mother in raising children and directing them for a virtuous life, since it is under the mother's care that the child spends early stage of his or her life. Therefore, Dharmapala had asserted two important tasks for Sinhala Buddhist women: one is to make children; then, to raise them teaching Buddhist ethics and values. Thus, the role from child bearing to rearing was made as the major responsibility for women. In that manner, Sinhala Buddhist woman was expected to contribute in expanding the community of Sinhala Buddhists in terms of number.

However, going through his agenda, it can be seen that his intention of educating women is, in fact, not meant so much for the betterment or emancipation of women; rather, it is meant for the expansion and establishment of Sinhala Buddhist nation. Hence, despite the calculable, measurable and comparable victory that women could gain due to the grant of universal suffrage and opportunity for education, women has continued to perform the *given* role of mother and wife. Nevertheless, here, there is no intention to undermine the motherhood or wifehood. Certainly, there is nothing pessimistic being a mother or a wife. The problem in this regard arises only when these three identities become the only *identity*, *recognition,* and *the role* that the

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[508] For further views regarding Dharmapala's ethnocentric agenda , please see some of the works that are mentioned bellow: the introduction written by Pradeep Jeganathan & Qadri Ismael for *Unmaking the Nation: The Politcs of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*, (1995); *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, Kumari Jayawardena, (2003); Buddhism Transformed: *Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Richard Gombirch & Gananath Obeysekara, (1988)

woman *could* and *should bear*; also, when motherhood, daughterhood and wifehood that they are expected to perform becomes as that, *which is pre*-defined and *pre*-determined. In this regard, it is important to return to some Sinhala Buddhist literature, such as *Jataka* stories and *kavyasekaraya*, which presents some *ideal* women under Buddha's teaching.

In Buddhism, the position given to woman is that of mother and wife. And, she should fulfill her duties as a *good* mother and a *faithful* wife in order to enjoy a blissful family life in the domestic sphere. Buddha also had described seven types of wives[509] pertaining to wifehood. According to those seven types, one can decide *what type* of wife one has got as the partner of his life. However, as far as motherhood is concerned, the negativity attached to it is considerably narrow. As Thalita Seneviratne and Jan Currie notes, '[T]he idea of the mother as a self-sacrificing and benevolent figure is very much present in Buddhist thought'[510]. Yet, the sacredness attached to wifehood is narrow, because it is a position that revolves around *fidelity* that is governed by chastity; and, in this context, women are considered as unfaithful. Thus, the trustworthiness or fidelity of woman is decided with regard to her sexual behavior[511]. As *jataka* story teller writes, women desire men just like cows desire new grassy lands. Moreover, in addressing her carnal apatite, she is capable of betraying her husband and getting him killed by her lovers. *Jataka* stories, such as *Andhabutha* and *Chulladhanuddara* exemplify above mentioned nature of women. In writing and presenting such stories as those which carry Buddha's Dhamma, the story teller not

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[509] In her work, *Sri Lankan Woman in Antiquity (sixth century B. C to fifteenth century A.C.)*, Indrani Munasinghe refers to the *Sattabhariya Sutta* in *Anguttarara Nikaya* which presents how Buddha had categorized wives into seven types on the basis of their attitudes towards their husband. Accordingly, they are as follows: '*vadhaka ca bhariya* – lit. executioner wife (wives, who were rough, and inconsiderable to their husbands), *cori ca bhariya* – lit.robber wife (wives who waste their husband's wealth and indulge in surreptitious misbehavior), *ayya ca bhariya* – lit. master wife (wives who are lording over their husbands), *bhagini ca bhariya* – lit. sister wife (wives who show obedience and adoration to their husbands as if they were their older brothers), *sakhi ca bhariya* – lit. firend wife (wives who are trustworthy, concerned and attached, as if their husbands are their good friends), *dasi ca bhariya* – lit. servant wife (wives who never tire of working to pelase their husbands), *mata ca bhariya* – mortherly wife (wives who are loving, concerned, attentive and protective as if their husbands were their sons).' Among these seven types, there are four virtuous types and motherly wife is the most favorable to the continued and wellbeing of the husband. 2004, pp. 143 – 144.

[510] Senevirtane & Currie, 2001, (Ed). Darlene M. Juschka, p. 203

[511] Cixous in her essay *The Laugh of the Medussa*, discusses how female sexuality has been taken as the very measure to define woman and her nature and how she has been reduced to her sexuality throught the human history, which is, as she asserts, a history that is created by men. Moreover, she terms it as the gretest crime that is done against women by men. This essay appears in *Signs, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976),* pp. 875 - 893

only spreads Buddhism, but also gives the legitimacy to confirm certain ideas regarding women that have existed since pre-Buddhist time. Hence, does it compel us to think that Buddhist literature and Buddhism that emanates from such literature as another project that is *operative to stereotype women according to the view point of men* and identify them as a figure full of evil and viciousness?

Going through Sri Lankan Buddhist literature, most of the characters that appear in *Jataka* stories depict the evil nature of women, while the other characters in other literary texts such as *Terigata* represent certain good qualities of women. *Maname*, *Sambula* and *Pabavati* can be examples for the former, while Vishaka, Sujata, Uppalwanna, Khema, Patachara and Ambapali can be examples for the later. Nevertheless, it is important to note that some of the characters that appear in the later, such as Uppalawanna, Khema and Ambapali, also happened to be *evil natured women*[512]; it was only after meeting Buddha that they had become good women realizing the *emptiness of life*. Therefore, except Vishaka and Sujata, the rest of the women seem to be *bad by nature*. In the case of Vishaka, she is the *ideal* woman: she is a very virtuous daughter and a wife, also a strong follower of Buddha and his teaching.[513] Describing Vishaka and her nature, Sinhala Buddhist literature presents Vishaka as the epitome of beauty comprised with *pancha kalyanaya*[514] and the best example for calmness that a woman should possess.

Such characters have strongly occupied the mentality of Sinhala Buddishts. They have become the role models that are *to be* followed by Sinhala Buddhist women[515] in becoming *virtuous* women, while the same model becomes the *ideal*

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[512] They are portrayed as those who had some *bad* qualities or who were involved in some wrong-doings. Accordingly, Khema was known for her arrogant and proud nature that she had just because of her beauty; Uppalavanna was someone who could not resist her desire for sexual pleasure, which caused her restless behavior; Patachara happened to be the one who eloped with the man with whom she had fallen in love, leaving her entire family since they did not consent her marriage with the same. And, later, she becomes mad due to the pain and the misery caused by the death of everyone that she had loved – her parents, brother, husband and children. Ambapali was a prostitute. All these women later find solace in Buddha's teaching and become nuns who attained the advanced mental status called *arhant* through rigorous discipline and meditation.

[513] The introduction written for her text, *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka*, (1994), Bartholomeusz notes how significant Vishaka's character in constructing the expected good nature of woman. p. 6

[514] *Pancha kalyanaya* means five kinds of beauty that a woman should possess in terms of beautiful eyes, shining teeth, long hair, fair complexion and young look despite the age. It is said that Vishaka had possessed all these *pancha kalyanaya*.

[515] In the essay, "Religion and Feminism: A Consideration of Cultural Constructions on Sri Lankan Women", which appears in *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, Thalitha Seneviratne & Jan

woman that every man should find as his life partner. The impact of such characters on social perception can be seen with regard to the female names given to Sinhala Buddhist girls and the names given to Sri Lankan girls' school, especially those considered as Sri Lankan Buddhist girls' school, controlled by Sri Lankan government. Most of such schools are located especially in major cities in Sri Lanaka. Accordingly, Vishaka, Gothami, Devi Balika, Sujata, Anula, Mahamaya, and Sita Devi are some of such names with which famous Girls' school in Sri Lanka are named. This naming is an example that exhibits Sri Lankan Buddhists' *obsession* regarding such characters that appear in Sinhala Buddhist literature. Moreover, it also can be seen as one of the ways through which Sinhala Buddhist nation was re-built against the British colonial power and the Western culture. In this regard, the above discussed project by Dharmapala had played a major role.

In his project of educating women *for a national cause*, Dharmapala communicated that the Sinhala Buddhist virtuous woman is *different* from the Western woman. The difference that he highlighted lies in the mannerism. According to him, mannerisms of Western woman, such as consumption of liquor and meat, wearing body revealing clothes, etc. do not comply with Buddha's preaching, and they are *inappropriate* for the Sinhala Buddhist woman. He condemns such manners *as if* righteousness or unrighteousness of a woman lies in a piece of cloth that she wears, glass of alcohol that she sips or piece of meat that she eats. However, showing such a resistance toward certain life styles coming from West, what kind of behavior did he ascribe to Sinhala Buddhist woman? How should she *behave as* a girl, *as* a wife and *as* a mother?

As Kumari Jayawardene shows, the traditional role that a woman should play especially as a wife is well illustrated in Sinhala narrative poem of the 15th century, written by Buddhist monk, Sri Rahula, from Thotagamuwa, which is still popular in

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Currie presents a similar idea with some of the examples. They write, '[T]he images of the religious and historical personalities which have made the greatest impact on women in Sri Lanka reveal virtuous and faithful wives or self-sacrificing, devoted mothers, such as Yasodara, the devoted wife of Prince Siddharta who suffered in silence after the prince left her and her son in quest of the truth. She was an ideal example of female chastity. Other such examples were Kinnari in Sandakinduru Jataka and Amara in the Ummagga Jataka who suffered in silence and remained faithful to their husbands. The self-sacrificing ideal of women is well portrayed in the life of Madri Devi who agreed to give away her children as servants to a Brahmin so that her husband could attain Buddhahood.' (2001), pp. 203 - 204

the context of Sinhala literature. She quotes the stanzas that contain the advice given by a father to his daughter on mariage:

'Do not leave your house without your husband's permission;

When you go out, do not walk fast and see that you are properly clad.

Be like a servant to your husband, his parents and his kinsmen.

Do not admit to your companionship the fickle courtesan,

The thief, the servant, the actress, the dancer,

The flower-seller or the washer woman.

Sweep your house and garden regularly and see that

It is always clean. Make sure that you light the

lamps to the gods both at dawn and dusk.

When your husband returns home from a journey,

Receive him joyously and wash his feet;

Do not delegate this task to servants.

Do not spend your time standing at your door,

Strolling about in gardens and parks and do not

Be lazy at your household duties.

Protect the gods in your house. Do not give

Anything away even to your own children,

Without your husband's consent.

If your husband's attention seems directed elsewhere,

Do not speak to him about it, let your tears be

The only indication of your sorrow.

Seek out your husband's desire in food and see that

He is constantly satisfied, feed him and ensure his

Well-being like a mother.

When you go to your husband let it be like a goddess,

Beautiful, clad in colourful silks, ornaments and sweet-smelling perfumes.

Be the last to go to bed and the first to rise.

When your husband wakes, see that you are by his side.

Even if your husband appears angry and cold,

Do not speak to him; be kind and forgiving

Never think to look elsewhere for your comfort.'[516]

In her work, which brings examples from Sinhala literature to point out how woman has been viewed by the society in relation to her duty and the beauty, Kumari asserts that '[S]uch attitudes were common to both major ethnic groups inhabiting the island, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and despite many changes which will be referred to later, they have persisted in Sri Lankan society to this day. The concept of female beauty prevalent in Sri Lanka is also reminiscent of Indian tradition.'[517] However, according to her argument, the accepted ideology in traditional Sri Lanka, which demands the subordination of women by themselves to the male at all times, got affected and changed by the advent of imperialism. And, this effect and change has already been discussed above with reference to the opportunity for education and universal suffrage. Here, it is necessary to bring the above discussed views of Kumari regarding women, since it gives some more clarity for the particular image, form, and role of woman that is necessitated by Dharmapala's project, in order to make them mothers of the new nation emerging against Western ideologies. The changes that happened in the context of Sri Lankan women under the impact of colonialism could

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[516] [From *Kavyasekaraya*] quoted in Jayawardene. 2003 p. 114
[517] Jayawardene, 2003, p. 114

certainly elevate the condition of women in a positive manner. On the other hand, this positive impact could later be used as a weapon to retaliate the British or Western ideas, especially through nationalistic missions like Dharmapala's.

However, the paradox of such movements is that, on one hand, there is an urge for freedom from the colonizers and their ideologies. Therefore, it is a freedom that seeks to be *free* from the West — western ideas, western culture and its practices, also from western political power. And, such freedom is the aspiration for a *sovereign* state that forms an *independent* nation, where the freedom knows no category in terms of religion, race, gender, caste and class. It is a freedom that demands to *forget* all such categorical differences for a *national* cause. In that sense, the demand for freedom here is made through a language that encompasses all the *named-languages*, in order that it becomes the language of nation (which is different from the project of creating national languages), which is capable of addressing everyone as children of *one* mother in a way that everyone can be brought together as *a family* or one community. The language of nation excludes only the *enemy*, and that enemy is the *enemy of the state* or the nation. Accordingly, enemy in the given context is none but *the West* – the colonizers.[518] In this context, there are only two categories: colonizers and the colonized or in Said's terms, "the orient" and "the occident"[519].

Hence, every Sri Lankan should contribute to build Sri Lanka as an independent nation. Thereby, all Sri Lankans are considered as children of one mother called Sri Lanka — Sri Lanka *matha*. This is what even the Sri Lankan national anthem says.[520] Accordingly, Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and other ethnic groups are united into *oneness* claiming to be children of one mother; cosenquently, all the men and women, who belong to all such ethnicities, become brothers and sisters. Thus, no one is excluded or discriminated in terms of position and benefits. Everyone is considered as *equal*. At least this is what it conceptually attempts to claim; but, in practice, there is no such existence of *equality*. However, let's say that Sri Lanka got

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[518] In this regard, it is important to look into the discussion presented by Derrida in his *The Politics of Friendship*, (1977), where he brings forth the idea of enemy and the enemy of the state with reference to Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, while comparing it with Plato's idea on the same.
[519] Said, 1985
[520] Opening line of Sri Lankan national anthem is '*Sri Lanka matha*', which means Mother Sri Lanka. One of the stanzas in the national anthem suggests that 'leaving all the divisions aside, let's go forward together without any delay, just like children of one mother who love each other, ("*eka mawakage daru kela bevina, yamu yamu wee nopama, prema wada sema bheda durela da, namo namo matha*")

its independence and became a sovereign nation on 04th of February, 1948, and it made every man and woman in the country as a free and independent citizen who has the equal opportunity and right to be independent; because, everyone had to suffer being a part of the *colonized* community under the power of the enemy from the West. But, here, the word *suffering* has to be seen majorly in relation to *political power* than to be a socio-cultural one, because there are certain things done by the colonizers, especially by the British, which affected people's lives in a positive manner. However, since 1948, every Sri Lankan citizen became independent by *concept*; yet, practically, it is *not* so. Here, the first reason is related to the discrimination that is done on *minorities*. However, the idea of minority is very often seen in terms of ethnicity, where the question of Tamils and Muslims in Sri Lanka is highlighted. In fact, not only in Sri Lankan context, but also in the global context, questions and issues regarding minorities always circle around either on ethnicity and race or on religion. But, how many of us have attempted to see women falling into this category of minority? How many of us are ready to see women as the most colonized people with no particular date? Who are the colonials in the context of women? Can they be identified with reference to a particular nation, religion or race?

Taking the question of women's freedom in Sri Lankan context, it can be seen that her present position is more stable, strong and influential in shaping up the socio-economic, political and cultural scenario of Sri Lanka, and many organizations, government and non-government, which stand for human rights and women's rights have been actively involved in protecting women. Therefore, in economic, political and legal terms, Sri Lankan women enjoy and share equal positions on par with men, and such achievements, which mark the success of Sri Lankan women's struggle for their emancipation, seem to have made everyone belive that Sri Lankan women as strong, forward, outgoing and independent. This advancement of women elevates Sri Lanka as an *advanced* and *modern nation* and posits it along with some other advanced nations in the globe. It compares its position of women with other countries' stance regarding the same, especially with those adjoining countries in South Asian region and finds that Sri Lankan women's situation as far better and strong[521].

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[521] In *Sri Lankan Woman in Antiquity (sixth century B.C to fifteenth century A.C.)*, (2004), Indrani Munasinghe conclude with such comparison, where she finds the position of Sri Lankan women is much better when compared to the same in India. She opines that women were never looked upon by a

Certainly, in comparison, there can be only three levels: higher level, lower level and the *same* level. The result of this comparison could make on feel *either* happy and successful *or* sad and defeated. Comparison *as such* would thus be one-way street. But, as Derrida mentions somewhere in his enormous body of writings, who says one should *compare*? What is the need of a comparison? Why *should* we compare?

Comparisons and their results can *neither* say much *nor* do much to change the *given* situation. It may help in *altering* the situation; yet, it would not be able to *transform* the very *form* or the *structure*. In other words, comparisons and calculations do not involve in *deconstruction*, which is undeniably *violent*. But, here, the term *violent* has a dffferent implication (and, this idea of volence has already been discussed in the second cahapter's discussion on writing; also, the same idea is further discussed in the last chapter). Hence, the success, victory and pride that are boasted in the context of Sri Lankan women are first of all *comparatively defined* victories, success and advancements; their emancipation is also that which is received by calculations and measurements, which are parts of the same *comparative method*. But, considering women's emancipation without counting on their material achievements which are displayed statistically, are we really able to say that women are *free* — not only in Sri Lankan context, but also globally?

None of the materially countable benefits could make women free — free from the *subjugation* by the male authority; free from *the tradition* which stereotypes women and prescribes the role that they should play. This can be exemplified with reference to the Dharmapala's national movement, within which the role of women became very significant. It made women feel responsible in deciding the *future* of the nation. While persuading and leading them to take part in his project, Dharmapala had pushed them to embrace the traditional role of *good* mother and *dutiful* and *faithful* wife. He upheld the women who practiced the values of precolonial Sinhala Buddhist society. Dharmapala did not certainly bother to educate women for their own betterment. His assertion on women's education was directed toward the *betterment of the nation*, which is for him a Sinhala Budddhist nation. Therefore, the education given to women was a limited one, which could suffice for her to learn *how to be* a good woman; because, it is that *good* woman, who would make a good wife and a

society nurtured in the teachings of Buddhism. pp. 178 - 179

good mother someday, under whose care that the children of the nation would grow.[522] Therefore, it was a Buddhist education, but, with the Christian touch. This is another *paradox* that can be seen in his national movement. Dharmapala himself was educated in a missionary school and he appreciated the mannerisms practiced by Christian fathers and brothers, also by Christian nuns. He wanted all the Sinhalese to behave and become like Christian fathers, brothers and nuns, since he found them as industrious, clean and intelligent. Then, he wanted all men and women of Sinhala community to follow the life-style of the Christian clergy. Especially in the case of women, he emphasized the necessity of learning house-making that includes embroidery, cleanliness, and industriousness, for which he appreciated the role of Christian nuns. However, such appreciations of Christian nuns came up only in relation to their works and practices, but not with reference to their religious ideology. Thus, while discarding and criticizing Christianity as a rival of Buddhism and Sinhala nation, on the other hand, he embraced its practices, since he believed that those mannerisms and practices could really help in building a productive nation with diligent men and women. Therefore, the school education that was especially given to women was basically that which helps in generating *dutiful* wives and mothers in the future. Explaining the content of such education given to women during the nationalist movement, Kumari writes: 'the content and purpose of education in these schools was the subject of much debate, the protagonists seeing in education the means of achieving goals relative to their conception of the role of women in society. A large group of Sinhala Buddhist leaders of the time argued that the education should be so geared as to produce good Buddhist wives, but with the modicum of modern knowledge necessary for the times. Others saw Buddhist women's education as an essential part of a national and political awakening and a means of emancipating women. Since the girls who attended Buddhist schools were given a more nationalist-biased education, which included stress not only on Sri Lankan and Indian history and culture, but on democratic and anti-colonial movements elsewhere, such students were also receptive to movements for social and political reform.'[523]

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[522] In this regard, please see the essay, "Domesticity and its Discontents", by Malathi De Alwis, that appears in *Resisting the Social and the Secular: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, edited by Patricia Jeffery & Amrita Basu, 1999, pp. 200 – 219 and *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, by Kumari jayawardena, (2003).

[523] Jayawardene, 2003, p. 125

According to her view, the ideal woman that Dharmapala and others had wanted to bring back was the one that was there in pre-colonial Sri Lanka. And, *that* woman was seen as the Buddhist woman with *Aryan* way of life. In this regard, Kumari points out how Dharmapala propagated *Aryan myth* regarding the origin of Sinhalese and inflicted chauvinistic attitude regarding women, while underestimating other religious cultures, especially the Christian and Muslim cultures as those which demands the subordination of women. In Dharmapala's viewpoint, as she explains, Aryan way of life and Buddhism had given freedom to women. Therefore, the freedom and the ideal Aryan Buddhist woman that was appreciated by Dharmapala is thus the reproduction of the stereotype depicted in *Kavyasekeraya*.[524] Accordingly, for Dharmapala, 'The Aryan husband trains his wife to take care of his parents, and attend on holy men, on his friends and relations. The glory of woman is in her chastity, in the performance of household duties and obedience to her husband. This is the Aryan ideal wife.'[525] Admiring and necessitating this role of woman, not only had he attempted to control the mindset of women, but also had prescribed the dress-code for Sinhala Buddhist women, deploring European women's dress that Sinhala girls had started embracing slowly by then. 'Dharmapala frequently advocated the sari as s suitable garment for Sinhala women, opposed Western dress for girls as modest, and ridiculed the Victorian hats and crinolines worn by the women of the bourgeoisie.'[526]

Nonetheless, in her work, Kumari shows that education given to women could make them realized the constraints of the traditional role. Referring to an article in the *Journal of Buddhist Companion*, published in Colombo in 1914, she attempts to exemplify this fact through quoting the following dialogue: "'Our Sinhala men are still trying to confine us to the kitchen. They are not interested in teaching us anything beyond that.'"[527] Hence, the next question is: *how far* this education and the realization that subsequently came along could assist women *to break free* from the *given* role or image? Also, how far could that education and realization influence on changing the social perception regarding Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist women?

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[524] Ibid, p. 126
[525] [Guruge] quoted in Jayawardene, 2003, p. 126
[526] Ibid, p. 126
[527] Jayawardene, 2003, p. 127

4.3   Women, Appropriation, and Violence

Undergoing socio-political-economic and religious transformations, Sri Lankan women have come out of their domestic space, in the sense that they have become multi-tasking, playing multiple roles. However, my argument here is that although she has become multi-tasking, she has not been able to come *out* from the conventional attitude that is held by the society regarding women. In this regard, neither education given at schools under different disciplines nor feminist revolution that happened in Sri Lanka or elsewhere in the world has been able to *violate* the conventional attitude regarding women, in a major way. Despite whatsoever the *material advancement* that has been made in the context of women, Sinhala women are yet inclined towards the *appropriation* that is done through *fixing* them to certain *identity* and *essence as such*. Moreover, this identity is located within the space marked by the three positions as daughter, wife and mother. Hence, regardless of whosoever that she becomes under whatsoever domain, she continues to remain as *a hostage* of *the given*. It suggests that she can become anyone and anything so long as it keeps her *within* and *under* these *positions* and their *defined space*. On the other hand, these positions, which are basically within the family domain, do not mix with everyday politics and economics of the state. Rather, they are given a religious or sacred tinge; accordingly, any attempt of damaging *it* would be considered as blasphemous *before* it to be seen as a crime in terms of law. Thus, the position of present day Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lankan woman is haunted by the religious ideology, which is a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism.

However, it can be said that women are educated enough to reason out for taking certain decisions and putting them into action, if at all education and knowledge can really and adequately help anyone to take *decisions*. Here, the idea of decision needs to be understood in Derridian sense, which views decision as an event[528], also as rupture — a cut. *By law*, women are certainly free, and they have the power to reject what they do not want them to do. For examples, woman is allowed to take free decision regarding marriage, divorce, marital-rape, child-bare and so on. In brief, she has the freedom to take decision regarding her *body* — what to do and what

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[528] See Derrida, especially in his essay "Ethics and Politcs Today" in *Negotitations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971 – 2001*, (2002a), and *The Politics of Friendship*, (1977).

not to do with her body. Also, with reference to Buddhism, it is a freedom given by the religion itself to have one's own choice regarding one's action and one's life, for which Buddha had emphasized the significance of self-consciousness. Therefore, conceptually, they are free-individuals in terms of both law and religion. Yet, why *cannot* they be free? What does keep them tied to a life with which they are not happy? Why cannot they break open through the tradition which still keeps them subjugated to the same? What would they gain from maintaining the oppressive and suppressive tradition?

The above raised questions need to be addressed with reference to the idea of *subject* and the *power of discourse*. And, in the context of women, it is not *just* subject, but *female-subject*. There are at least *two* kinds of subjugation here. If I use the term *subject*, the meaning of the term may stand for the wider notion of subject that is applicable to each individual, in the sense that every man and every woman becomes a subject subjugated to the power of discourse. In that sense, *all* humans are *subjects* and none can be excluded from becoming a subject. Taking this point, one may argue that when *everyone* is *already a subject*, why to highlight the same in relation to women; why cannot the question of subject be addressed without taking any particular gender; why cannot it be addressed as a common or a universal problem? Certainly, that is one of the major problems — when everyone is *already a subject*, due to which everyone is under the *control* of someone or something, why creating another order to make further and further subjections? When everyone knows freedom is that which everyone aspires, why would one attempt to create further hierarchies of *power*? When everyone understands that any power is already suppressive, why would one yet attempt to *dominate the other*? If it becomes that which is operative against the *other*, does not it then become the problem of *sheer self-centeredness*? It is here the implication of the term *female-subject* should be underscored.

The idea of *female-subject* suggests the *double subjugation* that a woman undergoes throughout her life. The *second* subjection is the one that comes *under* the power of *male dominant discourse*, and this subjugation is stronger, active and, more often, even visible. It *immediately controls* her space, while fixing her to a particular identity. Hence, all Sinhala women are subjugated by the *Sinhala Buddhist*

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heterosexual male dominant ideology. They are recognized and categorized *as* women through the procedure of seeing, reading, analyzing, defining, and fixing. This procedure is accomplished in and through *already given* language of the *given* discourse[529].

In that sense, according to Sinhala-Buddhist-male-dominant-heterosexual-society, which cannot be detached from Indian-Hindu-male-dominant-heterosexual-society that has been dominating Sri Lankan society for more than 2000 years, woman is full of *inherent* negativities. This negativity is measured and confirmed by the observations made on her *behavior*. Moreover, this behavior is evaluated in relation to the role that is assigned to be played by her as a *daughter*, *wife* and *mother*. The parameters to value her character through her behavior pertaining to any of those roles are *already* set and imposed in and through religions, which demand high conduct of morality and ethics. Hence, she is supposed to have *ethically* good conduct as a daughter, wife or a mother, and these ethics are based on some *dos* and *don'ts*, for which she should obey. In this obedience, what is demanded from her is certain abstention from some practices, especially from those which are related to sexuality and pleasure; because sexuality is the pivotal point around which the female identity is constructed. In that sense, under any of those roles, she is supposed to make a pledge to control her desire and to address it *within* the *given* space that is *restricted* and *limited*. There is a *limit* and she is supposed to make all her *movements within* and *up to* that limit, and the limit is nothing but her *sexuality*. Hence, sexuality is the limit that limits woman's freedom. As mentioned above, this limit is not always governed by the judicial law. That limit comes *prior* to the law, which also suggests that she is free to break this limit, especially before the law[530]. Yet, she *does not* do so because she *fears* of violating the limit that is imposed on her by religion and the society, which is controlled by *that* religion. Therefore, it is not a fear that emanates *from* the violation of *law*. Rather, it is a fear *towards* religion and the society; it is a fear that stops violating the *given* law of the *given* religion and the *given* society. However, this

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[529] To have a wider understanding with regard to this idea of ongoing discourse of gender, which is also the global gender discourse that is created and maintained by men, please see the philosophical treatement that is offrered by Cixous in her essay "The Laugh of the Medussa" in *Signs, Vol.1, No. 4. (Summer, 1976)*, pp. 875 – 893, also her book titled *The Newly Born Woman*, (1986).

[530] Here, it is at the door step of law that she is able to become a free individual who has the *right* for her body. It is the position of confronting law in terms of rights.

fear is inflicted in her *subtly* through certain awareness programs in which family, community and religion play a decisive role.

However, once the education is given, as Foucault says in his *Discipline and Punish*, there is no need for any army or military power to have the control over the individual. Hence, in the context of women too, she is aware of *how to* take care of herself. Moreover, she is aware of the outcome in case she does not follow the supposed rules and prescribed behavior. She is made to believe that having the command over her own behavior especially in terms of her sexuality is *rewarded* not only by the society but also by Buddha's teaching. And, the reward that is to come from the side of religion is not necessarily *within* the time of *present* life; instead, she is *going to be benefitted* in her *next* birth. In this regard, the idea of *karma* and *karmapala* that is discussed by Buddha is of greater significance. However, it sounds like some *life insurance deal* that we take up in order to be benefitted *not immediately*, but after some years. Thus, it demands the *sacrifice* of present *in the name of* future — sacrificing present for a present or a gift that is going to come from future. If this sacrifice is not made, the result that is to come from future life would be *negative* to the extent that she would have to go through a long chain of births to compensate for the same — the sin. This idea is best exemplified in the *jataka* story called *Kaliyakinnage kathawa* (story of the female devil Kali)[531]. Thus, she is prevented from doing sinful acts. All the more, she is believed to have done some sins in her previous births that caused her to be born *as* a woman in the present life. Therefore, she is also aware that she is *already* a *sinful* sole; yet, she is born *as* a *human* due to some good *karma* that she had done in previous births. In that sense, she oscillates between good and bad; she is the *conjunction* of both sin and merits.

Nonetheless, this knowledge and the truth produced by religion take care of her *double subjection* in the sense that this double subjugation is justified by religion itself. Hence, she is not able to break free from that truth and knowledge which has already constructed her image while fixing her to particular identity *as such*. This as such*ness* identified in the context of woman has not changed. It has continued to remain with some *alterations*. Therefore, despite whatever the role she plays – be it

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[531] Gombrich & Obeysekara, (1988), provides an interesting story and views related to goddess Kali that is worshiped in Sri Lanka.

economic or political role - coming out from the domestic domain, she still *remains within* the *same given identity*; also, she is *expected* to remain *within* the *same identity*. She is not supposed to violate that *givenness*. Moreover, in this constant consciousness with which she is tied up in the task of maintaining highly moral and ethical conduct, she is the master, teacher and the evaluator of her own self. She is responsible to herself and to her future life. Then, her future depends on her in the sense that she has the capacity and capability of making it better or worse; she has the final say in deciding whether she should go to heaven or hell; to go to *nirvana* or to be born again in the *sansara*, etc. Hence, are we really able to boast regarding women's emancipation just because of the the opportunity that she gets to come out from the domestic sphere *physically*, to wear any type of dress, to earn money doing a job that she likes so that she can be financially independent, etc. ? Does the emancipation of woman lie only with regard to such material conditions? Is it necessary for woman to come out from her home for her to realize that she is free and independent? If so, are all the employed women who step out from their houses in the morning and return late at night really *free*?

4.3.1   Freedom and the Outside

The freedom that is aspired in the context of women *cannot* be counted or measured *only* in terms of materiality. Here, I *do not* intend to mean that ways of eating, drinking, dressing, outdoor activities are not a part of freedom. Certainly, they are; they are symbolic. Yet, they *alone* cannot be taken as freedom, since the kind of freedom anticipated here is *beyond* the superficiality. We do not talk about some *calculated freedom*, in the sense that women get *equal* position *on par* with men in each and every sphere of the society. Also, it is not about getting female representation in every sphere; because, if it is based on such respresentation, we have *managed* to reach that destination. That recognition is *already* there.

Hence, the freedom intends to be emphasized here is much more *deep* and it coils and recoils around a freedom from a particular mentality, which is *the given* mentality of the *female-subject*; it is a freedom that *demands a break from the subject*; it necessitates *stepping out*, not from home or any particular place per se, but *from the*

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subject. Therefore, freedom desired and awaited in the context of women lies *outside* — outside *subject*, outside *the given*. If freedom is *outside*, due to which outside becomes freedom from what is *given*, that freedom *cannot* be grasped, defined, measured and calculated; also, it cannot be pre-decided. It is so, for *outside* has *no limit*. It *stretches* further and further in the sense that it can never be completely consumed and exhausted. There is no sense of totality for that freedom. It does not come to *end* in the sense that there can be *totalized satisfaction*. Then, such freedom is *in-finite*.

If freedom is thus *in-finite* and *outside*, how can it be thought out; how can it be attempted? Since this freedom is outside the subject, she has to step out from the given domain of the subject, which also leads to step out from the *given identity* and *language*. Hence, this suggests a *rupture* in subject, language, meaning, knowledge and truth that is *given*. The rupture here is not just a resistance, but also a re-action, through which she is *metamorphosed*. If it is only to be seen as a resistance it would continue as a possible closure, since resistance can also be initiated in order *to take care* and *maintain what is given*. In other words, resistance can happen in order to maintain the *continuity of the same*, consequently which the self would become *the powerful*, once again. However, this is the idea suggested even by Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness*, which has already been discussed in the first chapter. Apparently, this idea affirms the freedom of the self — the *I* subject. But, this freedom is *violent* and *harmful*, and this is precisely the problem with ongoing discourses regarding gender — regarding women, also regarding certain sexual practices like *homosexuality*. Then, such freedom becomes a power that is operative dominating the other, hence, becomes a *repressive order*. And, it becomes problematic when it is contested *ethically*.

Hence, it is the *ethical exigency* that can call freedom and power into question, *demanding the deconstruction of all the power centers that create totalities* excluding the other. But, it does not mean that ethics denies freedom. Instead, ethics demands freedom, but *rejects power*. Hence, what is this ethics that is highlighted here? As discussed in the second chapter, Derrida terms such ethics as *violent ethics*, which posits and conjuncts two contradictory things *together*: *violence* and *ethics*. It violates the *given*; so doing, it attempts freedom.

Hence, to step out from the subject is thus to *break open* through all *defined codes* of morality and ethics. The rupture and the outside is marked by the *breach* of given ethics in order *to be ethical*, not in terms of practicing *this* or *that* ethics, but *through responsiblity*. However, the idea of responsibility does not pertain to any *defined responsibility* demanded by any *given* law. It is not a responsibility that is promised in order to accomplish *this* or *that* duty. Rather, it is a responsibility that is kept *without* keeping any promise *as such*; *without promising to be responsible*. Thus, the ethical responsibility that is demanded in this context of freedom is nothing, but *response*.

The *response* asserted in the context of freedom, ethics and responsibility is that which attempted and kept *in and through language*, where language becomes the way through which the response is made. Yet, this response does not come from the powerful *I* subject, but from the one who *steps out* from the *I* subject. Therefore, it comes from the *outside* the subject — the other. Accordingly, response is the very *rupture of the self* — rupture of the self *as* response, yet in language. Therefore, this response is not only a rupture of the self, but also that of language. In that sense, to response is to make *a crack* in language – language of *the self*; it is also the way through which one *goes out* — out of the self, order, law, identity etc. The opening up to the plea of the other through response does *violence* not to the other, but to *self*. This violence on the self is demanded by the necessity of listening to the other – other's question, misery, helplessness, quest – who was awaiting to be heard interrupting the spontaneity of the self; interrupting the coherent speech that has been continuously going on manifesting its order, ignoring the silent murmur breaking through the choking and muffled voice of the other. Then, it is through wounding the self that the the opening up to the other can be attempted, for which language of the self has to be wonded or violated. Blanchot and Derrida shows this rupture of language as literature *through writing*, where one detaches from one's own self while opening up to the other *becoming* other. Literature is the space where one can experience the freedom of *becoming* – becoming everything that one wants[532].

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[532] Blanshot in his essay "Literature and the Right to Death" that appears in *The Work of Fire*, explains literature as that which negates nothing. 1995a, pp. 300 - 344

Hence, writing is the means through which women and all the suppressed others could attempt their freedom. In writing, they *can free* not their bodies *as such*, but their *minds* from the manacles with which they are tied to particular identity in terms of subject. This idea suggests that writing is *not a medium* of representation, but the *immediate* — immediate to life and living, immediate to thought. Hence, language through writing is the very locus of *being* who is *no more identical as subject*; also, it is the mind, thought and thinking, feeling, expressing and expression, action and reaction, question and answer, subjugation and freedom, noise and silence, sadness and happiness, and living and dying etc. Thus, as Blanchot has shown, writing through literature becomes the presentation of "crude" being. And, that crudeness is that which "negates nothing"[533].

Yet, language through writing is, on the other hand, that which emerges *after* subject, and the aftermath of subject can be attempted only through violating the norms that construct subject. Therefore, to write is to involve *violence*; but that violence is directed toward *the self*. This particular violence can be attempted only through giving away the desire *for the self-sameness*. Hence, writing demands certain separation or detachment from the self-centerdenss in order to *become self* in terms of *the other*, in the sense that one experiences constant and infinite *unfolding of the otherness in the context of the self*. This becoming affirms the *impossibility* of any *self-sameness*, due to which all the *this* and *that* categorical identities become *invalid*. Therefore, writing *violates* all *given* knowledge, truths, and identities that are fixed going by certain defined nature or essence. Thus, it threatens all *naturalization procedures*, which attempt to project *naturalized* truth as *natural* and *the nature*. So doing, it views nature as that which has no particular nature or identity *as such*. Hence, nature becomes that which cannot be naturalized in terms of *as such*, for it has no such *as suchness*. Consequently, it becomes *instant* or *spontaneous*; therefore, it becomes *undecidable* and *unpredictable* in its *nature*. In that sense, the *nature* of *being* cannot be decided and predicted. It is so, just because of the constant transformation that it undergoes due to its *exposure* to *outside*. And, this transformation happens through wounding the self, while *giving one's self away to the other in response*, *out of responsibility*.

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[533] Blanchot,1995a, p. 315

In such a context, language through writing does not become that which encapsulates someone in terms of subject — subject of any social order and knowledge. It is not the language of the subject. On the other hand, it cannot be considered as the language *of* something or someone. Instead, it becomes language *with which* one *becomes*. Therefore, language *cannot* be detached from being.

Accordngly, in the above discussed context of gender, especially in the case of Sri Lankan women, what is required is a *violation* of the *given order of Sinhala Buddhist male dominant hetrosexual ideology*, that fixes Sri Lankan woman into a certain Sri Lankan*ness*,   and Sinhala*ness*, which also should stand for certain Buddhist*ness* or religious*ness*. This violation is required. Moreover, it is not just a requirement; rather, it is a requirement that is required *urgently*. Hence, violence that violates the order of the dominant discourse is *both* demand and necessity. It demands and necessitates *a response*, which is kept not in terms of equality in distribution of power and position, but in terms of ethics which does not consider, calculate and measure any power or position. As Derrida says[534], such ethics taken in terms of responsibility does not consider benefits which would benefit the self. It should be taken urgently, in the sense that there is no time to *think* and *calculate* regarding what is going to happen in *the future*. Therefore, this violence of breaking through the given tradition or discourse is a *decision* that is to be taken at the moment when there is *no possibility* for a decision to be taken. Also, no decision should be *already* available at this decisive moment.

Women in the Sri Lankan context, also in general, as well as the others, who are deprived of their freedom in whatsoever manner are in such a situation, where they have no other option but to be subjugated to the order that is operative to exploit them, if they wish to become the *owners* of an accepted *recognition* and *identity* under the socio-political and economic order. But, resisting to be submissive and, therein, stepping *beyond* the controlling power in order to create a space for once own *survival* is to *risk* one's life and one's future, since the resistance would not be accepted and approved by the tradition from which it seeks to break free. Therefore, it is a *dangerous task*; because it involves a *risk* — risk of losing one's own self. It makes

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[534] Derrida, 2002a, pp. 295 - 314

one lose everything, as Derrida says, putting him in a *play* or *game* — play of *différance*[535].

Nevertheless, one should resist. And, the *resistance* is made *against* the efforts of *appropriation* in order to say one can n*ever* be *appropriated*. Accoridngly, one cannot be appropriated just because she is a *woman*, *homosexual*, *bisexual*, etc. However, in this step of resistance, one is summoned to the domain of ethics once again, where one is demanded to give up on one's own self. Hence, taking any action *as such* to retaliate or to resist the oppressive power would inversely create another power structure, within which one or the other would be under the power of another. Therefore, *taking* or *favoring* one side *instead* of the other *cannot* resolve the problem of *problematic of power*. In that sense, it does not suggest the *reverse* of any order. Accordingly, it does not demand, appreciate or necessitate the order of matriarchy *instead of* patriarchy, order of homosexuality *instead of* heterosexuality, order of Tamils or Hindus *instead of* Sinhalese or Buddhists. Also, it does not demand for a submission of West *to* East, men *to* women, Sinhalese *to* Tamils, Buddhists *to* Christians, and so on. Instead of any such demands, it necessitates *going beyond* the *given*. Then, it is a *going beyond* any recognition *as such*, where *nothing* is visible or observable; nor action or reaction *as such* is visible. One has to make a *move* that is *other than* physical or *more than* physical, and, it is a move and a movement attempted in and through writing. One moves in and through language. In this movement, one is *metamorphosed* without making any form or figure *as such*. Then, there should not be any figure, definition or form of woman *as such* that one has to look up to. There should not be any *goal* or a *telos* with regard to women or sexuality. In the absence of *as suchness*, one moves while *becoming*, yet without knowing *what* one becomes. Consequently, this would not attempt to produce any Vishaka, Sujatha, Gothami, Yasodara or any other character admired and appreciated by Sinhala Buddhist literary tradition and the society that nourishes it. Alternatively, it would unfold as the space of *in-finite singularities* that cannot be reduced to any nature, knowledge, truth or essence *as such*. Therefore, literature through writing is the *demand* and the *necessity* to tear the thick fabric of *given* socio-cultural, political and economic discourse, in order to experience freedom — freedom of expression,

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[535] Derrida, 1973, pp. 129 - 160

freedom of living, for those who have not been able to voice out themselves in their own language.

CHAPTER - V

"VIOLENCE OF THE LETTER": WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LITERARY WORKS BY SHYAM SELVADURAI

5.1   Writing and the Feminine

Discussing the question of gender in the context of women under the male dominant ideology that prevails in Sri Lanka, while asserting the necessity of violating that order in order to find a space within and through which they can be free, the previous chapter attempted to highlight the indispensability of writing, for writing is the way through which one could attempt the freedom that is denied in real life. Hence, taking the cue from this necessity of writing not as the way of living, but as the very means of *survival* at the edge, the present chapter explores the idea of literature through writing, keeping Shyam Selvadurai's literary works as the backdrop.

Why write? What to write? When to write? And, more importantly, who writes?

In her work *"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, Cixous writes 'writing, dreaming, delivering: being my own daughter of each day. The affirmation of an internal force that is capable of looking at life without dying of fear, and above all of looking at itself, as if you were simultaneously the other – indispensable to love – and nothing more nor less than me.'[536] Hence, to write is to *break free* from that which fixes one into *this* or *that* identity. But, what does this breaking free mean? It is the breaking free from what one possess as one's own properties or belongings, for these properties and belongings are heavy; they make one stop from moving, by making him or her the owner or the bearer of some valuables — some goods, lands, territories, genealogies, ancestors, names, identities and so on. Thereby, one has to be responsible to take care of these assets and, this responsibility costs one's freedom. It is the freedom that is thus mortgaged in order to become a caretaker of that which is given to one's self as a subject — subject of so and so gender, culture, community, religion, etc. Then, it is from this heavy burden that one has to break free in order to

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[536] Cixous, 1991, p. 6

paddle in search of freedom. This freedom is to reach what is kept away from one's reach; what is *forbidden* to one's own self. Hence, to be free is to run away, breaking the manacles which are *double-locked*: locked with a key, of which owner is some authority; secondly, having kept it for years in this locked-condition, the key-hole or the lock is rusted. Thus, the manacles have become tighter by themselves with the time passes through them. When the key is owned by some other authority, which has the power to decide *when* or *whether at all* it should be opened, the one who is locked has no other way out than breaking it with his/her own effort and strength. This breaking would deliver him/her onto a great moment of freedom — freedom that is like the sea that Derrida asserts[537], in which tides keep rising and breaking making it the sea further — the *limit-less*. Therefore, in this breaking that is necessitated by the desire to be *other* than the *given*, one has to *dis-own* everything to the extent that one *loses* one's own *self*. Then, is it a freedom which demands a high price — losing all belongings including one's own self, the *I* — the powerful? It is a freedom that arrives at the moment of *letting go* of everything and, consequently, becoming extremely poor — the absolute poverty and the bankruptcy. Freedom, thus, seems to demand and command: "[L]et yourself go! Let go of everything! Lose everything!"[538] It is here, another economy begins, and that is an *infinite* economy. As Cixous shows, this infinite economy is a *feminine* economy.[539] Hence, the next question that arises here is *what* is this economy, which is *both* infinite and feminine?

It is writing; for writing is both infinite and feminine. But, why is it necessary for writing to be *feminine*? What kind of femininity is that? Is it another *gendered* gender or is it a gender that has no gender *as such*? The idea of economy, as Cixous explains, is related to "earning profits" through giving — gifting. Accordingly, one gives or spends *in order to gain* some profits, in the sense that one gives something to someone *only* with the *expectation* of gaining another thing. 'You never give something for nothing.'[540] But, what is more important here is what does one expect in giving or what kind of profit does "the giver draws from the gift"? It is here that

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[537] See Derrida in his essay "Roundtable on Translation" that appears in *The Ear of The Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, 1985, pp. 144 - 145

[538] Cixous, 1991, p. 40

[539] This idea of Cixous appears in the essay titled "Sorties" which is included in *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader*, edited by Morny Joy & et al. , 2002, pp. 214 - 220

[540] Ibid, p. 216

Cixous highlights the difference between masculine economy and the feminine economy as follows:

'What does he want in return – the traditional man? And she? At first he wants, whether on the level of cultural or personal exchanges, whether it is a question of capital or of affectivity (or of love, of jouissance) – is that he gain more masculinity: plus-value of virility, authority, power, money or pleasure, all of which reinforce his phallocentric narcissism at the same time. Moreover, that is what society is made for – how it is made; and men can hardly get out of it. […] A man is always proving something; he has to 'show off', show up the others. Masculine profit is almost always mixed with a success that is socially defined.

How does she give? What are her dealings with saving or squandering, reserve, life, death? She too gives for. She too, with open hands, gives herself – pleasure, happiness, increased value, enhanced self-image. But she doesn't try to 'recover her expenses.' She is able to not to return to herself, never settling down, pouring out, going everywhere to the other.' [541]

Hence, it is through writing that one is going to make the best economy *out of* one's self, and that can be made only through *giving* — giving infinitely *despite* the self. In giving, one is required to *give* one's own self *away* so that one gives *infinitely, selflessly*. That is the giving of the self to the *other*. In this task, one is supposed to "cut free" the umbilical code through which one is tied to one's own self *feeding on* the other — a *parasite*, who does violence to the other, in order to make its own survival. But, why should *I* do violence to the *other* for my own survival? Is it because *I* am afraid of going through violence that would fall upon me making me starve to death or of experiencing the deprivation of comfort and safety of life? If *I* have been doing violence on others for *my own* sake, now it has to be turned and directed toward me, in the sense that *I* – the self – *undergo* violence through *opening up* to the other, welcoming the other. This opening is a wound, and one has to *wound* one's own self to the extent that one begins to "bleed"[542]. It is when one comes to

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[541] Ibid.

[542] In his essay "Kafka and Literature" that appears in *The Work of Fire* (1995a), Blanchot casts this idea of bleeding in the context of writing. Here, he brings reference from Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra that says "Write with blood" in analyzing Kafka's works as those which are written while his mind is bleeding. p. 15

write. That is what Kafka says, also does at the same time. Therefore, coming to write is to wound one's self with an "axe" and that axe, as Kafka wrote in 1904 to his friend Pollak, is to break or cut "the frozen sea inside us"[543]. In that sense, what takes place at the very outset of writing is a *crime*, where one begins to bleed — bleed to death. Blood and death — the most violent and horrifying sight of a crime. Then why attempting such a crime at a moment we think of undoing violence? As Cixous shows, act of writing is an act that suppresses the world.[544] Writing annihilates the world, while, on the other hand, creates another; and, it is the other world that is *outside* the *given*.

Thus, there is a condemnation that takes place in writing. The world is condemned through writing. It is *necessary* to *condemn* the world, since the world has *already* done a crime by condemning people into silence or into death through suppression, deportation, banishment and exclusion. Hence, it is *that* world which is condemned in and through writing. Yet, is it easy or possible to condemn the world? Certainly, it is the most difficult task, because, on one hand, that world is very strong; on the other hand, while condemning the world, we also end up condemning ourselves since we are already a part of that world. In that sense, it is the ground on which we stand that is condemned. Then, where shall we go from here? We need to go *beyond* — beyond *here*, outside. But, where can we go in order *to go* beyond this world? In this attempt of going, there is no way to walk upright towards sky since there is gravity and we fall back on the same ground where we do *not* want to stand any further. Then, where to go? Emphasizing the necessity of going away, Cixous suggests going "under-ground". Under ground is *under*-world; at the same time, it is *beyond* the world and it is where the *dead* ones rest. Therefore, writing condemns the world while "descending", and when descending while condemning through writing, one gets to meet those who were condemned to death. Faces of those dead ones begin to come to pass. Yet, they all are specters, since they are *already* dead. However, as Cixous says, "there are two ways of clambering downward – by plunging into the earth and going deep into the sea – and neither is easy."[545] Also, this going downward

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[543] Cixous, in her *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993), quotes some passage from the letter that is written by Kafka in 1904 to his friend Pollak. Also, she continues to discuss the idea of writing through literature taking this particular metaphor throughout her work.
[544] Cixous, 1993, p. 19
[545] Cixous, 1993, p. 5

is not done through keeping the feet first; instead, it is done adopting a "fetal position"[546] in which head goes first just like we descend into the sea. On the other hand, this position is also the position of birth – 'perhaps birth is toward the bottom or the other way up, or straight ahead standing upright. . . . The body inscribes part of its effort, depending on its position and need, in order to descend and work against the current, against the earth. It inscribes the orientation of its drives. Which is difficult. When we climb up toward the bottom, we proceed carried in the direction of – we're searching for something: the unknown….'[547]

It is through writing that we *climb up* toward the *bottom*, in which case writing becomes the "ladder" and Cixous presents it as "H"[548]. This idea of Cixous delivers us onto a different world, where we begin to see writing, which is literature, as the means through which we begin to live while experiencing life as nothing but *relations*. It is from those relations that we draw life, where we begin to know that what we have known about our own selves is nothing but our own *constructions*, which are bound to break or fall apart, thus, not having any solid truth to be praised or held onto; Hence, life and truth are just not *given*; because, they *cannot be* given beforehand since none of them can be totalized into particular form *as such*. It is so, because the life is *governed* by *uncertainty* that is inevitable to life, due to the fact that undecidability and unpredictability reigns over and takes life. Consequently, truth and knowledge are always in a gamble — a play or a game.[549] This uncertainty is of everything — of happiness, health, wealth, success, knowledge, truth, life, death, also of language. Moreover, it is not *mere* uncertainty, but with confusions, contraditions and complications. And this confusion is due to the *other* — due to the unavoidable relation with the other. Then, in life, it is the other who has the *final say* regarding our life, according to which life becomes all that which is not about me but the *other(s)* — others *in* me, others *as* me, and my relations *with* others, in which case others are *me* and *my relations*. Thus, others as me and my life along with the truth that *I* am *not I*, but *I-I* — related to each other and one cannot do *without* the other. Hence, it is also the H that Cixous says that she wants to begin with, when she is going to the "school

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[546] Ibid.
[547] Ibid, pp. 5 - 6
[548] Ibid, pp. 3 - 4
[549] This is the economic character of différance that Derrida discusses in his essay "Différance" that appears in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, 1973, p. 151

of writing". Then, writing is a ladder that can be drawn like H; also it is a ladder, over which *I* climb, and I do not climb over it in the manner of jumping or hopping. In climbing a ladder, jumping or hopping is not possible. Instead, one has to climb *step by step*, since one is on the ladder in relation to two opposite directions: upward and the downward. Hence, when on the ladder, one is in-between two worlds at the same time — hanging.

Writing is relation and it is all about the self *in relation* to the *other*. It begins to write how *the self* has *ended up* becoming other without its realization. Hence, it is a *self* -betrayal that happened in the absence of the self. But, despite this betrayal, self manages to *survive* not as the self, but as other. However, this does not mean that there is complete absence of the self since there is *trace*. Therefore, the self here is nothing but "différance". Then, who is *this I* who is in this relation with *another I*, just like English alphabet H is painted by Cixous making it look like a *drawing* that connects two *I*s together by linking them with a horizontal stroke – H? It is this relation between self and the other that unfolds in writing and as writing that is explored here with reference to the writings by Shyam Selvadurai.

5.2   Who is Shyam Selvadurai?

This question, which is posed with *who*, cannot be provided with *one* answer; also, it cannot be answered just *once*. But, why does this question, which is generally taken as a simple question, suddenly become such a *problematic* thing? Is it that difficult to find *who* Shyam Selvadurai *is*? The question is certainly based on the idea of *identity* for it demands us to identify *who* Shyam Selvadurai *is*. But, then, does not the question itself carry the answer within*?* The answer is immediately available: *Shyam Selvadurai* – the name, the proper name. Yet, is it an adequate or a satisfactory answer? Can it serve the very purpose of posing such a question? Where does this question come from? *Who* can ask it or from *whom* can it be asked? Can it be asked from Shyam Selvadurai - the one who bears this name or can it be asked from others, other than Shyam Selvadurai?

5.2.1 Shyam amidst the Question of Identity

This kind of question is an integral part of everyday society, which is certainly a political society where individual identity becomes more significant. Consdering Sri Lankan political society, it is one of the modern nations which attempts to maintain clarity in identifying its citizens under rigorous demarcations and categories, and this idea has been already discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, posing this question – *Who is Shyam Selvadurai?* - especially in Sri Lankan context is significant since the one who is called Shyam Selvadurai is a Sri Lankan, since he was born in Sri Lanka and lived there until the age of eighteen.

However, if the question is typed on Google, since it is believed that Google – the internet – can bring us knowledge with efficiency, a page appears with so many links to search Shyam Selvadurai. At the same time, the right-corner of the page offers us a brief description introducing Shyam Selvadurai.[550] Nevertheless, would that description be adequate for the above question particularly in a context like Sri Lanka, especially war-time Sri Lanka, where everyone was supposed to carry the National Identity Card or Passport as the proof of identity whenever and wherever they travelled within the country? Then, it was a question that could be posed by anyone including Shyam himself, since war-time Sri Lankan society constantly demanded its citizens to be *conscious* about their identity. Also, it is undeniable that the pressure for a proper identity was much more on Sri Lankan Tamil community, since they had already been identified as *the* enemy of the Sri Lankan state. And, Shyam belongs to that era of war in Sri Lanka, especially the era of 1980s, more specifically 1983, when war against Tamils erupted in Colombo.

Before Shyam finds his links with Canada, he was related to Sri Lanka not through acquisition, but *by birth*. Shyam Selvadurai is a Sri Lankan *by birth*, which gives him Sri Lanka as his *birth-right*. It is the birth that marks the life, which gives him Sri Lanka *as* his life. Hence, for Shyam, Sir Lanka is both a *right* and a *gift* given *by birth*, and they together bind him to Sri Lanka, *legally* and *emotionally*. Sri Lanka is his home-land, also mother-land. It inhabits him more than he inhabits it, because it is mother who inhabits him. He draws breath and life from his mother – the land, the

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[550] Please check Who is Shyam Selvadurai? on https://www.google.co.in/ (accessed on 07.09.2015)

home, the country, and the womb to which he is attached deeply through his love.[551] Hence, more than the law of the birth-right, it is the gift of *love* which makes Shyam feels such a strong attachment to Sri Lanka. It is a bond that is *invented* through emotions. Thus, for Shyam, Sri Lanka is a bond, an attachment, and an affair that cannot be left behind. Yet, what is inevitable in Shyam's life is that his love and affection becomes fateful, and it subjects him to a question — question that is raised by others, therefore by Shyam's own self. In that sense, the question - *Who is Shyam Selvadurai?* - finds its significance at each moment that it erupts, and, it can never come to any end since there is no such ending — ending of Shyam as Shyam Selvadurai.

This question of identity is able to drive him *away* from his *home*, his *land*, and his *country*. In this deprivation, the above question becomes a legitimized question born in relation to Law — Sri Lankan Law, which is *under*, *within*, also *beyond* the power of judiciary. Here, the term *beyond* needs to be understood in relation to the power that the politics of the state had gained, especially from 1980s onward; because, it could *manipulate* the law of the judiciary for its own benefit. Nevertheless, it is in relation to Law that *everything* about Shyam becomes *problematic*. It is by Law that Shyam is summoned to find an answer to this question, where he begins to realize *what* his race, class, religion and gender *is*. And, all of them together make him realize his poverty *without power* — power that makes one powerful and strong enough to find an answer that is *legal*, *acceptable* and *admirable*. This sheer destitution that he feels is due to his *race*. Shyam Selvadurai is Sri Lankan-born Tamil. Thus, though he is Sri Lankan, he is a Tamil. This *racial* identity becomes the irreversible destiny that he is born with in this small island, which is dominated by the majority Sinhalese. Therefore, now, the question, *who is Shyam Selvadruai?*, finds its socio-political and historical significance, reminding us the ethnic conflict between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils.

In such a socio-political and historical situation, Shyam Selvadurai is identified as a Sri Lankan Tamil, *before* he is identified as a writer or a "novelist". Also, he is a *Sri Lankan Tamil* despite being a writer. Therefore, he also can be a

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[551] Strong attachment towards the mother runs through all the works written by Shyam. Particularly his third novel, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (2005), highlights, through the character of Amrith, the memory of an enduring relationship between mother and son.

terrorist; if not a terrorist by then — the time he was in Sri Lanka, he could have had the *potentiality* of *becoming* a terrorist. It is so, because Sri Lankan-Sinhala-Buddhist-nationalist discourse had suspected all Tamils in Sri Lanka or anywhere in the world to have affinities with the LTTE, who fought for separatism. Subsequently, the anti-terror drive operated by the then Sri Lankan government happened to be an *anti-Tamil* mission, where most of the Tamils were killed by the government out of *fear*. 1983 riots, known as Black July, thus becomes a crucial point in the nineteen year old Shyam's life in the sense that he is compelled *to leave* Sri Lanka. This departrure finally delivers him to Canada. It is due to this movement from Sri Lanka to Canada that Shyam becomes a "Sri Lankan Canadian". But, this destiny that Shyam faces is not only his destiny; it is also the destiny of many others, who are like Shyam, who had to leave Sri Lanka during war and, consequently, who became *refugees* in another land. In fact, this destiny that Shyam faces is not peculiar to the Sri Lankan refugees in another land or in their own land; it is also the fate that of everyone in the world who has been recognized, cornered, discriminated and neglected as the *other* by the ruling dominant ideologies. In that sense, Shyam is another name that is able to stand *for* many other names, just like Blanchot writes referring to Kafka and his works, projecting them as "a story from before Auschwitz", where everyone died baring the same name — "no matter what their names, all had the same name: Auschwitz."[552] Similarly, the name Shyam is not only a name that is inscribed only on him; it is also a name that can be *inhabited* by any other individual who face/faced the event of war that happened or that has been happening in Sri Lanka or anywhere else in the world. Therefore, *Who is Shyam Selvadurai?* is a question for which no answer can be given; because there is no *one* answer for this question, since there are *many* who can be Shyam Selvadurai or Shyam Selvadurai can be *many*. Thus, Shyam begins to *multiply* — multiply in *singularity*, according to which Shyam is nothing but *singularities*; *multiple singularities*. In this multiplicity in singularity, which makes anyone so complex in a way that one is not able to understand one's own self since there are many selves unfolding within the self, the very effort of finding an answer to such a question is *impossible*; However, it does not mean to say that this effort of finding an answer is abortive; rather, it is something *funny*; because, there is nothing *to find*.

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[552] Blanchot, 1999, p. 495

Hence, the question itself is a *funny* question, because answers that the question finds involve in a *play*.

Here, the word *funny* is important in two ways. One is in relation to language, while the other is in relation to Shyam. In the first, the significance is given to the meaning that the word *funny* carries. Accordingly, the word *funny*, which is an adjective in its grammatical function, at least stands for five kinds of meanings as follows: 1.causng laughter or amusement 2. Strange; peculiar 3. Arousing suspicion 4. Slightly unwell 5. Eccentric or slightly deranged. Considering these meanings, it also can be said that the word, which we frequently use in everyday language *cannot* be taken so lightly or casually, since it highlights *something* that *cannot* be placed *properly*. It is so, because *it* has something *peculiar*, which makes it look *strange*; yet, it is *not complete* strangeness, but *slight* strangeness. This *slight* strangeness that keeps appearing and disappearing cannot be identified in terms of *this* or *that*; it certainly has no face *as such*: though there is some face, it *cannot* be recognized. It is thus a face that cannot be identified, especially when there is light; yet it can be felt through its eyes that are widely open in darkness — the gaze. Those eyes stare at those, who come to identify it; it is a gaze full of questions that questions others – others and their faces which are coming in search of someone. They want to know *who* this *is*; *whose* face or gaze it *is*. But, is there anything *to know* here?

It is here the word *funny* becomes significant in relation to Shyam. He seems to have some *history* with this word. It is a *historical* word for him. In fact, it is Shyam who seems to be asking question: is there anything *to know about me*? *What* is there *to to say* about me — say from *my* side, which is also the *other's* side, when I have already been told *who I am* or *who I must* probably *be*? We feel that he is asking these questions from the world in which he attempts to find his voice. Shyam resists speech. He is *not* able to speak, for he has no language, since the language that he has been living with has excluded him. It has denied him a shelter within it. Hence, there is no space for him in that language. So, he begins to write; while writing, he *invents* a language that does not deny him anything or corner him. He invents this language through literature while writing that he does not want to talk: "I really don't want to

talk about it" because it's just complicated"[553]. It is complicated for him because he heard them saying that he is a "funny boy".

However, in his writings, it is not Shyam who begins to speak; rather, it is Shyam *through* his relations or Shyam *as* relations. Accordingly, *relations* of Shyam begin to unfold through his writings, where the two words "funny boy" that he had heard once during his childhood begin to *echo*. This echo is coming from the far away land which he had left behind while leaving to Canada. Then, what is this land from where this sound coming? Here, the far away land is ambiguous. On the one hand, it refers to Sri Lanka since it is the land that he had to leave while going to another land, Cananda; on the other hand, refers to his memory, it is like a land, a space, and a text within which so many things have been planted, inscribed, carved or written. His memory is like a land, a space, a text also a body that is full of *marks*. In that sense, Sri Lanka is his memory; from that memory land, he hears people calling him *funny* boy — the name, the title, and the laughter. He cannot help hearing it. He walks down the memory lane from where the noise is coming. He hurries his steps just like Arjie ran toward the sea with the torn sari in his hands. He is walking down; but, it is not easy to walk *down*. One cannot walk down only with the help of the legs. It is a task which cannot be initiated without *hands*. Hence, both hands and legs are needed to walk down. Now, Shyam is walking down with all the four limbs just like the one that Cixous projects on the ladder. It is his hands which need to move first on this ladder, which is the ladder of writing. He goes deep into the sea just like Amrith, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*[554] — sea full of memories and sea of memories within which he swims back and forth, from present to past and past to present, also from Canada to Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka to Canada. And, there, Shyam swims across two oceans – Atlantic and Indian – despite the geo-political borders that attempt to demarcate the enormous body of water between Canada and Sri Lanka. Yet, for him, who is already known as someone *funny*, therefore *unknowable*, this attempt of defining borders does not matter anymore. He does not attempt to define, because he does not desire for a definition that cages him *either* here *or* there. Moreover, he realizes that definitions have done only *violence* to him by fixing him into *this* or *that* identity. But, for a writer, who is ready to let go of everything, would a definition or an identity matter,

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[553] Shyam, 2005, pp. 104 - 105
[554] Ibid.

especially when he has *given up* on *belonging* to any identity *as such*?[555] There must have been a time: where he was deprived of any identity that he desired; where he was cornered and subjugated for desiring an identity of his own; where certain things that he liked to have in his possession were snatched or stolen by someone who was more powerful than him; where he was punished precisely because he willed *to desire*. Thus, the world must have despised him or tortured him for what he appeared to be, which he yet could not really be[556]. Now, at a different point of time, where he begins to write, he is going to *despise* the world, the order, the language and the power which had come to *subjugate* him *violently*. Shyam, who is already wounded with the violence enacted by different forms of rigid *power* that was based on Sri Lankan nationalism and the heterosexually-oriented-cultural-order and who has continued to survive through his traumatic experiences, now becomes *wild* and *violent*; he carries out violence in his own way. But, it is a different way of doing violence, for it is done through the *letter*; it is the "violence of the letter"[557] through *writing*. He writes. He writes in and through language, while doing violence to language. He *violates* the *given* language while creating *another* language, which is the language of the *other*. Hence, it is the other who begins to speak through his writing. It is other's voice that begins to resonate in this space created through letters through writing. Consequently, writing becomes the language and the voice of the other.

5.2.2   Shyam's Hyphen

Through writing, Shyam becomes the other and that other in Shyam begins to speak drawing this relation between *self* and the *other*.[558] In that sense, the one who writes is *no more* the same Shyam; he is *other than* Shyam. He cannot be reduced to any identity *as such*. There is no identity for the writer – Shyam. Identity of the writer *trembles* while writing, for writer is neither *this* nor *that*; also neither *here* nor *there*.

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[555] With regard to the question of the writer's identity, which is Shyam's identity, please see the introduction that Shyam has written for his edited work *Story-Wallah*, 2004, pp. 1 - 14
[556] Ibid, p. 2
[557] This is also a title of a chapter in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida, 1994, pp. 101 - 140
[558] Writing as that which draws the relationship between self and the other is explained by Cixous through drawing the letter H, which looks like a ladder, also like a relation between two *I*s. 1993, pp. 3 – 4. Similarly, Blanchot projects this relation in terms of he/it that occurs at the border of writing. 1992, pp. 3 - 20

Therefore, it is a futile effort to find Shyam within his work because he is never there to be found. At the same time, it is impossible to separate him completely from his writing, since he is the one who writes. Then, in writing, there is only a relation — relation from one to the other. It is a relation that is drawn or painted through writing, while writing itself appears as nothing but relation or an affair — of language, of thought, thus of everything. Shyam takes this affair or the link, which relates self and the other, as *hyphen*. He writes thus from "hyphen".[559] It is a space for him that comes to exist only through writing. Therefore, hyphen, which is writing, is the "space between" where he finds himself — himself as hyphen, which relates Sri Lanka *and* Canada, Tamil *and* Sinhalese, past *and* present, present *and* future, male *and* female, and heterosexuality *and* homosexuality. Thus, it is a "marvelous open space represented by the hyphen", and it is where, as he says, "the two parts of my identity jostle and rub against each other like tectonic plates, pushing up wards the eruption that is my work."[560] And, his work is works of language.

What do these works of language present? What are these works about? What does appear through these works of language? What does Shyam write?

Shyam and his works present *life*. They are *life-writing*. He *writes* life. Life *unfolds* through his works of language in the sense that *life*, *language* and *works* cannot be detached from each other. Accordingly, all of them together make a *body* in a way that they breathe life into each other, so that, through writing, *life-becomes-language-becomes-works-becomes-life*. Hence, Shyam's writings through language are texts. Also, since these texts are written by Shyam with his *body*, they are also *bodily-writing*. Shyam offers his own body to write in a way that it is his body that he *offers* as writing — the body that keeps *becoming* body all the time undergoing *transformations within*. Body itself *as* writing and writing itself *as* body.[561] He condemns his own body for this task — task of writing. Hence, it is his body, which is also life that he gives up for writing. His writing costs his *life*. Yet, he dares to give

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[559] Author Reading – Shyam Selvadurai – Clagary Public Library, published on December 9, 2014 on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDVS8qiDbmg (accessed on 09.09.2015)
However, the speech that is found in above mentioned website is in fact the introduction that Shyam wrote for his edited work, *Story-wallah*, 2004, pp. 1 – 14
[560] Shyam, 2004, p. 1
[561] In this regard, please see Cixous in her essay "Coming to Writing" in *"Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (1991) and some of her other essays that appear in *Stigmata* (2005).

away his life just like one gives one's own self in *love — for* love, *in the name of* love. One gives away one's own body, which is the very *personal* body, *in* love *for* love, because one *loves* — loves to love that which knows only *to give*; to give *everything* that one has as one's own to the *other, out of* love. Thus, giving away what one has *as* one's own, one ends up giving one's self away to the other, where he or she falls into *utmost* poverty.

But, does not it sound stupid — givng away everything in the sense that one gives one's own life to the other? Is it not an *extreme* way of giving or of giving *too* much? *Should* one give like that? Should not one keep some *limit* while giving — a limit in a way that one manages to keep some for his or her own self or save some for the self? Should not one save some for the self in order to *save* the *self*? It is for saving one's own self that one has to be careful in giving, while *giving away* things to others. In schools or any institution including family, community and religion, we are told, taught and advised such lessons of *giving*; there, we learn *how* to be economical in order to *manage* the things in life *for existence*. Thus, we learn to save — save for the future in order to take care of life. Hence, all these economic-lessons of saving are meant for saving *life* — life that is kept for future, which is a future life. Therefore, savings are meant for life's future, due to which both life and future become a *hope*. Thus, one hopes for life in *future* when one attempts to save. It is with this hope for future that one begins to *calculate* in *giving*. Accordingly, one does not give away everything to the extent that one ends up *giving* one's own self *away*. Instead, one gives what one *can* give or one is *able* to give. In our everyday life, this is *how* we give — according to our *capacity* and *possibility*. However, when comes to love, our way of giving is different. There, we give *differently* because love is a different kind of *giving*.[562]

5.3 Giving *out of love*

Yet, how does one calculate giving when one gives *out of love* in love? Idea of giving while calculating the benefits that one hopes to achieve for one's own self is

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[562] With regard to this idea of giving in the context of love, it is important to read Derrida in his *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, (1992b), and in his *The Gift of Death*, (1995b).

irrelevant in love, because one gives everything *out of love* when one is in love. There, one cannot give *adequately*. One needs to give more than what one has, when one gives *out of love*; thus, in love, one is never satisfied in giving *as if* one is *not* able to give *enough*. There is *no limit*. Therefore, in love, one gives *despite* the self. And, Cixous highlights such giving as a feminine way of giving; she calls it "feminine economy" — "an economy that can no longer put in economic terms. Wherever she loves, all the old concepts of management are left behind"[563]. However, one gives without a limit, because there is no limit *for* love. Such a *selfless* love would put the one who loves at a *risk*, in the sense that one risks one's own life in love. One sacrifices one's own self in love. Reading the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham through Kierkegaard, Derrida, in his *The Gift of Death*, writes a beautiful chapter about love and sacrifice in relation to ethical responsibility.[564] Hence, in love, one embraces one's own death for the *other*; one wills to embrace even death *out of love*.

We see such utmost *generosity* of love in Shyam's love for *writing*. He gives himself away for writing, because he *loves* writing. Writing is his love; his passion. He does not seem to stop himself *in* love — love for writing. For this love, he is ready to let go everything including his own self. So, he *surrenders* and *submits* to this love or begins to love without *waiting*, without *postponing* for future.[565] Thus, he loves as if he is in *urgency* — urgency to love. He cannot postpone this love, which, now, appears like a *responsibility* which that he *cannot* give up. In this responsibility that comes along with love, he *cannot* think about himself; he *cannot* think whether he is going to be benefitted at all, because it is an *urgent* moment where he just has to *act* without thinking of the consequences[566]. Therefore, it is out of love born through the

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[563] Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa" that appears in *Sign, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976),* p. 893
[564] Derrida, 1995b, pp. 53 - 81
[565] Idea of love and loving in the context of writing that is presented by Cixous as quoted bellow is significant in understanding what I have written here as Shyam's submission for the desire to write. 'Write? Taking pleasure as the gods who created the books take pleasure and give pleasure, *endlessly*; their bodies of paper and blood; their letters of flesh and tears; they put an end to the end. The human gods, who don't know what they've done; what their visions, their words, do to us. How could I have not wanted to write? When books took me, transported me, pierced me to the entrails, allowed me to feel their disinterested power; when I felt loved by a text that didn't address itself to me, or to you, but to the other; when I felt pierced through by life itself, which doesn't judge, or choose, which touches without designating; when I was agitated, torn out of myself, by love? Come to me, I will come to you. When love makes love to you, how can you keep from murmuring, saying it names, giving thanks for its caresses?' Cixous, 1991, p. 13
[566] Taking decisions out of ethical responsibility in an emergency without calculating the consequences is extensively discussed by Derrida in his essay "Ethics and Politics Today" that appears in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971 – 2001,* 2002a, pp. 295 - 314

very response to the other that Shyam gives away his entire self along with his body for writing. Hence, Shyam's texts are *body-texts*, where body itself begins to become a text — text that is written at every moment of writing, which is always a *writing-moment* that never exists *before* or *after* writing – through the act of writing; writing-moment emerges, erupts or appears at the very moment of writing. Hence, each writing-moment is a bodily-felt moment in the sense that each text is a text *out of body*, where body itself ends up becoming a text. And, a text never ceases *becoming* a text, since text, as Derrida writes,[567] are always exposed to the other — *outside*; they are so vulnerable and anything can happen to them. Therefore, these texts are also life itself and that life is everyone's life. They bear similar destinies in the sense that they are also exposed to outside, and it is this exposure that makes them *survive*[568]. Thus, *in writing*, language, texts and being or life come together in a way that all of them appear as a mere attempt of *survival*. One has to survive not for one's self, but *for* the other and *in the name of the other*, so that one carries the other along with him/her in the *memory* that is going to come *despite* and *beyond* death. Hence, Shyam gives himself away for this responsibility of having to survive, *just like* a text that is separated from the writer; a child that is detached from its parents; a lover or a friend that is separated from the beloved. There, Shyam *echoes* Blanchot at the border of writing: "At the border of writing, always having to live without you."[569] Hence, Shyam is *mourning*; his works are "works of morning" that happen "just following the death"[570] of a loved one.

He mourns through his writing. His words are nothing but tears, sobs, sighs, and murmurs. Yet, this *mourning* is his *responsibility* as a survivor. He survives death

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[567] Derrida, in his *Roundtable on Translation*, discusses the idea of economy of a text where he explains how a text never ceases becoming a text precisely because of its detachment from the author and exposure to outside, 1985, pp. 156 - 157

[568] In his essay "Des Tour De Babel" that appears in *Acts of Religion* (2002b), Derrida writes how texts manage to survive in and through translation, where he asserts the *impossibility* of translation as the *very imperative* for attempting the im-possible translation. pp. 104 - 134

[569] Blanchot, 1992, p. 7

[570] The phrase "works of mourning" finds its direct reference to Derrida's work, *The Work of Mourning* (2001a), in which he explains how one mourns through writing. Here, Derrida, mourning over the death of Roland Barthes and other philosophers and friends, presents mourning through writing as both promise and responsibility that one has taken in the name of the other. And, this mourning is to "write following the death, not after, not long after the death by returning to it, but just following the death, upon or the on the occasion of the death, at the commemorative gatherings and tributes, in the writings "in memory" of those who while living would have been my friends, still present enough to me that some "declaration", indeed some analysis or "study," would seem at the moment completely unbearable.' pp. 49 - 50

while becoming a survivor of other's death. Thus, he survives many deaths — his own deaths and other's deaths. Through surviving deaths of the others, he continues to be responsible to mourn over *others*. It is the only way through which they would not be forgotten or left behind. Also, as he writes in his *The Hungry Ghosts*[571], he should take up this responsibility toward the others who are dead, yet continue to appear as ghosts beyond death, for he is the only one who can attempt to redeem them through giving *danas*[572] and passing merits of his deeds to them — those who have become "*peretayas*" after death, with a "huge belly" that desires to eat much, yet having only a very small mouth[573]. They have become "*peretayas*" because they had desired so much when they lived; yet, those desires remained unfulfilled till the time of their death. If he does not take up this responsibility in order to "redeem" them, they would continue to be "*peretayas*" with unfulfilled desires and would *haunt* the living ones. Hence, this mourning is not only a feeling, but also responsibility and promise that is kept *before* death — *to mourn* over death. That is what Derrida writes in his *Work of Mourning*[574] through which he mourns death of his friends. It is also a promise that is kept in the name of love, in the sense that one promises to love *beyond* and *despite* death.

Then, we meet Shyam as someone who writes, while standing in this "space between", which can be related to many aspects, such as race, nation, religion, gender, life and death. Whatever he expresses through his writing highlights this *inexplicable space* that anyone may fall into, where one is not able to locate one's own self to one particular place or position any more. In that sense, "space between" delivers the very impossibility of belonging to any identity; it is a space that can be depicted only

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[571] Selvadurai, 2013

[572] *dana* is the Sinhala word that stands for the English word almsgiving. Giving *danas* to Buddhist monks or any other person is a ritual in Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist culture. Especially, they are given *in the name of the dead ones*, because, according to Buddhism, it is believed that dead ones who were not able to quench their desires would be reborn as *perethayas* (a form of ghost) and would continue to come after someone who is living since it is that person from whom the dead person had expected love and care *while living*, *yet not received*. It is to redeem those dead ones who would become *perethayas* due to this unsatisfied desire, *danas* are given to others by the living relatives of the dead ones. This kind of *dana* is given especially on the *seventh day* after the death, then, on the day by which completion of three months happen. After the *dana* ceremony that happens in the completion of three months, it is not compulsory to offer *dana* in the name of the same dead person. However, most of the people in Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist community continue offering *dana* even after the period of three months.

[573] This is how Shyam, in his *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013), has described the way *perethaya* looks. pp. 24 - 25

[574] Derrida, 2001a

through a *hyphen*, which is writing, since hyphen can be seen only in and through writing.[575]

Therefore, Shyam is writing from the place of a "hyphen". It is capable of relating and positing everything and everyone together *in relation*. It *marks* a relation. Moreover, it is like a passage or a bridge across which so many *things* and *people* can *pass*; it is a space where *many things* can happen, since it is a space where *anything* can happen. But, such a space can be *invented* only through writing for writing *invents*: it invents that which has not yet been invented[576]. Accordingly, it is able to invent a space for that which has not got a space, because writing *spaces* while creating a *space*. Hence, Shyam *invents* a space — a "hyphen" space, where identities tremble and oscillate due to the relation between self and the other, despite socio-cultural-political categories that are linguistically marked and defined. In that sense, he invents a world that is determined not by reasons and consciousness; but by *passion* and *emotions*, through which one is related to the other *despite borders*. Then, it is also a world where borders or limits begin to fail and disappear in a way that there are no more limits which would limit *him* — the *writer*, Shyam. For him, this world invented *through* writing is like ocean, where he can *swim freely* while experiencing enormous freedom. He swims in the ocean of *language* — an enormous body of water, because swmming, *like* writing, is a *passion* for him. And, Shyam swims in *language-sea*; there, he swims like: Arjie does *as Funny Boy*[577]; Balendran does during his life in *Cinnamon Gardens*[578]; Amrith who is *Swimming in The Monsoon Sea*[579]; or Shivan does in *The Hungry Ghosts*[580] — his *relations*, his *characters*, and his *otherness*.

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[575] This idea of hyphen, which is possible only in the context of writing, is compatible with Derrida's idea of différance that he explains in relation to "silent writing" in his essay "Differance", which appears in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, 1973, pp. 129 - 160
[576] For further knowledge regarding this idea of invention, please see Derrida, in his essay "Psyche: Invention of the Other" that appears in *Acts of Literature*, 1992a, pp. 310 - 343
[577] Selvadurai, 1994
[578] Selvadurai, 1998
[579] Selvadurai, 2005
[580] Selvadurai, 2013

5.4   Shyam's *Funny Boy*

Funny Boy, published in 1994, is Shyam's first work. The story begins with a *flashback*. Thus, at the very outset, Shyam makes a relation with past that has certainly gone with the time and can *never* be brought back. It is *irreversible* — the past. But, how can one say that and be convinced with it unless one tries to make an attempt to reverse it? Would one just give up on worrying about that past? Past is *gone* and it *cannot* be reversed — certainty. On the other hand, though it is a *gone* or a *dead* past over which nothing can be done, one *cannot help* of going there. In fact, one does not *go* there; rather it *comes* back time to time — *without* seeking any *permission*. Shyam sees this *coming* of *past*; he says, "like a leopard stalking its prey through tall grass, a man's past life pursues him, waiting for the right moment to pounce."[581] It is to such *sudden* visits of past that one is constantly *exposed* vulnerably. This exposure is *vulnerable* or this exposure throws someone into such *vulnerability*, since it is *able* to come at any point of time, *paralyzing* all the efforts that one has taken *to be shut off* from past. Therefore, though past is irreversible, it keeps visiting us *across* time and space in a manner that one cannot be *done with it*.

Now, *Funny Boy*, the title of the work, is a word and a name that is *coming from* past; someone *still* hears it; it, despite being an utterance that he heared many years ago, continues to *echo* in his ears, as if it is not a *thing of past* but a *word* or a *name* that is going to resonate forever. It is *through* this *relation* to his past that Arjie is able to understand that, which he could not understand at the moment when he actually heard it — "Funny Boy". Hence, the story begins marking this irreversible relation with past with which Arjie continues to live. He remembers how he spent his childhood especially during "spend-the-days". "BESIDES CHRISTMAS and other festive occasions, spend-the-days were the days most looked forward to by all of us, cousins, aunts, and uncles."[582] The story that begins with these lines is set in Sri Lanka where Arjie had spent his childhood before moving to Canada after 1983 riots that happened in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Who is Arjie?

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[581] Selvadurai, 2013, p. 319
[582] Selvadurai, 1994, p. 1

Arjie is the central figure in *Funny Boy*. The story is about relations that Arjie had with others and how these relations continue to affect him despite time and space. In that sense, Arjie is another name that is given to unexplainably *complicated* and *strange* relationships that one would *stumble on* while walking along the passage of life. And, life becomes worse when they begin to make him *feel guilty*. Here, the question to be raised is that is Arjie *complicated* in his *nature*? What is *it* that makes him *look strange*, and, thereby becoming a stranger to others?

Arjie is the younger son of Mr. and Mrs. Chelvaratnam, a Tamil family living in Colombo. He has a brother whose name is Diggy and a sister – Sonali. For the first time, Arjie appears in the story, titled, "Pigs can't fly" – the first story in the novel – as a boy who is eagerly waiting for Sunday in order to go to "spend-the-day" in his grandparents' house with his cousins, because, as he thinks, "[F]or one glorious day a month we were free of paternal control and the ever-watchful eyes and tale-bearing tongues of the house of servants."[583] However, even in his grandparents' house, there is no such enormous freedom, since Ammachi and Janaki are "supposedly in-charge" to supervise "fifteen grandchildren". Janaki, the servant, is the one "to be appealed to only in the most dire emergencies", while Ammachi, the grandmother, "[L]ike the earth-goddess in the folktales, she was not to be disturbed from her tranquility", because, "[T]o do so would have been the cause of a catastrophic earthquake."[584] So, they – the children – develop and refine a system of handling conflict and settling dispute by themselves in order to minimize interference by the in-charges. There are two things that formed the framework of this system: "territoriality" and "leadership". Accordingly, the area around the house is territorially divided into two: "front garden" and "back garden". The front garden belongs to boys where they mostly play cricket, and the back garden is the territory that belongs to girls. As Arjie sees, in the territory that belongs to boys, there are two factions that struggle for power: "one led by Meena, the other by my brother", since Meena, a female cousin of Arjie, is included in this group of boys. The second territory, which is called "the girls", includes all the female cousins in the family except Meena. However, the *strange* thing, which can be seen in this territory, is that Arjie, who *happened* to be a boy, is *also included* there, and Arjie feels very happy about it. He is happy because it is the space that he *wanted*

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[583] Ibid, p. 2
[584] Ibid, p. 3

him to be *in*. "It was to this territory of "the girls", confined to the back garden and the kitchen porch, that I seemed to have gravitated naturally, my earliest memories of those spend-the-days always belonging in the back garden of my grandparents' home. The pleasure the boys had standing for hours on a cricket field under the sweltering sun, watching the batsman run from crease to crease, was incomprehensible to me."[585]

5.4.1 Shyam-Arjie: Desire of a Woman

"For me, the primary attraction of the girls' territory was the potential for the free play of fantasy. Because of my imagination, I was selected as leader. Whatever the game, be it the imitation of adult domestic functions or the enactment of some well-loved fairy story, it was I who discovered some new way to enliven it, some new twist to the plot of familiar tale. Led by me, the girl cousins would conduct a raid on my grandparents' dirty-clothes basket, discovering in this odorous treasure trove saris, blouses, sheets, curtains with which we invented costumes to complement our voyages of imagination."[586]

Arjie, who thus becomes a part of "the girls", always gets the chance to play women's roles in their games. Also, these female cousins of Arjie do not mind him becoming "much-beleaguered heroine of these tales" like "Cinderella or Thumbelina" or becoming a chef if the game is going to be "cooking-cooking", since he *plays* the *role better*. However, Arjie's favorite game among all the "varied and fascinating games" is "bride-bride"; because, he says, "[I]n it, I was able to combine many elements of the other games I loved, and with time bride-bride, which had taken a few play initially, became an event that spread out over the whole day and was planned for weeks in advance. For me the culmination of this game, and my ultimate moment of joy, was when I put on the clothes of the bride. In the late afternoon, usually after tea, I, along with the older cousins, would enter Janaki's room. From my sling-bag I would bring out my most prized possession, an old white sari, slightly yellow with age, its border torn and missing most of its sequins. The dressing of the bride would now begin, and then, by the transfiguration I saw taking place in Janaki's cracked full-

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[585] Ibid.
[586] Ibid, pp. 3 - 4

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length mirror – by the sari being wrapped around my body, the veil being pinned to my head, the rouge put on my cheeks, lipstick on my lips, kohl around my eyes – I was able to leave the constrains of myself and ascend into another, more brilliant, more beautiful self, a self whom this day was dedicated, and around whom the world, represented by my cousins putting flowers in my hair, draping the palu, seemed to revolve. It was a self magnified, like the goddesses of the Sinhalese and Tamil cinema, larger than life; and like them, like the Malini Fonsekas and the Geetha Kumarasinghes, I was an icon, a graceful, benevolent, perfect being upon whom the adoring eyes of the world rested."[587]

The above quoted passage is very significant since it foregrounds Arjie's desire *to be a girl*, by which he can *become* a "*bride*" — a beautiful bride like a cinema actress: that too, not just any cinema actress, but Malini Fonseka and Geetha Kumarasinghe — two popular cinema actresses in Sri Lanka, who majorly played the role of heroines in Sinhala cinema. Their popularity is due to their beauty and cleverness. Arjie's imagination of a bride is the imagination of *beauty*, and it is this beauty that he adores so much. Moreover, *for him*, this beauty is the beauty *of* a *woman* and *being a woman*; therefore, beautiful is nothing but the woman and the world in which she lives. Thus, Arjie finds women's world as the *most beautiful* world, and, he loves this beauty to the extent that he *also wants to become* one of *them*. It is his *passion*. For that, he is *ready* to *give away anything* that he has in his possession *just* to embrace his love — love *for* women. Yet, it is not a love for women in the sense of keeping or *possessing* a woman so that she becomes his *property*; but a love to the extent that he *wants* to *become* a woman so that he *is* a *woman*. Through becoming a woman, he becomes more beautiful and more brilliant. As well as, he thinks that becoming a woman is the best way, *through* which he can be the *very becoming*, for woman herself is nothing but *becoming*. Thus, it is through his desire to become a woman that he envisages the scope of *feminine*. Consequently, the *very* space of feminine becomes *larger* — larger than life. In that sense, to become a woman is to *step out* from the world full of *constraints* and *be free* — free to *become* anyone or anything, because, it is *only* woman who has got this *in-born* capacity to become, since she is *undefinable*. She is undefinable because there is no *one way* to

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[587] Ibid, pp. 4 - 5

define her[588]. There are *multiple* ways to define her. Accordingly, to be a woman is to have the potentiality *to outnumber* the numbers — number of definitions, images, meanings; *to untie* the ties that are tied around her just like Arjie's mother unties her sari when she returns home and puts some other set of clothes on her. Thus, through Arjie's thoughts and language which unfold through Shyam's writing, woman becomes the very space of the *multiple*; also, she spaces for the multiple as if she is the *locus* of multiple. He views feminine as the space of *multiple possibilities*: and, each possibility is a *different* possibility, due to which they all differ from each other, yet all are capable of appearing within the same space that could yet be called as *feminine*. It is possible so, for feminine *cannot* be defined and reduced to any image or meaning *as such*.

5.4.2   Desire across Borders

Arjie's desire to be a woman does not desire a woman with a particular figure; rather, it is a desire *to be* a woman without any figure *as such* or who *cannot* be *appropriated* to any figure *as such*. He does not need *this* or *that* figure; he desires all kinds of figures — figures that he has already seen, also those which he would see in future. Hence, it is a desire that is not going to fade away, because it is a desire for someone who is not going to cease. Desire and woman go hand-in-hand; they are *open-ended*; they are *in-finite*. That is what we see through the long paragraph that is quoted above. His favorite game "bride-bride" itself is a game of combinations — combinations of many other games. That is the reason for his love for this game that is "planned for weeks in advance". It also can be seen that Arjie's idea of becoming a bride itself does not have any *particular* image of a bride, because *that* bride which he wants to *become* is a bride *full of* combinations. Certainly, it suggests that there is a bridal figure that he adores and that he wants to become. He *imagines* a bride: it is *that imagined* bride, who is in his *imagination* that *he wants to become*. He "put[s] on the clothes of the bride", which is a sari – a white sari: after that, there are other things such as "the veil being pinned", "the rogue", "lipstick", "kohl", and "flowers" that he wants to wear in order to become the bride — the bride *full of brides*. Further, this

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[588]For a better understanding regarding this idea please see "The Laugh of the Medusa" in *Signs, Vol. 1, No. 4. (Summer, 1976)*, pp. 875 – 893, and *The Newly Born Woman* (1986) written by Cixous.

bride is not *any* bride that *any* girl could become; rather, he wants to become a bride who has got *combinations* of many *other* looks, through which she would look like "goddesses". But, which goddesses does he think of here? Arjie seems to have seen some images of goddesses that are kept in Sinhala-Buddhist temples or Hindu temples in Sri Lanka; he has some familiarity with some images of goddesses. That is why he compares those two cinema actresses to goddesses. However, it is significant to note that, here, he does not mention any particular name of any goddess, such as Durga, Kali, Saraswathi, Lakshmi, Pattini etc.. His analogy is *different*; he wants to be "like the goddesses of the Sinhalese and Tamil cinema". And, these goddesses are the Malini Fonseka*s* and the Geeta Kumarasinghe*s*. For Arjie, these two actresses are *more than two* actresses. He sees them in *multiplicity*. In his imagination, Malini Fonseka and Geeta Kumarasinghe *multiplies* in to *many* — *many* women; *many* actresses; *many* goddesses, therefore, *many* brides. So doing, not only he expands the space of *his* imaginary bride, but also *undoes* the socio-cultural *border* that separates and distinguishes cinema actresses *from* the goddesses, for goddesses belong to realm of *religion* from where the idea of *divinity* and *holy* emanates. Hence, in comparing these two actresses with goddesses, Shyam-Arjie *transforms* the *given* idea of *divinity*, through which *divinity* and *cinematic* "leak(s)ing into each other like flavours when you cook"[589] and becomes *indistinguishable* from each other, *as if* cinematic figures themselves are none other than goddesses or vice versa. However, this analogy would not be accepted by the *given* domain of *religion*; it would be considered as *blasphemous*. Yet, the question of *acceptability* and *agreeability* does not matter to Arjie, who is ready to leave everything that is *given* to him in order to become a bride or a woman. In *his* world, what matters is possibility of *becoming*. It is his desire; passion; love through which he finds his happiness. And, it is for this happiness, which has no limits and borders, that Arjie is ready to cross the *given* borders, which separate actresses *from* goddesses and goddesses *from* brides. Consequently, Arjie's world is a world where actresses, goddesses and brides can exchange their positions with each other while mixing with each other so that everyone *runs into each other* becoming other than *who* or *what* they *already are*. Accordingly, Malini Fonseka and Geeta Kumarasinghe, also their cinematic-characters are also transformed into some *godly* figures. However, the most important thing among all these possibilities is that,

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[589] This phrase is from Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, 2006, p. 44

in this world of Arjie, he himself *can become* a girl in order *to become* a bride, who looks like *goddesses* and *actresses*; who looks like *many different* brides, yet with all the looks of *goddess-looking-actresses* and *actresses-looking-goddesses* who can be named *as* Malini Fonseka and Geeta Kumarasinghe, at the same time. Arjie materializes this happiness through this game, "bride-bride". And, as the story proceeds, we see how he, as seven-years old boy, takes any risk in his life to put himself in this play that delivers him to "ultimate moments of joy".

Here, as far as Arjie's happiness is concerned, it is not found within the given world in which he lives. He has to *invent* it — invent it from elsewhere or from *outside*. Accordingly, he invents a play, within which a different world opens up. It is through an invented world that he invents another Arjie, a different Arjie, who is happy through inventing himself as *other*; other of the man — *woman*, the feminine. Thus, Arjie invents a *feminine* within him; now, he is that feminine. He becomes feminine that is going *to become* all the time by *becoming-feminine*; because feminine can *never* be invented, since feminine is the *other* and the *otherness* that has to be invented, constantly. It is the uninventable other that he is trying to invent in his each effort of becoming the bride in the "bride-bride". Arjie is thus trying to invent something through this play. But, as we know, Arjie himself is none other than an invention. He is Shyam's invention and Shyam invents Arjie through his language through writing, where Arjie has been invented — invented as a character in his novel while inventing another character within himself in relation to the play that he invents within his own invention through writing. Writing thus has become the way through which this world of Arjie, also of Shyam has been invented. It is a world of writing, which is a world invented through language: at the same time, that invented world of language has been invented through writing. Now, it is difficult to say who invents whom; yet there is an invention — an invention of Shyam *through* Arjie or Arjie *through* Shyam. Hence, there is a relation that can be projected only through writing, drawing and painting a *hyphen* between Shyam and Arjie: Shyam-Arjie and Arjie-Shyam.

Thus, Shyam-Arjie is a boy who *crosses* his *given* male-gender *to become* a girl, and no one stops him from doing *so*, for he is in the world of childhood where freedom is not defined so categorically and rigidly. Therefore, no one seems to object

his childhood innocence. Innocence of a child cannot be defined, structured and fixed, since it is difficult to grasp their whims and fancies through the *lens* of reason and order. They are not *methodical* because there are *no methods* for them. Therefore, as Shyam writes, childhood is a "safe harbor"[590]. It is within this "safe harbor" that Arjie is *able* to move *freely across* these *given* borders, especially borders of gender and *gendered*-borders, experiencing his freedom and happiness. He is able to do so, since he does not understand *what* any sort of *border* is meant for or whether there is any border *at all*.

5.4.3 Shyam's Bride

However, this freedom of Arjie is threatened when his role in bride-bride is challenged by her cousin Tanuja who returned from abroad and whom is "renamed" as "Her Fatness" by "the girls". The game "bride-bride" has got its own rules and those rules have not burdened anyone in the group of "the girls" until Tanuja questions them. Tanuja is accepted by "the girls" for the play; yet, as per the rules of the game, "she must necessarily begin at the bottom", since she is a recent arrival in the group.

But, what is this bottom with which she has to begin?

"In the hierarchy of bride-bride, the person with the least importance, less even than the priest and the page boys, was the groom. It was a role we considered stiff and boring, that held no attraction for any of us. Indeed, if we could have dispensed with that role altogether we would have, but alas it was an unfortunate feature of the marriage ceremony. […] Her Fatness should take over the role."[591] Hence, beginning at the bottom means to take up the role of the groom, since it is the *least* important in the game. It is due to this less significance that the role of the groom lies at the bottom of the play. Now, Tanuja, who is a girl, accepts to play this *male* character "without a murmur" for "two spend-the-days". Certainly, as a new comer to the play, she has to play the role, because that is how she can *make* and *mark* her *entry* in the play. Her acceptance to play the groom would qualify her to be a part

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[590] Selvadurai, 1994, p. 5
[591] Ibid, p. 6

of the play, through which she would gain the right to climb the ladder of *hierarchy*. It is with this desire that Tanuja seems to be receptive regarding the offer. Yet, she is aware that she plays the least important character, which is "stiff and boring": also it is a male-character, since it is a *marriage between* a male and a female. A girl playing a male-character in a game like "bride-bride" would not happily be welcomed by a girl, because according to the tradition of Sri Lankan marriages, bride *should be* a female and groom should be a male. That is why the groom is always played by Sonali, younger sister of Arjie. She played it because, as Arjie recalls, "Sonali, with her patient good nature, but also sensing that I might have a mutiny on my hands if I asked anyone else to play the role."[592] However, the "third spend-the-day" becomes crucial, especially to Arjie, because Tanuja *resists* playing the groom anymore and demands the role of the bride for her. "I want to be the bride", she shouts seizing her moustache and flinging it to the ground. She *challenges* Arjie's position through her *demand*, and this demand of Tanuja is a *logical* one. It is a *logical* and *reasonable* demand where emotions and desires have nothing much to say. The logic *presented* and *represented* by her demand erupts at the moment when Arjie denies her the role of the bride. It is at this point that they begin to argue and this argument is significant to be quoted here, since it causes *ruptures* in Arjie's happy world.

"'You can't," I finally said.

"Why not?" Her Fatness demanded. "Why should you always be the bride? Why can't someone else have a chance too?"

"Because…" Sonali said, joining in. "Because Arjie is the bestest bride of all."

"But *he's not even a girl*, [emphasis added]" Her Fatness said, closing on the lameness of Sonali's argument. "*A bride is a girl, not a boy* [emphasis added]." She looked around at the other cousins and then at me. "A boy *cannot be* the bride [emphasis added]," she said with deep conviction. "A girl *must be* the bride [emphasis added]."

I stared at her, defenseless in the face of her logic.

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[592] Ibid.

Fortunately, Sonali, loyal to me as always, came to my rescue. She steeped in between us and said to Her Fatness, "If you can't play properly, go away. We don't need you."

"Yes!" Lakshmi, another of my supporters, cried.

[…]

Her Fatness looked at us for a moment and then her gaze rested on me.

"You're a pansy," she said, her lips curling in disgust.

We looked at her blankly.

"A faggot," she said, her voice rising against our uncomprehending stares.

"A sissy!" she shouted in desperation.

It was clear by this time that these were insults.'[593]

As discussed above, Arjie's world among girl-cousins has been a happy world, where no one questioned him; no one challenged him. Everyone wanted him to be a part of their world since they all were happy with his company despite him being actually a *boy*. It is Tanuja who breaks into this space from *outside* and attempts to *snatch* Arjie's position *away* from him, because that is the position which *she* desires within the play. It is *just* a *game* or a *play* for her where positions or roles can be *exchanged* among each other. Also, it is a game that is to be played by *girls*, because it is girls who *become* brides. Here, Tanuja attempts to relate the game to *real* world. Accordingly, despite being a game, it is a *part* of the *real* world or *within* the *real* world; it is *also* a *representation* of everyday world that she sees around her, due to which *form* and the *content* of the game has to match with the *order* of the same. According to this knowledge of Tanuja, girls are the ones, who *should* actually play the bride. She has *not* seen a boy *becoming* bride: it is *impossible* for a boy to *become* a bride. In fact, it is not impossible; rather it is *unacceptable*. *Impossibility* is *determined* by this *unacceptability*. In Tanuja's world, which is also the everyday world, a boy can be accepted *only* as *groom*, since it is boys who are *to become*

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[593] Ibid, pp. 10 - 11

grooms. So, in front of her argument, everyone becomes *wordless*, while Arjie feels "defenseless". This *silence* and *defenselessness* is due to the logical truth that Tanuja brings out *justifying* her request to be the *bride*. The truth that she attempts to highlight here is the *truth* that everyone is *familiar* with. Therefore, no one can object her, because she tells *the* truth; presents and re-presents *the* truth – the *given*. It is *the* truth that would be *defended* by anyone in Sri Lanka, because, it is already a *defended* truth to the extent that the idea of *defending* itself seems to have vanished, while making it *as ultimate* truth that no one would even think of questioning or challenging. Hence, at this moment, Tanuja is well saved and safe in her *position*. Tanuja *is the truth* that is *unquestionable*, *unchallengeable* and *immovable* even on the basis of playing a game. She is not ready to play *with truth*; she does not want to *risk* truth. Thus, it has become a truth that *cannot* be risked even for a game; and one should *not* play with truth.

Yet, it is *that* truth which is now at *risk*, due to Arjie's choice to play the bride in the game. He is the one *who* is playing *with* truth. *So doing*, he has *challenged* truth. Not only has he challenged it; *while* challenging it, *on the other hand*, he also has created *another* truth. That is the truth which we hear through Sonali's demand: she demands that Arjie plays the bride.[594] In that sense, it is a *struggle* between two kinds of truth: one is *the given*, and, the other is *the created* or *invented*. Yet, the *given* truth itself is *another creation*, another invention; therefore, it does *not*/*cannot* have any better position when compared with the later. Accordingly, the *given* truth can be *contested* by the *other* as the way Arjie has been doing playing "the bestest bride of all", *despite* the fact that he *is* a *boy*. So doing, Arjie has created another world, where he and other female cousins are happy.

He has been living in his *invented* world. That is invented *through* the game. *But*, it is not *merely* a *game*; it is *both*: the game and *more than* or *beyond* the game. He becomes a girl in order to become the bride in the "bride-bride". At the same time, *on the other hand*, he cannot become a girl *without stepping out* from the world that is *already given*. When his situation is compared with the other female cousins in relation to the game, it is obvious that *those* female cousins *do not have to* give up on their *real world affairs* in order to enter the game, since the game itself is believed to

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[594] Ibid, p. 10

be a *necessary part* of their *real life* too. On the other hand, though there is a necessity of one of the female cousins becoming the groom, it does not appear to be such a complicated act. At least, Arjie and her cousins do not find it to be a difficulty *probably* because it is also another possibility of *becoming* in the context of feminine — woman becoming *man*.[595] Shyam, here, reminds us the enormous space that can only be enjoyed by a woman as a *being* who is *in-finitely becoming*. The game "bride-bride" itself is a game *of becoming*, because, no one can be a bride at the very outset. It is true that it is girls who can play bride and who would become brides someday in their real life too. In that sense, every girl has the *potentiality* of *becoming* a bride, someday. And, there is a procedure of becoming a bride; it needs certain things, which are not used by girls on everyday basis; because, it is a *special* occasion in a girl's life. So, being a girl is a *qualification* to *become* a bride. Yet, when she becomes a bride she has to wear a different dress, which is called *bridal* dress. Now, is bridal dress a *different* dress?

Certainly, it *is*. We hear Shyam's murmur *through* Arjie. Bridal dress is *significant* since it is worn not by the one who *can* become *a* bride, but by the one who *actually* becomes *the* bride. In general, as far as the girls are concerned, they wear *different* kinds of clothes. If not different kinds of clothes, they can wear the *same* cloth *differently*. In that sense, what matters is not the cloth, but the *capability* that women have got with themselves to do many *different* things with the *same* thing, just like writer does *different* and *multiple* works with *same* language. Accordingly, women are crafts(wo)men, those who can produce such nice handy-crafts. These craftswomen are like a writer, who is capable of *creating* many works *doing* things *to/with* language. Writer does the works that a painter, carpenter, weaver, tailor, blacksmith, or a goldsmith does in order *to create* — the work. Hence, writer is also like a woman, who is capable of *becoming* creating *different* and *multiple* things on the basis of the *same* material. Thus, they both are *creative*, and, their *creativity* has *no limit*. In that sense, what we see is the *fluidity* of the *feminine*, which presents her as *undefinable*. Therefore, there is no *particular person* that can be figured under this *figure* or the *body* called *feminine*; it is a *third* body or a *third* person — *she*. Thus, feminine body is no-body *per se*; but, *she* is still a *body* that is *flexible* and *supple*.

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[595] In this regard, it is significant to read the essay by Cixous, "Tancredi Continues". This essay appears in her *"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, 1991, pp. 78 - 103

Moreover, this flexible and supple body of the feminine is also a body that is *exposed* to *outside*, and shocks are brought *in* through this exposure to outside — *outside* body. It is a body that *absorbs* shocks coming from *outside*. While absorbing shocks which attack the *materiality* of the body — the skin or the texture, body *undoes* its own materiality in the sense that it becomes *another* body. But, does it happen only with the *feminine* body, because this idea of *sensitivity* is common to *every* body — both male and female? If so, why do we highlight only the female body here?

5.4.4   She Feels

Sensitivity and *sensibility* that is *bodily-felt* is common to both male and female. Yet, the problem is that whether both genders are ready to *accept* this *weakness* of the *body*. However, is sensibility or sensitivity weakness — weakness of the body? Should we consider it *as* weakness? If it it is weakness, is this weakness really a *bad* or a *negative* thing that can happen to the body? One has to take a long detour to think answers for such questions. It is a tedious job and one has to be patient to think — think about the body or to think about one's self through acknowledging one's own body. Now, to acknowledge one's own body is to acknowledge one's own self – the individual with the body; an *individual* body. Yet, if one begins to acknowledge what one's body *is*, it is to acknowledge one's own feelings that run through body or that certainly affect the body. Then, to think of one's own body is to feel the body *as* a body that *feels* — feels many things. And, this feeling of body is due to its exposure to *outside* from where various things, such as cold, heat, rain, wind, dust, noise, etc. come; these things are related to the nature and its reactions, to which *every*body is *exposed*. However, apart from that, there are some other things to which the body is exposed, and these things come from *others*, such as *other* humans and animals, where one is *affected* by the *other*. In both the cases, one is exposed to certain *attacks* or *shocks* and these attacks can be *favorable* and *un-favourable*. What is important here is not the *nature* or the *quality* of those attacks, but the fact that they all are *attacks* that can come at any moment without seeking permission from the *self*. While coming to us, they are able to do certain things *to us* and we are not able to realize *what* they have done *to us* until *sometime passes*. It would *take time* for us to realize *what* they have done to us and, therein, *what has happened to us*.

Nevertheless, the question here is not regarding the *exposure* of our bodies *to outside* and things coming to *us* from outside. It is *unquestionable*, since this exposure *is not* initiated from our side; becaue, it *cannot be* initiated *intentionally*. It is not some action that we perform *consciously*. It *happens* to *us,* because it has *already happened* to us in a way that we are *already exposed*, and we have *no control* over it, since it is *beyond* the *power* that we have over ourselves. Yet, there is something that *only* we – the individuals with their bodies – are able to do, and, that is in relation to the *effect* of this exposure. It is the effect that has *direct impact* on us. Hence, one has to *accept* that one is *susceptible* to be *affected* by *outside*. If one is ready to accept *this vulnerabilty*, it suggests the existence of *someone*/*something*, which is *more* powerful than the *self* and thus capable of coming to self as per its *decision*. In that sense, it is the *other* who is able *to decide* for me *despite my will*. Then, it becomes a question of *power* and *the powerful*. In this *struggle* of power, as dicussed in the previous chapters, it is the *other* who is more powerful. However, *to accept* the other as *the powerful* is *to accept* the *weakness* of the *self*. The self *has to* accept *its weakness*. And, when one accepts the weakness of the self, one would *not resist* admitting what one *feels*. Accordingly, cold, heat, happiness, misery, sorrow, fear, anger, hunger, sickness, etc. would become those to which *every*one or *every-self* is *vulnerably* exposed, despite the *positions* that everyone bears in their respective socio-economic, political and cultural spheres.

However, more importantly, such feelings have been playing a major role in constructing and shaping *gender* identities of *men* and *women*. Accordingly, men have been always identified as *strong* and *powerful*. Men are known to be *stronger* than women. This strength is both *physica*l and *mental*, in the sense that men are capable of being *hard*, *stiff* and *rigid*. They are known to be those who *are able* to bear any severe weather conditions or emotional situations *better than* women. Hence, in *given* socio-cultural contexts, they are trained to be *harder* and *stronger* when they pass from childhood to adulthood. Thus, in human history, we have men *who* have partaken in various fields that are *directly connected* to *power*, *politics*, and *economy*. They have fought in war fronts; they have lead wars; they have borne the pain of being wounded in fights; yet, they were to not to give up on their missions; they should not cry because *tears* are *not meant for men*. They *cannot* thus be *emotional*, because they *should not* be so. *They* have been the *leading figures* in *family*, *nation*

and *the international*. Thus, they – men – are *fathers*, and that is a *figure* whose *strength* and *capability* is *defined* or *given*. And, in this definition, since father is the *strongest* due to his power — physical and mental power, everyone is *expected* to respect him. Thus, everyone *should* listen to him and ask for his suggestions before taking decisions; because, nothing should happen *without* his permission or *beyond* his power. Thus, human civilization that stretches from West to East and East to West is a *Father*-civilization based on *strength*, *power* and *bravery*.

In contrast to men, women are considered to be *weak* and this *weakness is* a *historical* one. Also, it is both *physical* and *mental*. Women are not muscular unlike men. She is known to be *feminine*. Her body and mind is feminine, and, to be feminine is to be *weak* and *bear* the *weaknesses* as if her weaknesses are *inscribed* on her body, in a way that her *body* itself is nothing but *weakness*. Her skin and muscles cannot bear *extremes* — extremes of any kind, because they are known to be *thin*, *tender* and *fragile*. Hence, woman is *sensitive*, and this *sensitivity* is a *feminine* quality; it is an integral or proper to woman. So, when she feels cold, she shivers; when she feels hot, she feels exhausted; when she feel sad, she cries; when she feels angry, she shouts and quarrels; when she feels jealous, she plays tricks; when she falls in love, she betrays everything for love and brings death to others in fulfilling her desires — this is *how* women are described throughout the history and it is women's history[596]. And, this history has been created by *men*. However, it is within and according to *this* history, women are known to be *weak* due to their sensitivity towards emotions. They are highly emotional; and, *reason* or *rationality* cannot account for her nature, since she is *unpredictable* by her *nature*. This *unpredictability* settles her in a zone where others, especially men, could be in *danger*[597]. She is *dangerous*. Hence, she is like a *beast* whose nature is "beastly"[598]. Cixous explains this emotional nature of women in her *"Coming to Writing"*. According to her, woman is an "animale which is badly brought up, capricious and cumbersome"[599]. She is "wild thing". Therefore, "woman is one of the things that you are in no position

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[596] For further knowledge regarding this idea, please see "The Laugh of the Medusa" in *Signs, Vol. 1, No. 4. (Summer, 1976)*, pp. 875 – 893, and *The Newly Born Woman* (1986) written by Cixous.
[597] In this regard, please see the previous chapter which has given examples from *Jathaka* tales in Buddhist literature.
[598] Cixous, 1991, p. 34
[599] Ibid.

to understand"[600]. In that sense, her *weakness* that lies in her sensibility makes her *un*definable. Now, can this *undefinability* be viewed as *weakness*? If it is weakness, should one be ashamed or embarrassed about it? Why to feel embarrassed if it is the inevitability of femininity?

5.4.5 Weakness of a Woman

This weakness or fragility is *feminine*, and she *is* that feeble and fragile *creature*. She has been carrying this weakness along with her throughout the history. Hence, it is this *weakness*, which has enabled her *moving* along with that history. Her *weakness* has *moved* her. It keeps her *going* — going to *infinity* in her *femininity*. She *breaks open* due to this *fragility*; and, each time, she undergoes *death*; yet, *on the other hand*, she is born *anew*. More she *breaks*, more she *creates*. She is thus *in-finite* and keeps *becoming feminine ceaselessly*. Hence, feminine being is a being *in-finite*. What about men then? Are not men also weak and fragile? Are not they emotional like women? Being men, are they actually deprived of being emotional?

Emotions are *common* to any living creature, and, *that cannot be denied* by setting up *categories* like *gender*, *race*, *color*, etc. Everyone feels pain, misery, happiness, sadness, anger, etc. *despite* their gender. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, as far as men, especially those who *attempt to identify themselves as men* are concerned (because there are men who are not concerned about male identity *as such*)[601], they *hesitate* to acknowledge that they are vulnerable. They do so, since, according to them, it is a quality which marks woman's weakness. *Sensitivity* is a quality of a woman; that is why she is *weak*. On the other hand, even if they acknowledge such possibilities of *emotional attacks*, they want to assert that they *know how to handle* it or *manage* it, so that they do not grow *weak*; they would *still* try to *be powerful*, pressurizing those waves rising against their own strong positions. But, why would they do so?

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[600] Ibid, p. 35
[601] In this regard, please hear the interview given by Cixous, uploaded on May 29, 2007 by Svsugvcarter, on
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=+cixous+interview, (accessed on 10.29.2015)

For them, it is a *necessity* since it is the *base* of their *given identity* — identity of a *man*, which makes him *conscious* about his *maleness* or manliness.[602] It is a strongly established identity, and it should be *maintained* through *self-sameness*. But, this same identity has to *continue* since masculinity is already *given* or defined to the extent that it *cannot* go *further*, or *beyond* — beyond the *givenness*. There is no *further* or *surpluss* in the context of *male* gender, since it has *already* exhausted *conceptually* all the *possibilities* of *becoming*: it has *already become*. Male-gender and its identity is, thus, a *totality*; it is already *totalized* in its form and content — the *complete*. It is a defined, fixed, totalized and closed identity that has been travelling across human civilization in spite of directions and colors. From West to East and East to West, and from White to Black and Black to White, it is the same male identity that has been unfolding in the world. Then, men, *yet not all men* but those who like to be identified as men while holding onto their male-identity, have to revolve around this definition and stay within the *given* space marked by that definition and identity. Nonetheless, they are *also* not worried about the space within which they are confined, since it is *the* larger space and *the* space of *the powerful*. In that sense, it is *not* a confinement; rather it is a *sovereign* space where they enjoy their own power and order. They attempt to expand their space only in terms of materiality so that they *can* have *more* — more of everything: *of* strength and power, for strength and power is the base on which male identity is constructed. On the other hand, is there anything else left for them to gain through a struggle when they are already well-equipped and well-settled with what they *aspire* — the power and the strength? Even they have to struggle, that struggle woulbe be for acquiring *more* power in order *to be the most powerful* among *the powerful*. This idea is extensively discussed by Derrida in his *The Politics of Friendship*, while asserting on how international fraternity and democracy, which has prevailed throughout human history, has been opertative in excluding women.[603]

However, Shyam's "funny boy" does not want to be confined *within* this space and identity demarcated by male gender, since it does not space him *to imagine* — imagine *beyond* the *given*, which is his *male* identity that has to be declared,

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[602] For further knowledge regarding phallocentric male identity, please see Cixous in *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader*, edited by Morny Joy & et al. , 2002, pp. 207 - 246
[603] Derrida, 1997

manifested and maintained in and through his *behavior*. He has to behave *like* a boy
— any boy, who is anyway the *same boy* since all boys or all men are *same* in terms
of their identity, which is reflected in the *manner* they *behave*. In that sense, their
clothes, games, friends and friendships, etc. together manifest their identity. Arjie's
brother Diggy, his father, Mr. Chelvaratnam, principal of the Victoria Academy, Mr.
Abeysinghe who is famous as Black Tie, the vice principal of the Academy, Mr.
Lokubandara, the English and Drama teacher, Mr. Sunderalingam and Jegan, who
happened to be the son of Arjie's father's friend — all these *men* manifest, present
and represent *that* identity. According to Arjie, they are the members of that male-
world which is rigid, stiff, strong and powerful. And, he is not able *to locate himself
within* this world of *men*. He is *different* from all these men mntioned above and this
difference is manifested through his *desire to be with girls* and *to become* a part of
"the girls"; because, for Arjie, girls' world is "the potential for the free play of
fantasy".

Yet, the problem that appears in Arjie's world is the question of *acceptance*
and *inclusion*. Going through the argument between Arjie and Her Fatness, it can be
seen that it is only *till that time* that Her Fatness questions him and mocks at him that
he could be a part of "the girls". *Till* her arrival in the group, everyone had accepted
him.. In fact, there has *never* been a question of such acceptance of Arjie into the
group of female cousins. This particular inclusion of Arjie by the other female cousins
highlights Arjie's own *ability to become like one of them* as if he himself is a female.
And, this is a *task* that cannot be performed by every *man*. In a way, to become and to
behave *like* a girl is to become *flexible* and *tender*. Now, Arjie becoming a girl, and,
then, becoming a bride is a *great shift*. Male *becoming* female is a *movement* —
movement from one *position* to *another*; one world to another world, which is the
other world. In this movement, the world that Arjie leaves behind *while* embracing
another is *the* world where nothing is denied to him especially by law, because, it is
by *law*, he *belongs* to that world. Therefore, the *given* world in which he lves is an
established world. It is where he is *rooted* by birth. *If* he leaves that world, he would
lose the ground on which he is standing. He would not be *stable* any more since he is
moving away from *that* established world. Yet, is Arjie, especially as a little boy,
worried about what he is going to lose, due to his *stepping out* from the *given* world

while going to the *other* world, which is the feminine world, where there is no *one* particular world?

In the story, we see that how this argument between Her Fatness and the rest of female cousins including Arjie affects Arjie's life that is going to come to him then onward, which he later sees as a movement "from the safe harbor of childhood towards the precarious waters of adult life"[604]. However, the first challenge during his childhood comes from the world that he has *stepped into* with lot of happiness, and it is brought by a *legitimized* member of that world, who is capable of providing *reasons* to prove that her argument and knowledge regarding *her* world, which is women's world, is *unchallengeable*. Her Fatness's words push Arjie into an unexpected "defenseless" condition. He is not aware of the meanings carried by those insults that she brought onto him saying "You're a pansy", "A faggot," "A sissy!", though he realizes that "these were insults". However, these insults cannot push him away from the game. He and the other cousins return to "bridal preparations". Arjie narrates how beautiful and solemn he felt in *becoming* the bride, finally. For him, it is a *victory* that he gained after the struggle with Tanuja. He struggled *for* this position, because it is not *just* a position or a role for him. It is *everything* for him — his desire, hope and happiness is nothing but *becoming* the bride and to celebrate it, realizing that there is *no end* to it, since it is the *space* of the beautiful, which is both *divine* and *cinematic*. Arjie explains this beautiful, divine and cinematic moment as follows: 'When the bride was finally dressed, Lakshmi, the maid of honour, went out of Janaki's room to make sure that everything was in place. Then she gave the signal and the priest and choirboys began to sing, with a certain want of harmony and correct lyrics, "The voice that breathed oh Eeeden, the first and glorious day…." Solemnly, I made my way down the steps towards the altar that had been set up at one end of the back garden.'[605] This is the moment that he *awaited*, which is the moment of *becoming* the bride. He is dressed like a bride with the sari, the veil, flowers, kohl, lipstick, and rouge. Now, he looks like a bride – the "bestest bride". But, is he *yet* the bride?

He cannot be a bride only with the sari and other make ups. There are few more things to be done for him to be *the* bride, and these things are *equally* crucial for

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[604] Selvadurai, 1994, p. 5
[605] Ibid, p. 12

the moment to become an *event* or a *game*. They are: *the* date, *the* time and *the* place. By now, with the sari and the bridal make up, Arjie has transformed into a beautiful bride, and, now Arjie is "heshe"[606] that Cixous writes *about* in her *Unmasked*. In that sense, Arjie has not yet become *she*. There is something that is *yet* to happen so that "heshe" becomes *just* the *she — the bride*, who is "a graceful, benevolent, perfect being upon whom the adoring eyes of the world rest". However, that *thing*, which is yet to happen for "heshe" in order to become *she* — "simply quite-other"[607], is certainly not *within* him. It does not *belong* to him; he has to *walk* toward *it*, just like he walked into the world of "the girls". He has already walked so much from the place where *he was* in a way that now *he* has *become* "heshe" — from *he* to "heshe". In that sense, he has *not yet* reached the destination that he wants, which is the bride — the she; the *she* of the bride and the bride of the *she*. For this, Arjie has to walk some more steps that lie between "heshe" and "the altar" that is kept at the end of the garden. Hence, to reach the altar is to reach the *end* of *the garden*, and there would not be any more space to *step*. All the journeys and plays would end there, where the garden *ends*. Garden's end is set to witness and bear the *happiness* of the happily-ending play. Now, as Cixous asserts in her *October 1991 ...*[608], it is a *process* which is more important, since it is "of passing by, of happening. The instant — the eternity of the instant"[609]. Hence, Arjie is in a process of *becoming* the bride though "heshe" is already the bride with bridal wear; but, *not yet* the bride — *she*; "heshe" is *walking*. Thus, walking has *already begun*, yet not *over* until "heshe" reaches the altar, where the process of becoming *she* would be completed.

5.4.6   Arrival and Event

This moment of Arjie walking with the bridal wear is theatrical. "Heshe" hears priest and the choirboys singing. They have already begun to sing. This moment, which keeps prolonging, is like a theatre or a stage that is already set for a particular play. Yet, that is the play which everyone is aware of. They are *aware of* each step that makes their play *perfect*, within which becoming bride is the climax. There is nothing

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[606] Cixous, 2005, p. 182
[607] Ibid.
[608] Cixous, 2005, pp. 43 - 62
[609] Ibid, p. 43

more that can be added into it. The play itself is called "bride-bride" and all the actors are aware of the distance that they need to pass to bridge this *gap* that lies *between* the two words which are linked by the hyphen. But, it is a marvelous and crucial *hyphen*. It is so, because it is a secret from where anything can *erupt*, suddenly. It can bring some *extra* step or a mile to the measured and calculated distance that is already known to the actors of the play. Yet, they *have already* calculated and measured every step of the play in a way that there is no further room for anything extra; so they would not *expect* anything *extra entering* the play. It is a completed circle — a closed circle with measured number of events. Accordingly, the bride has to reach the altar, and the priest would accept the marriage, declaring the bride and the groom as man and wife. At the beginning of the story, it is already said that presence of the groom is unimportant for the play; yet it is an "unfortunate feature of the marriage ceremony", since there *has to* be a groom for the bride *to be* the *proper* bride. Though it is a stiff and boring role that could have been "dispensed with", it becomes a very significant role at this crucial moment that is in the process, process of Arjie becoming the bride — the *perfect* being. However, Arjie reaches the altar. Yet, Arjie is still somewhere in the space between that is marked by the *hyphen* in the "bride-bride"; thus, it takes few more moments for this third person pronoun, *she*, to take it *full* form. It is still in the process of getting into the shape or form. May be it - the *third person*, *singular*, *feminine* pronoun - must have *almost* reached there; but, it is *not yet* it *is*. This word, *almost*, is a magic word. The *distance between* that is marked in terms of language through the two words, *almost* and *is,* must be very *minute*. Yet, this minute distance *costs* time. It takes time to pass this *thin* line that is like the size of a pencil stroke. Hence, it is a time that takes its own time, and no one can make it happen according to his or her time. In that sense, now what has become more powerful is nothing but the *time*. Time makes everyone *wait*, especially Arjie, who inhabits this last moment while awaiting the same for becoming *perfect*. "Heshe" is almost there *near* the perfect; but, *not yet* perfect — she. But, Arjie and others are so certain about reaching this perfectness. It is at this moment that the continuity of the play is threatened by *outside* with the sound of the kitchen door opening, through which Her Fatness with Kanthi Aunty enters. This sound makes Arjie *turn* — turn from the altar "to see" them standing there, and "discordant singing died out".

This turn *turns* everything — *upside down* in Arjie's life. It is not even a *reversal*; instead, it is an *event*, which destroys every order, plan and preparedness. Also, it is his world that he loved so much which is just robbed away from him by avalanche of this event of *arrival* — Kanthi Aunty's and Her Fatness's arrival. Now, Arjie is commanded to surrender and submit himself to Kanthi Aunty's order.

'"What is this?" […] She came down a few steps and crooked her finger at me, I looked down at my feet and refused to go to her.

"Come here, come here," she said.

Unable to disobey her command any longer, I went to her. She looked me up and down for a moment, and then gingerly, as if she were examining raw meat at the market, turned me around.

"What's this you're playing?" she asked.

"It's bride-bride, Aunty," Sonali said.

"Bride-bride," she murmured.

Her hand closed on my arm in a tight grip.

"Come with me," she said.

I resisted, but her grip tightened, her nails digging into my elbow. She pulled me up the porch steps and towards the kitchen door.

"No," I cried. "No, I don't want to."'[610]

With the arrival of Kanthi Aunty through the kitchen door, Arjie's most awaited moment *collapses*, and, now it is a *gone* moment that can *never* come *again*. When the kitchen door opens, *another* door from the *other* side, which is the side *of Arjie*, begins to *close*. It is the door that leads to Arjie's world. Hereafter, he would not be able to enter there. Even if he enters there someday, it would not be the same Arjie. He would always be reminded of the *existence* of this door and be *conscious* about it. Hence, he would not be *free* — free to be there in his world. It is his freedom

[610] Selvadurai, 1994, pp. 12 - 13

that is denied to him by Kanthi Aunty's command to submit. He is not able to resist the order coming from her, since she is a close relative; she is his Aunt. Being an adult and also an aunt, she has all the power to pull him toward the direction that he resists to go. He does not want to go; yet, he *cannot* help. He *has to* go, which is now happening *against his will*. He is actually not even going; rather, he is being pulled and taken away from his own self. However, this is a moment that has already passed and has become a part of Arjie's past. Yet, it is not a *past* for him. It still continues to live with him. He is *not able to forget* what happened there when they entered the drawing room. He is not able to turn away from that episode, which keeps unfolding in front of him *as if* it is not a thing of past. Certainly, it is not the event or that moment that is coming to him, but the "specters" of that moment. He remembers the laughter of Kanthi Aunty. It echoes in his ears and heart. *That* laughter and the incident have caused him *tears* and *fears*. Shyam-Arjie, narrates what happened there at the drawing room as follow:

'As we entered the drawing room, Kanthi Aunty cried out, her voice brimming over with laughter, "See what I found!"

The other aunts and uncles looked up from their papers or bestirred themselves from their sleep. They gazed at me in amazement as if I had suddenly made myself visible, like a spirit. I glanced at them and then at Amma's face. Seeing her expression, I felt my dread deepen. I lowered my eyes. The sari suddenly felt around my body, and the hairpins, which held the veil in place, pricked at my scalp.

Then the silence was broken by the booming laugh of Cyril Uncle, Kanthi Aunty's husband. […] The other aunts and uncles began to laugh too, and I watched as Amma looked from one to the other like a trapped animal. Her gaze finally came to rest on my father and for the first time I noticed that he was the only one not laughing. Seeing the way he kept his eyes fixed on his paper, I felt the heaviness in my stomach begin to push its way up my throat.

"Ey, Chelva," Cyril Uncle cried out jovially to my father, "looks like you have a *funny one* here. [emphasis added]"'[611]

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[611] Ibid, pp. 13 - 14

Arjie had never expected him to go through such *humiliation*. Though he is not able to understand why everyone is laughing at him, he is sensitive to what he is surrounded by. From *outside*, he is surrounded by adult relatives, while he is being surrounded by certain emotions from *within*. He feels it *within* his body; at the same time, *through* these feelings, he also *feels his body*, which is his *personal* body that makes him Arjie. Hence, Arjie feels his own body within which his *singularity* unfolds, *secretly*, due to which, his *own self* is *unaware* of *what* is going on *within him*. He is thus *unknown* to his *own self*. Yet, now, *this body* that is *unknown* to Arjie's *own self* is *exposed* to *others* as if he is a *thing* or an *object* kept in some exhibition. He is under their *gaze*, and they are *laughing at him* as if he is a *comedy*. There is *something* in Arjie, which makes others laugh. *Ironically*, he is *not aware* of *what* that something *is*. However, they seem to be reading him — his mind, *through* his *body* that is with flesh and blood. It is this *fleshy* and *bloody body* that is *touched* and *pierced* by other's *eyes* and, thus, *wounded*. Yet, what can he do? Is he able to escape from these *piercing* gazes? He has already been seen and captured. There is no strength left in him to *resist*; he has grown *weaker*. There is *no end* to this *trial* and *humiliation* that he is *subjected* to having been placed at the center of *adults' stage*, which is *no more* the stage of the play, "bride-bride". He has fallen *out of* that *play-stage* while falling *into* another stage, which is the *real* stage of everyday-life, where people play their respective roles on *everyday basis*; where *reality* has become nothing but a *play* — play of reality. And, *that reality* is *away* and *different from* the one in the *imaginary*. In the *imaginary* world – the world of "bride-bride" - where world was *imagined*, reality itself had become nothing but *image* of an *imagination*; in that sense, nothing was *more* real than the *other* or *more* imaginary than the *other*. There was *no* difference between reality and the imaginary, since whatever happened there in that world had *actually* happened. So, there was a place where things could happen as imagined. It *is not* mere imagination, lie or an illusion *for* Arjie, since he *experienced* it and *lived* it while living *in* it. It was certainly a *game*; yet, a game where they played some *reality* while *playing with* reality. All the cousins together have played *with* reality. But, Arjie is the one who has played more *with it* so much and so well that he has made that *imaginary* world into a *real* world in a way that the *real* world out there inhabited by these relatives has been *challenged*.

5.4.7 Reality in Question

Now, Arjie is in a different stage, and that stage is a *wider* space. He has fallen into it and he is the only *identified* actor. He can be seen and *easily* recognized, especially because he *looks different* from the others. His *difference* is that which has made him look like a "funny one". He *fell* here on *this side* of the world, *while* he *was playing* there *beyond* this world as a bride *while becoming* the bride. *There*, he was the bride *to play* the bride. And, when he fell *here*, he fell not as the *boy* called Arjie but as the *bride* called Arjie. He is then a *male-bride*. He *looks* like a bride due to the attire and make up that he is wearing; thus, he has become a *female — woman*. Yet, he is *known* to others as a *son*, a *boy* — male. Now, in this *appearance*, he has given a *surprise* to others. He has been *found* by a surprise. "See what I found!" – the aunt says. Thus, since his *appearance* has *turned* certain *reality*, on which others are firmly grounded, *upside down*, no one knows *how* to *believe* it and *accept* it — the *appearance*, which is the appearance *of* Arjie, in which Arjie does not appear to be the *same* Arjie. They are *not able* to find a *proper* word to locate him. There is *no word* with which he could be *appropriated* to *this* or *that* identity. He *cannot be appropriated* to any of the words that exist in *given language*. It is *not able* to *accommodate* him within *its* space. There is *no space* for Arjie *within* that language. Hence, there is a *lack* in the *vocabulary*; in the *language*. *Therefore*, now, it is a problem *with* language. This language, through which they *think* and *communicate*, is also the one which has been shaping their *perception* and *cognition*, on the basis of which their *knowledge* is constructed. Accordingly, language, knowledge and people are cohabited and enfolded by each other creating a *totality*. It is a strong totality of *language*, and, there is *nothing* or *no one* that exists *outside* this totality; because, it is believed that there is no *outside* — outside *totality*. This is a belief that is determined by the idea that there s*hould not be* any *outside*, since outside is a *threat* to socio-cultural economic and political *integrity* that is weaved through *language*. Therefore, it is essential to resist the outside through *exclusion* and *suppression*, which is easily enforceable and enacted through language, since language is capable of enacting power without weapons. (This idea has already been discussed in previous chapters) However, when language is thus *powerful*, it is also *blind* to its own weaknesses that are *within*, which could cause it to undergo *cracks* or *ruptures* on its *texture*. Now, the moment where

Arjie appears with his bridal wear in front of others is a moment, which highlights language's own *failure*.

Then, what is that failure?

The particular incident that Arjie *remembers* is *actually* not a *failure* with Arjie, but *with* language, as well as, *with* the space that is created through that language. Arjie he has *not* failed in his ability to *become* a bride. He has been *able to be* the "bestest bride", *because*, he is *capable* of *becoming* a bride. That is his *ability* and *capability*. On the other hand, he is also *not* able to be *a boy like* his brother Diggy, while he is *able* to be *a boy like* his *female* cousins. Hence, he is *able* to be a boy *like a girl*. At the same time, his female cousin Meena is a girl *like a boy*: she is *able* to create her own group, and she plays a decisive role within the cricket team that has got only boys. They both – Arjie and Meena – are good at what they are doing despite their *given* genders. Others also do not find them problematic, due to the commendable role that they have been playing in their respective groups. Then, where does the problem lie? Problem is *with* and *within* language. It has got words for *everyone* around Arjie but not *for* Arjie. But, the problem here is that whether language is ready to accept and acknowledge its own weakness, failure or the lack. Could that language look into its own weaknesses? Again, we have come to a juncture where acceptance and acknowledgement of *weakness* matter the most. Here, if language accepts its own *weakness*, which has *disempowered* it in *accommodating* Arjie, it would *lose* its *power* with which it *dominates* the *other*; and, in that case, the *other* would *become powerful*. Hence, it does not want to be *weak* and *lose* its *strong position*. In that sense, language is *like* those *men*, who are *stiff* and *rigid*, and are *not* ready to submit to their own failures, due to the *fear* that they feel for *losing* their *identity* and the *position*. It is, then, *masculine* language, and it will not be *submissive* to its *own failure*. Preferably, it would be operative to *pressurize* the other, by discriminating, humiliating and ridiculing the *other*. Accordingly, Arjie is named *differently*, which is certainly not a *name*; not even *mere* word. It is *more than* a name, also *more than mere* word. Arjie's gender cannot be *reduced* to any *category* that is marked in terms of *binaries*, such as *boy/girl*, *male/female*, etc. Hence, *that language*, due to its own *failure* (which it does not acknowledge), *recognizes* him as "a funny one". Within that recognition, Arjie is *neither* a boy *nor* a girl; instead, he is a "funny

one". That is a *label* given to him; he is labeled in *language* by *others*. Henceforth, he would be seen by others in and through this new, yet *funny* definition, which lacks a definition *as such*. It just gives a sense of *strangeness* that is related to Arjie, and that strangeness appears through his behavior. He is looked upon as *strange* by *others*. He is a stranger to *others*, also to *language*. He is thus exiled from *his* world, also, from the *other* world. This *banishment* is done *by* language, *through* language. This exile takes place in language, which *defines* him as *stranger* — "a funny one". Arjie feels the strangeness that is brought to him through this word "funny", not at the moment when he heard it for the first time, but, during some other time that he was not allowed to enter his mother's room while she was wearing her sari. 'I crept away quietly to my bedroom, […] It was clear to me that I had done something wrong, but what it was I couldn't comprehend. I thought of what my father had said about turning out "funny". 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.'[612]

Arjie is not able to bear this exclusion that is done by his mother. He had always enjoyed watching his mother wearing sari and seeing the way she is transformed beautifully into "a film star" — "You should have been a film star Amma."[613] However, after the incident in which he became "funny one", he is not entertained by his mother for this *sari-affair*. She has been scolded by his father for what Arjie has become. As a mother, it is *her* duty and responsibility to bring him up *properly* like a *proper* boy: so, she *must* push him away from the company of females and send him for the company of boys, in order to make him a *proper boy*. She insists Arjie playing *with* boys: "You're a big boy now. And big boys play with other boys."[614] But, he argues with his mother saying, "That's stupid."

"It doesn't matter," she said. "Life is full of stupid things and somewhere we just have to do them."[615] Arjie could have found some solace only from his mother, for he was not close to his father, due to some *fear* or *dis-likeness* that he had developed towards his father. Mother has always been kind and loving to Arjie. Yet,

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[612] Ibid, p. 17
[613] Ibid, p. 16
[614] Ibid. p. 20
[615] Ibid.

with *sudden turn of events*, he feels that even his mother is hurt with him due to his behavior. Moreover, it has affected the love and affection that she has been giving to him. Since father has made her responsible for what Arjie has become, she is going to correct him by making him play cricket with his brother Diggy and the other guys. Thus, Arjie is thrown into a condition that he *never wanted* to be in. He makes an attempt to join the group of boys. Yet, there too, no one wants to have him as a member in either of the two sides in the cricket team, since he is a "girlie-boy". It is another *nickname*; a *new* nickname. He remembers *how*, "[a]t the new nickname "girlie-boy", everyone roared with laughter, and even Diggy grinned"[616]. Yet, it was not a humiliation *then*, since, *at that time*, he had wanted to escape from them and run back to the world of the girls. This *flashback* flashes on his memory and he sees everything that happened there *again*. He is again that child, Arjie. And, he is not able to *escape* from that childhood. He cannot have plans to escape from *that* past. In that past, he had made plans to escape from boys so that he could join "the girls". And, those plans are successful ones since Diggy threatened him saying, "If you ever come near the field again, you'll be sorry." – "Don't worry," I replied tartly, "I never will".[617]

5.4.8 Self-exile

Arjie remembers this self-exile that he took willingly. Since then, he had not gone to play with boys. He has made a wow that is going to be forever. "I never will". Here, the will is *both*: time and the wish. He *will* never go there to the world of boys; also he will never *will* to go to the world of boys. "And with that, I forever closed any possibility of entering the boy's world again. But I didn't care, and just to show how much I didn't care I made another face, turned my back on Diggy, and walked up the front path to the house." While closing this door *forever*, he opens another door that leads to another world, and that is *his* world, which is *her* world, where he is able to be happy. He hears the voices of the girls preparing for "bride-bride", especially Her Fatness's, ordering everyone around. Now, that world is reined by Her Fatness as she has taken over the role of the bride. She is the leader. Yet, the other cousins, except

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[616] Ibid, p. 25
[617] Ibid, p. 28

Her Fatness, feel happy seeing him coming back to the world of the girls. Lakshmi asks him to come and join them in the play; but, before he could do so Her Fatness rose to her feet.

'"What do you want" she said?

"I came forward a bit and she immediately stepped towards me, like a female mongoose defending her young against a cobra. "Go away!" she cried, holding up her hand. "Boys are not allowed here."'

Arjie pleads. "I want to play bride-bride please," I said, trying to sound as pathetic and inoffensive as possible. Other cousins too want him to be the bride, and he gains some strength and attempts to justify *why* he should be allowed to be the bride. He says, "I have something that you don't have", and that is the *sari*, which he had "smuggled" from home before getting into the car. "Without the sari you can't play bride-bride." Arjie attempts to win the chance somehow, and he is not able to give any other good reason to be in the role, since his arguments have failed in front of Her Fatness's logical reasoning. Hence, he has to save himself there with the help of the sari. But, as the story goes, it can be seen how Arjie *loses* the *sari*, though he has the sari in *his hand*, due to the struggle that takes place between Arjie and Her Fatness. At the end, he is left with a *torn* sari, because Her Fatness pulls it: 'Crying out, she jerked away from me with her whole body, hoping to wrest the sari from my grip. With a rasping sound, the sari began to tear. I yelled at her to stop pulling, but she jerked away again and the sari tore all the way down. There was a moment of silence. I gazed at the torn sari in my hand, at the long threads that hung from it.'[618]

Sari was the only thing that he had with him *for* him *to be qualified* to become the bride. It was the *last* thing, which could have helped him *to last* in the bride-bride *as* bride. Throughout the history of this little play called bride-bride, the sari has been there, since it is a *must* to be a bride. There is *no* bride-bride *without* the sari. Just like sari is wrapped around his body when he becomes the bride, the play itself is wrapped *within* and *around* the sari. *Tying* and *untying* the sari marks the *beginning* and the *end* of the play. That is why this old-white sari is so precious to Arjie and the play. Arjie's world and the world of the play are like those threads through which the sari is

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[618] Ibid, p. 35

loomed. Now, it is *torn* in a way that those long threads are hanging — one part is here and the other part is there. Tearing the sari, Her Fatness has not only torn Arjie's chance to become the bride; she has also torn down his *world*. Hence, it is Arjie's world, happiness, dream and the hope that has been destroyed so *ruthlessly*. Everything that Arjie had aspired is hanging and dangling, and, thus *lost* in the air. All the more, since he has attempted to enter the world that belongs to girls and since he had quarreled with Her Fatness, he is going to be punished by Ammachi. He is to be punished at this moment, where he has lost everything that he loved and hoped. Arjie is not able to bear this pain of losing the sari and the injustice done to him by Ammachchi. It is too much of pain for a child. He cannot take it; he cannot suffer it anymore. There is no one to help him and he is left alone with the torn sari. So, he flees. He is running from the back garden to the front gate and *out*. In the field across the way, he sees that boys are still playing cricket game. He is hurrying down the road toward the sea. At the railway lines he pauses briefly, goes across, and then scrambles over the rocks to the beach. Once there, he sits on a rock and flings the sari down next to him. "I hate them, I hate them all" "I wish I was dead" – he puts his head down and feels the first tears begin to wet his knees.[619]   And, he knows now that he "would never enter the girls' world again. He realizes that he "would be caught between the world of boys' and the girls' worlds, not belonging or wanted in either"[620].

So, Arjie is exiled forever from the world of the boys and the world of the girls. He understands that the doors for both the world are thus *shut* for him *forever*, and he cannot enter there *again*. There are two reasons for this inability to locate him in any of the two worlds. The world of boys is that to which he *actually* belongs by birth. Hence, he has the *right* to be there in the world of boys *by birth*. It is a birth right and that cannot be snatched from him. Therefore, he can be there as it is *his* world; yet, *for him*, it is not *his* world. He does not feel that he belongs to that world. It is a stiff and boring world for him. Hence, *despite* the *secured* position in the boys' world, he *does not want* to be there. He feels, also he is aware that he can be with girls in the girls' world, because he *likes* to be there; he is *happy* to be there. Therefore, he *wants* to be there. But, unfortunately, what he desires for is that which is *prohibited* to him; it does not *belong* to him, but to some *other*; and, he is not *included* there,

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[619] Ibid, p. 38
[620] Ibid.

because he *cannot* be included. That is the law — the *order* of the *discourse*. What is that order and what does that order *command*? What is that discourse?

It is at this point of the *order* that is set by the *discourse* that everything begins to matter. Hence, Arjie – the funny boy – cannot be just a character or a fiction any more; it is more than that. It involves certain philosophy and reality. It attempts to say something *through* Arjie. But, why would Shyam attempts to say anything through Arjie? Why would not he say it by himself? Why Arjie, and why not Shyam?

5.5   Shyam's Question

Shyam *through* Arjie narrates a story. Yet, at the same time, Arjie is Shyam's own invention. And, it is a story that happened to Arjie in which he was found to be a funny boy. Though it is a story, it is also a world — world of Arjie. And, in that world, something has *happened* to Arjie. What happened to Arjie is *real* because he goes through all that what we have discussed above. So, *what* happened to Arjie there? And, *why* did that happen to him? That is the question. It is from this side of the question that we need to enter the world of writing created by Shaym.

Shyam has written down a *question*. It appears through his writing in the sense that his writing is the *very* question itself. And, that is a question of life in which life is *in question*. However, it is a different way of questioning. We do not see any question that is formed by Shyam in the *form* of a question. His question has no form: it is a de-formed question. Yet, it is a question. In that sense, he has invented an *alternative* way of making, also, of posing questions. Accordingly, he has written a story with many characters and incidents. It is through *telling* a *story* through *writing* that he casts his questions, *silently*. Stories are the ones which are able to bring certain questions that cannot be posed otherwise. Therefore, stories or fictions *cannot* be discarded; because, they are not *just* stories. And, they are not *just* stories, because *stories* are *not just stories*. They are stories, and *more than*, as well as, *beyond* stories. They are the *affairs* of *life* and life *full of affairs*, within which the deep philosophy of being runs.[621] In certain stories, we do not find a story *per se* that has proper

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[621] In this regard, please refer to Blanchot in his essay "Literature and the Right to Death" that appears

beginning, middle and end; rather, we find many stories within one story, and, they all are *scattered* and *jumbled up* in a way that there is no particular *order* to *arrange* them in a *sequel*. They are thus *fragmented* stories, of which bits and pieces are dispersed everywhere just like life. In life too, there is *no* order. Things happen; life happens. And, life happens only *when* things *happen* to *us* — to people, *with* or *without* their involvement. With each such happening, we have a story. But, we do not remember all what happened to us. Rather we remember, very often, those which could deliver us to some *unforgettable* incident or event, with a *surprise*. Here, surprise is not necessarily a happy one; it can be sad, scary, unfortunate and miserable as well. Nevertheless, what is more important in this regard is that we *do not forget* them since we *cannot forget* them, because they have *turned ourselves* from us and *moved* us in our heart at least by a "millimetre, or even less from the place where it first existed"[622]. That is what once Ondaatjee had heard across *The Cat's Table*. He tells us, 'I once had a friend whose heart 'moved' after a traumatic incident that he refused to recognize. It was only a few years later, while he was being checked out by his doctor for some minor ailment, that this physical shift was discovered. And I wondered then, when he told me this, how many of us have a moved heart that shies away to a different angle [...].'[623] However, it is those stories that we tend to remember and keep narrating more than once. And, in each narration, the story is moved in a similar way that the heart is moved; then, it is the *same-different* story. Story narration is common to all human beings. Asserting on the freedom of expression, Rushdie highlights this idea of humans as story-tellers as follows: "Limiting freedom of expression is not just censorship, it is also an assault on human nature. Expression of speech is fundamental to all human beings. We are language animals, we are story-telling animals."[624] While narrating stories, we *present* our own questions and answers, also, how those answers that we made cause further questions. Thus, they project certain grave problems that could not be raised or voiced out *except*

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in *The Work of Fire*, 1995a, pp. 300 – 344, and Derrida in his interview to Derek Attridge titled "This Strange Institution Called Literature" that appears in *Acts of Literature*, 1992a, pp. 33 – 75, where they extensively discuss the impossibility of distinguishing fiction from reality or truth and vice versa.
[622] Ondaatje, 2012, p. 356
[623] Ibid.
[624] Addressing a news conference at the inauguration of the World Book Fair at Frankfurt during the month of October, 2016, Rushdie had expressed and shared this view, and it appeared it on Indian News Paper, *The Hindu*. Please see, The Hindu. Wednesday, October 14, 2015, p. 20

within this *invented* "space of *literature*"[625]. It is necessary and imperative to *invent* a *space* for *that* which has not got a *space*, since it *should* find a *space* — to express, to question, to survive; a space for life and freedom. This space *beyond* the *given* can be *invented* only through *writing*, where everything finds space, since, as Blanchot writes in *Literature and the Right to Death*, it is a world that "negates nothing".

Hence, Shyam too has presented a question, within which many other questions emerge, and, that *cannot* be *answered*. There are *no* answers for certain questions; because, no one *knows* how to answer *rightly*, since there is no such *right* answer due to the "contradictory imperatives in a single gesture"[626]. Accordingly, every *right* answer is also the *least* wrong; *every* answer is *both* right and wrong. Hence, *no answer* can be discarded. On the other hand, none of them can exhaust the *question*; it is an *exhausting* question. It *exhausts* every answer. So doing, it demands *further* answers. Thus, the question and the answers are in *in-finite* journey. However, what is this question that Shyam writes and addresses at the same time?

Shyam poses and explores the question of *gender*, emphasizing on the issue of *homosexuality*. For him, this exploration is a *voyage* — a voyage across the sea, the enormous body of water which has *no end*. This voyage cannot be launched unless he takes *exiles* from his own *self*; because, *it* is *forbidden*, especially in Sri Lanka — homosexuality. Then, he involves in a *crime* by attempting the *forbidden*.

Homosexuality is the crime that is in question. It is a questionable and punishable offense in Sri Lanka, as it is defined as a *crime* by Sri Lankan *law* — the *language* of Law in terms of judiciary. But, how is it seen by the socio-cultural law of everyday life? The term, *crime*, involves a wider range of application in the context of judiciary, depending on the way it *interprets any* action. Law is *capable* of this as it has the power to interpret[627]. However, considering the law of everyday society governed by its *cultural ideology*, it can be seen that any *act* that *violates* the *given* moral code accepted by the *heterosexual order* finds the possibly *worse* insults. Here, especially, women become the victims, due to the indiscriminatroy historical jusdgement given on women.

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[625] This phrase and the idea finds its direct reference to *Space of Literature*, Blanchot, (1982).
[626] Derrida, 2002a, p. 300
[627] See Derrida in his "Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"" that appears in *Acts of Religion*, 2002b, pp. 230 - 298

Nevertheless, *homosexuality* is something that is *unthinkable*, *unimaginable* and *highly unacceptable*. Unfortunately, no one knows *why* it is unacceptable. As Arjie rightly says "it is stupid" — it is stupid to accept *only* heterosexuality but not *homosexuality*. Writing on such *stupid* reduction of sexuality in the essay, *Unmasked*, Cixous notes, "[A]ll creatures contain infinite possibilities of being an other. One possibility is just as good as another. If our internal world were reduced to a single sex, what a boring scene it would be, what stertility."[628] Hence, Arjie suggests *another* possibility — another possibility *of* Arjie, and Arjie's possibility of becoming *an-other*; *infinite* possibilities of Arjie becoming *other*. On the other hand, Arjie's mother also does not know how to challenge his argument; her answer is: "It doesn't matter," "Life is full of stupid things and sometimes we just have to do them." Though this is an utterance in the novel, it also presents some socio-cultural reality of Sri Lankan society, where no one knows *why* homosexuality is *prohibited*.

5.5.1 Attempting the Forbidden

Hence, Shyam writes that which is *forbidden*. In *attempting* the *forbidden*, he involves in a *crime*. He has to *execute* his own self, and, it requires lot of *courage*. He should be *brave*, since it is going to *cost* his *life*. Yet, how can he *murder* his own self? That *cannot be* done. If he does, he has to *commit suicide*, since it is the only way that one could be *free* from one's own self. But, to commit suicide is to enact *violence* over one's *own self* for one's own self — *for* one's own *freedom*. There, one *dies* for *freedom*. Yet, it would be *violent*, as it is yet another action taken by *self* at the *limit* of the *self*. As Cixous writes in *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, there are some writers, like Kafka and Clarice Lispector, who have gone to experience this limit — *limit* of the *self*. She sees them as "two writers who died of writing because they went so far toward approaching what is forbidden, so near what Kafka called the fire, that they actually caught fire. In fact Clarice Lispector only barely escaped being burned alive ten years before she did eventually die. She was seriously burnt, her bed caught fire, and she was saved at the last minute by her son, but her hands were badly burned

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[628] Cixous, 2005, p. 182

and she could no longer write by hand.'[629] They keep *dying through* their *writing*, while undergoiing the *pain* brought by that *death*. They *suffer* — suffering *from* writing, also from the *pain* that causes *writing*. At the same time, they suffer *without* writing, as if they have fallen in *love* with *writing*. They cannot do *without* writing, since it is writing which *makes* them *survive* — live at the moment they write, the present. Yet, how much to write and how long can one go on writing? Though writing is *infinite*, its *infinity* is manifested with *discontinuities* in the sense that writing *continues* through *discontinuities*. Hence, at that moment when writing discontinues and comes to a *halt*, *life* too comes to *an* end. There are *so many ends*, *deaths*, and *departures* that are to be experienced and witnessed at the same time, and they have experienced and witnessed them *many times*. Is not it too painful for someone to witness such departures and *be* the *bearer* of *too many losses*? As Cixous writes, they could not take this pain of putting them to *deaths* any further; hence, *finally*, they *terminated* their *own life*. In fact, they might have terminated their life in order to terminate *death*[630] — end of the *properness* of death. Hence, finally, they have *actually* done this *crime* to *themselves*. They have murdered *death* that keeps murdering them *without* coming to them, making them victims of *pain* and *torture* brought to them through the *obligation to live*. Then, these writers are different kinds of criminals, and their crime is *death*. They have taken their own death *for* life, making a sacrifice *out of* their own self *instead of* making a sacrifice out of *another*. They have thus made a sacrifice of themselves, and continue to remain as those who took *nothing* from the world as a *return*-gift.

However, Shyma's effort of reaching the forbidden can be realized only if he *violates* the *given* law. Yet, as mentioned above, he cannot let go off himself by committing suicide, because, it would separate him from experiencing the moment of pleasure and freedom that he seeks by violating the law. Therefore, he should manage to *escape* after enacting the *crime*, so that he remains to *witness* the *crime* that he did and to feel that violent-pleasure *painfully*, *surviving* both *crime* and the *criminal* that he has *become*; *witnessing* one's own *crime*; witnessing the *pain* that it has caused while *suffering from* it. Hence, he needs to be the *testimony* of everything: pain,

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[629] Cixous, 1993, p. 35
[630] For further knowledge regarding this idea, please see Blanchot's idea of death presented in his philosophical and literary works.

pleasure, life, death, crime and the criminal. Thus, he is the testimony of Cixous's creature that is capable of *infinite possibilities*. So doing, he becomes the testimony for *being* — for *everyone* that *we all are*. Then, he is *like* Shakespeare's Macbeth or Othello, who survive the *violence* that they have *committed*. Shakespeare tells us that they are *criminals*, who committed crimes not only to *others* by murdering them, but also to *them selves* by murdering the *trust* and the *love* that they had received from others. We remember how Macbeth is loved by King Duncan through *becoming* the *guest* of Macbeth, gifting him the most *trustworthy* relationship *of* guest and host. It is only Macbeth who had managed to *earn* that *trust* from the king. Yet, Macbeth *conspires* to *kill* the king in order to *become* the king, as if he was unaware that he was *already* the king — king with the *crown* of *trust*. However, he *murders* the king; so doing, he also murders the trust, love and the relationship that had made Macbeth as the *indispensable* and *priceless*. And, now, with the blood stained daggers in his hand, what he sees is his own "deeds" that he has committed. He attempts to *hide* them, while Lady Macbeth attempts to *wash away* the smell of blood from her hands. She goes on rubbing them off with the water. She realizes that the smell of blood cannot be washed off even with "all the perfumes of Arabia"[631]. She goes *crazy* in this *futile* attempt of *undoing* the *crime*. She gets up at night and walks in sleep. On the other side, Macbeth is *deprived* of *sleep*. He says "sleep no more!"[632] He is not able to sleep as he is reminded of his own crime. "What's done cannot be undone"[633] and, he goes on committing further crimes. He murders all his dear ones *except* his wife. There is no need of *killing* her. She is already gone *mad*, and, thus, in a *different* world. Yet, we know that she went mad since she could not keep *witnessing* what she *did*. She could not *survive* the *sight* of the murder — the *violence*. Hence, she goes mad and finally dies *out of madness*. But, what happens to King Macbeth? He *cannot* die that early, *because* he has to go on *witnessing* what he has done, and, therein, has to *suffer* from it. He experiences the *death* of all the love that he had been gifted by others Hence, he has *betrayed* his *own self* — the *love* and the *loved ones*. *Madness* would be too less punishment for what he has done. Also, the *quick* death would be more soothing for him since it would eliminate his *fear* for life. Thus, he is deprived of both and punished further with false predictions given by the witches, until he

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[631] Shakespeare, 2014, p. 102
[632] Ibid, p. 32
[633] Ibid, p. 103

hears his wife's death. He is left alone to fight a dfferent battle — battle of *life* and *death;* and, at last, he realizes that what he has fought for is *nothing* but a "[…] tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing."[634] Thus, at the end of Macbeth — the king, what we see is *not* a king *but* a *creature* who is *everything*. There is nothing that can be negated — Macbeth as a loyal citizen, a brave soldier, a hailed hero, a trustworthy friend and host, a betrayer, a husband, a criminal, a kng, a fool, etc. All these show a man full of *love*, *hate*, *happiness*, *success*, *sadness*, *misery*, *fear*, *desire*, *power* and *stupidity*. However, this is not a peculiarity of Shakespeares's Macbeth or Othello, but of *everyone* — *every one* of us, *all* of us. We all witness all these while living, because we are *all* that. Yet, we *hesitate* to accept and acknowledge that we are *all that* or we are *everything* — *infinite possibilities*. This hesitance is determined by the assumed *forbidden* that demands our abstention from entering certain regions, which are believed to be *poisonous* and *deadly*[635]. On the other hand, if someone violates the law by trying the *forbidden*, he/she would be expelled as *outlaw* — the story of Adam and Eve. Hence, to enter the forbidden is to *get expelled* — out of *law*, and that is what Shyam does.

5.6 Writing and Violence

However, it is only *through writing* that one is *able* to involve in such crimes and *escapes* from the same without getting caught by law. So doing, the criminal *survives* both *crime* and *horror secretly* — without a *face*. Hence, in *writing*, the criminal is *un-identifiable* and *un-graspable*. Yet, the crime is *just* there; it is *undoable*. And, that crime is *writer's* crime which is a *public-secret*. It is a murder done during *day* and everyone can see its *horror*. Yet, who should be *responsible* for *this* — the *crime of language*? Whose is this *bloody* language that smells *blood*?

Shyam's *Funny Boy* is a *crime*; a violation of *law*. He *violates* a *Sri Lankan law*, which reads *homosexuality* as a *crime*, therefore, *forbidden*. This forbiddance is particularly on a particular *desire* for *pleasure*. Hence, the *law*, which is meant for preventing violence that violates rights of humanity, has actually *become* the *biggest*

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[634] Ibid, p. 112
[635] In this regard, please see Cixous in "The Scene of the céne" that appears in *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader*, edited by Morny Joy & et al. , 2002, pp. 223 - 224

culprit by violating the very *right to desire*. It seems to be saying that *one should not desire pleasure beyond heterosexuality*. If one does so, that would be a *violation of law*; also, that would be *violence*. Hence, it is this *violence* that is *resisted* and suppressed by imposing violence of another kind, and, it is the *violence* enacted in and through law. However, this violence is *legal* since it is authorized by law, whereas the *other* is *illegal* as it is not found in law. Yet, where is the foundation of this law? Derrida, in *Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"*[636], asseverates the *deconstructability* of law, since law is meant for *justice*. It is *justice* that is expected from law, and, *that* justice can never be defined by maintaining a *hierarchy of violence*, in a way that law gets the *upper* hand in justifying the violence that *it enacts* for its *own sake*. Hence, Shyam raises a question of *law* and *justice*.

However, Shyam *violates* this law *through* the *movement* that he makes through *writing*. He *moves* to *violate law — law* of the *language*, since law itself that forbids this desire is a construction of *language*, also the *language* of the *law*, of which *everyone* is *afraid*. Then, his *violence* is *not* enacted *on law*; but *on that* which the *law* is *based*. He *attacks* and *breaches* the *foundation* on which the *law* is *founded*, and, that is *language*. Accordingly, Shyam *violates* that *language*, which *forbids* him *desiring*, and, that is the *language* of *masculinity* and *heterosexuality*. So doing, he *opens up* the *clutches* within which the language of *the other* is caught. The *other* of the given language is *feminine*: then, it is *feminine* language and *feminine* desire, which knows *no limit*, hence, *desires* the *forbidden*.[637] It is Eve's desire to "taste the apple" — the desire for the forbidden, desire for the *knowledge*. And, knowledge is *nudity* — the naked *being* with the body.

Through releasing the suffocating language of the other through *writing*, Shyam releases his own self. He *lets* his *own self* and the *language go beyond — beyond* the *law*, which grounds him and confines him to a certain identity. In this letting go *of* the self and the language that was centered to self, Shyam goes far away from *the land* to sea — language. He swims in the sea of language, making his own movements freely. In this freedom, he is free to say *what happened* to *him*.

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[636] Derrida, 2002b, pp. 230 - 298
[637] In this regard, please see Cixous in "The Scene of the céne" that appears in *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader*, edited by Morny Joy & et al. , 2002, pp. 223 - 224

What happened to him?

This question cannot be properly answered. It can be argued that nothing has happened to him so far, because he is *alive*. He has managed to *survive* despite the war that was going on in Sri Lanka. When compared to Sri Lanka, he has moved to a better place like Toronto *because* of the war. He is a famous writer. Hence, Shyam can be seen as someone who is benifitted from war. When compared to those, who directly fought the battle during the war facing heavy damges of various kinds, Shyam has not faced any such *loss*. Thus, nothing bad *as such* has happened to him. Consequently, it is quite possible to consider people like Shyam, who lived in Colombo, to be those who actually did not see the *real face* of war; because, it was only once that Colombo got affected severely; that was during the 1983 riots. It is Jafna and North-Eastern parts of Sri Lanka that are known to be the regions where the *real* war went on. In that sense, some Tamils from the North would view people like Shyam as those who had a *comfortable* life in Colombo at a time when others were suffering *multiple* wars within *one official* war. Consequently, one may oppose someone lke Shyam speaking as a *victim of war*. On the other hand, though he is recognized as a victim, his victimization would be of lesser value, due to his life in Canada. Hence, Shyam may not be seen as one *among* the *identified refugees* living in refugee-camps. *On the other hand*, due to his *Tamil identity* given by birth, he also cannot be considered as a *part* of the Sinhala community. Thus, he cannot be placed within any of the two major communities.

Yet, in *another* context, Shyam would be *welcome* and *accepted* by *both* the communities, due to his *fame* as a *writer*. His popularity would be seen in two different ways by both the communities. Here, Shyam's name plays a major role. Since Shyam's full name carries a Tamil identity due to the surname called *Selvadurai*, Sri Lankan Tamils are proud to share his success and fame that he has earned as an *award-winning* writer. In that sense, *as a Tamil*, he has brought such *honour* to *entire* Tamil community in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the world. Accordingly, he would be considered as an honour, also the one who brought honour to *his community* to which he was born. He would thus be *honored* and *appreciated* for this friendly gesture that he has extended to *Tamil community*. What about the other group — the Sinhalese? As mentioned above, Shyam falls under the socio-

political category called *Sri Lankan Tamil*. He is a *Sri Lankan*, but a *Tamilian* at the same time. His surname *represents* and *manifests* his Tamil*ness*. However, the problem here is that, as discussed in the previous chapter, Tamils are known to be one of the minorities in Sri Lanka. Since the war that went on for more than three decades occurred due to Tamils' claim for *separate* land, Tamils are identified as *the enemy* of the Sri Lankan state by the *majority* Sinhalese. Now, Shyam is one of them — *the enemies*. Yet, when he is *honored* with awards for his great literary works, Sinhalese community seems to forget this *definition* which *defines* the Tamil as the *enemy* of the state; hence, they *too* welcome Shyam for the very honor that he brings to the *entire community* as a *nation*. Shyam, *here*, is the *pride* of *the nation*. He is seeing as someone who is *able* to *honor* the *nation*, though he is *deprived* of his *native land* for making the same nation. There, his Tamil identity does not matter; rather, it is his national identity that is *highlighted*, and, that identity is able to *overrule* the *other* identity.

It is very *unfortunate* to witness such paradoxical and hypocritical nature of the Sri Lankan society. Yet, it is an *exemplary* to all the other societies, which carry similar paradoxes.

5.6.1 Heart-breaks

Sufferings of people like Shyam are not *visible* or *audible*, because they do not carry any *wound* or *sickness* that is *visible*. Also, they do not wear particular clothes with particular colors and shapes so that they become the *symbols* of sadness, death or madness. Thus, there is *nothing* that projects them as *sufferers* or *victims*; in that sense, they are similar to the one in Blanchot's *The Madness of the Day*: who is scorched from head to foot; and running through the streets and howl at night, yet working calmly during the day[638]. Therefore, no one is able to see *what has happened to them*. But, that is the exact point to be noted here; there is *no point of view* to see what has happened; because, many things have happened to them, and those things that have happened to them *cannot* be *gathered* into a *central* point, since *every incident* is *central*. Thus, all of them continue coming as fragments. In each fragment,

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[638] Blanchot, 1999, p. 191

we see *what* has *happened* to people like Shyam, who are like Balendran, Amrit, Shivan. Also, each fragment speaks of its own life that is broken into pieces and scattered everywhere like a *broken heart*, because life is nothing but the *heart* itself where one *actually* lives. It is the *heart* which is more *precious* in life, and it should not grow *weak*; because, then, it *just breaks*. So, one has to be strong *at* heart. Yet, on the other hand, in us, it is the heart that is *weakest* and *most vulnerable* to the extent that it can easily be *attacked*. Then, heart is the treasure that has to be *taken care of*. On the other hand, it is a treasure that is not visible. Heart *cannot* be seen because it is inside or within us — within the body. But, body itself is consisted of heart. So, which heart do we talk about? Is it the biological heart? Or, is it the one that is biological, yet *beyond* that? Derrida, in *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*[639], asserts on the im-possibility of locating the *heart*, since the word "heart" plays with the idea of heart depending upon the context. However, this heart can be *attacked,* because it is *sensitive*; moreover, it cannot be *guarded* or *protected* from such *attacks*. It is *exposed* to *outside*. Here, the *outside* is not *exterior* to body. Rather, it is the *outside-in-side*; in Cixous's term, it is "the outside-of-me in me, the uprooted heart in the heart, in the outside interior of me"[640]. It leaps. It slips. It moves. It vibrates. It feels. It beats. And, it *never* seeks permission from the *beholder*. The beholder *cannot* hold it. It does *not* obey, and *no law* can condition it. It is the most *secret being* in being; hence, the being itself is *not aware* of *what* it is *going to do* or *how* it is *going to behave*. The self is *not able* to know *how* its own heart behaves. This *unknowable*, *unpredictcable*, *indefinable* and *uncontrollable* nature of the heart makes us *feel fear* at *heart*; makes us *feel afraid of* our *own heart*. Hence, heart is that which one is afraid of, due to the *sovereign* power it has gained by itself, through which it has been able to become the *other* within the body of the self. Accordingly, *heart* is *another body* that resides *within* the body, which is identified as *my* body with reference to the *self — I*. Since it is *another* body that *breeds* within *my own body*, *I* also cannot say that it is *not me* or *my heart*; yet, *at the same time*, since it acts according to *its own way despite me*, it also *cannot* be *my* heart, completely. There is *something* that is *strange* to *me* in *my own heart*, and that strangeness *makes* me a *foreigner* to my own *self*. Hence, *I* live *with* a *stranger* — some *other* which is *unknown* to *me*. Undeniably, *I* am in a *relation*

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[639] Derrida, 2005a
[640] This is quoted from Cixous's essay "What is it O'clock? Or the Door (We Never Enter)", that appears in *Stigmata*, 2005, p. 94

with this *otherness* within *me*, and it is *this otherness* which is *capable* of *entering* me, *breaking* or *violating* this *vague border* between me and the other. It is *through* this *violation* of the thin *border between* me and the other that the heart *undergoes* attack(s). It *breaks open* with this *attack*, and, one falls *out of* heart, without realizing. At this *disaster*, one is *not able* to be *responsible* for *what happened*, because it is the *heart* that has *played* and *fallen* while playing its *secret* games. But, it makes all of us victims — *victims* of *heart*, *the secret*. This victimization is *different*: it cannot be explained or defined: it is not visible or audible from outside. Moreover, there is no one whom can be made *responsible* for this *disaster*; no one can be *blamed*, *accused* or *pointed at*. At the end, everything *falls on me* and *I* am the *one responsible* for all what has happened. Hence, *I* am *guilty*; yet, I am not aware of my *own guilt*. But, this is what happens to *all* of us. Shyam's writings express this disaster and the misery of people becoming victims of a *weak-heart*. Balendran from the *Cinnamon Garden*s or Shivan among *The Hungry Ghosts* are such victims that Shyam depicts through his writings, which are his thoughts that thrust up from his own heart, which is yet another *weak-heart*.

5.7   Shyam in *Cinnamon Gardens*

Cinnamon Gardens is another work written by Shyam. And, in the *Cinnamon Gardens*, we meet another person like Arjie, whose name is Balendran. Yet, he is not a young boy like Arjie, who is not aware of his sexual desires. Balendran is Mudaliyar Navarathnam's younger son, and he is married to his female cousin Sonia, born as a daughter to a Tamil father, who is Mudaliyar Navarathnam's brother, and an English mother. 'It was at London that she and Balendran had met. In high-caste Tamil society, the marrying of cousins who were the children of sisters and brothers was held in esteem. Besides keeping wealth within a family, it also served to ensure that the bride's husband and in-laws would not be strangers to her. However, the marriage of the children of two brothers or two sisters was considered almost incestuous, and such cousins even referred to each other as "brother" and "sister". Balendran and Sonia's alliance had thus raised a murmur of disapproval. Sonia being of half foreign

blood and a stranger to Ceylon had, however, somewhat mitigated the objections.'[641] Balendran and Sonia have got a son, who has gone to London for studies, and the couple lives in a house that is "short drive" from Brighton, his father's house in Cinnamon Garden. "Unlike the rich neighbors his father had in Cinnamon Gardens, Balendran's neighbors were middle-class people." Their house, which is named as Sevena, is situated close to the sea. His mother is Nalamma and she lives with her husband, Mudaliyar Navarathnam. Balendran's elder brother, Arul, lives in India. According to *the order* issued by Balendran's father after Arul's attack on him due to his objection regarding Arul's love affair with the servant girl at Brighton, no one in the family should keep any relation with Arul. Nalamma and Balendran along with Sonia have to *obey* this *order* of Mudaliyar Navarathnam, since he is the one who has the *ultimate power* in taking *decisions* within the family, and *no one* is *expected* to *question* him or go against his decisions. It is due to this reason that Balendran is *afraid* to *talk* to his father regarding *anything*. Rather, he keeps taking his orders and *follows* them. Thus, father has the control *not only* over the *women* and the *servants* in the family but also over *men*. He is the most powerful who can rule and controll others *despite* their wills. However, Arul is the only one over whom he could not exercise this extreme power, since Arul was *able* to *challenge* his power. Balendran has never been able to resist the power exercised upon him; hence, he continues to suffer *throughout* his *life*. He is *already depressed* and frustrated *within*, though he appears to be the one who attempts to fulfill his duties and responsibilities *as* a *son*, *father*, *husband*, etc. The incident happened in London has made him sad and depressed. *What happened during* his bachelor life has *affected* his whole being in a way that the one who is known as *present*-Balendran is, in fact, a *different* kind of person that Balendran himself is *not familiar* with.

5.7.1 Human Relationships

Shyam has always written about *human relationships* and *how* they *influence* on one's *own life*. Here, he brings *two* kinds of *relationships*: one is that which is *given*; the other is that which *happens*. And, throughout life, each person keeps oscillating

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[641] Selvadurai, 1998, pp. 52 - 53

between these two different kinds of relationships. However, as Shyam shows, this is a *very difficult condition* to which one is *thrown*, and, there is *no* way to *escape* it. The *given* relationships are those with which we identify ourselves socially, culturally and politically. Accordingly, all *relationships* that come to us in relation to *institutions*, which include family, schools, temples, offices and so on, together make our identity as *this* or *that*. We are *recognized* by the society *through* these *identities* and *relationships*, since they are able to reflect how we are *positioned* and related to others in the society. In *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran is also known to everyone through these *family ties*, out of which some of them are ties *by birth*, while some of them are made *by law*. These ties give the legitimacy for someone to be a part of a particular community. Moreover, there are codified laws and norms to be followed by everyone in that community in order to *maintain* these *relationships* in a *systematized* manner. In that sense, these relationships are also *systematized* ones with their own *set of rules*, which suggest *how* one should behave as a child to parents, wife to husband, student to teacher, servant to master and vice versa. Moreover, the *prescribed* behavior can succeed in fulfilling *given set of responsibilities* toward the other *as the other*. However, it is significant to note that the *law does not define* what these responsibiltes are; rather, it deals with the *legality* of relationships and *intervenes* in them, when it is approached by individuals. Especially, it does not involve in solving *family matters* of everyday life. But, does it mean that law is not necessary to run the family? Michel Ondaatje presents one of his works under this strange title called *Running in the Family*[642]. There, he writes whether law has any value at all to *run* a family, because, for Ondaatje, to run a family is to "running in the family". There is no *end* to this *running*, if one wants or choses to *run the family*. On the other hand, when one attempts to *run the family*, one really *has to run away from his own self* for the sake of the family. Most of Ondaatjee's works give a great deal to this idea of *running* — running of the self while *running away from the self*.

However, in *Cinamon Gardens*, there is another law that is functional in everyday life in a family, and, that is the law of *culture*. Cultural law has *already inhabited* us *before* we inhabit it. Everyone *participates in* it by becoming a part of community. It is the respective cultures that people end up living when they live their

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[642] Ondaatje, 1983

everyday life. Culture is thus *everywhere*, and it determines the role of the individual. Hence, Balendran in C*innamon Gardens* is also *inhabited* by the *culture* in which he is born, and that is the Sri Lankan-Tamil-Hindu-culture governed by *Hindu* religion, within which the literary text, *The Tirukkural*[643] plays a major role. The text suggests how to lead a virtuous life, and Balendran is brought up especially by his father with the attempt of making him *that ideal man given in The Tirukkural*. In Brighton, one of the favorite verses from the Tirukkural is "The service a son can render his father is to make men ask 'How came this blessing?'"[644] Going through the story, it can be seen that Mudaliyar is in a mission of making his son Balnedran *as* "this blessing". It is here that the above discussed two kinds of relationships become significant.

Mudaliyar is related to Blendran *by birth* since he is his father, and he continues to serve his father *as* expected, *until* the time he meets *Richard* in London. Until this point, Balendran is the *emerging product* of the *cultural text* highly valued by Mudaliyar. On the other hand, Mudaliyar was *able* to *predict* that his son becoming such a blessing along with his *English education*. In Mudaliyar's view, Balendran was going to become a *nice blend* of the *virtuous man* of the *Tirukkural* and the *English education* that he receives from the *Europe*. As father, this expectation of Mudaliyar is *not* unreasonable. He has the *right* to expect his son fulfilling *his* wishes. It is *his love* that he gives to son which he expects in *return*. Son can present this return gift to his father. And, this *gift* is his *duty* and *responsibility as a loving son*. That is what the culture has taught him and he is not able to *escape* it or violate it. Yet, what can he do when things do not happen *as planned*?

5.7.2   Falling in Love

The incident at London is that which *happens* to Balendran. He had not planned or expected that to happen. Instead, it just *happened* to him even before he *realized* that it *happened* to him. What happened to him in London? It is "Love" — Shyam writes; and, it is a "terrible time". Love is terrible, because it is *love*. Even after twenty years, Balendran still remembers that love with which he *fell in* and which has made him

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[643] *The Tirukkural* is one of the masterpieces of Tamil literature. For further knowledge regarding the text , please visit http://www.hinduism.co.za/tirukkur.htm (accessed on 08.11.2015)
[644] Selvadurai, 1998, p. 28

feel *terrible* despite the time and space stretched in between him and *that* time. But, why is love *so terrible*? *Is* love terrible? Shyam makes us think, while he is thinking the question through all his writings.

Certainly, love *can be* terrible; but, not all the time. He does not say all kinds of love(s) are terrible. He implies that love is *not* terrible when you *fall in love with the right person*. How to find *the* right person when one falls in love? Who is that *the* right person? How does one define this *rightness* here?

The right person with whom one should *fall in love* is *already given* by the *culture*. Culture and its law have already set up a *space* for this love, which is marked, demarcated and defined by *race*, *caste, class*, and *age*. In that sense, according to the socio-cultural set up in which Balendran has been brought up, he *should love* someone from *his* race, caste, class, etc. So long as he *follows* these *rules*, his *love* would be *accepted* and *welcomed*; it also would be legitimized by conducting a *marriage* — the institution. In *Cinnamon Gardens*, everyone is *particular* about these rules since it is the most prestigious area in Colombo, where people from high class live — European mannered-English speaking people. But, as we see in the story, by falling in love with *the servant girl* at his home, Arul has gone *out* of this *order* of falling in love with the right person. It is due to this reason that Mudaliyar has *expelled* his elder son from home. Arul is *deprived* of any ties with the family because of his love and marriage with a *wrong* person. Therefore, he has left his family and Sri Lanka *in the name of his love* and continues to live in Bombay until his death.

But, what is the *wrong* with Balendran's *love*? With *whom* has he fallen in love?

Balendran's love is even *worse* when compared to Arul's, *because*, he has fallen in love *with a boy* and his name is Richard. In Arul's case, he, *at least*, had loved a *girl*, and it is *natural* for a *man* to fall in *love* with a *woman*; because, according to Sri Lankan *heterosexual cultural discourse*, *love can happen only* between two people from *opposite* sex. And, *that* love is *natural*, *normal* and *right* love. Hence, Arul's love is somewhere *within* the *given* space of *culture*. It has *not crossed* the *cultural* border. Therefore, it is a *culturally* acceptable and admirable *love*. The only problem with Arul's love is that it does not *suit* his *social* background,

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since Pakkiam is a *servant* coming from the lowest social strata. Yet, Balendran's *love* is not *acceptable at all*, since it has crossed all the *given borders* of culture — Tamil Hindu culture and Sri Lankan *national* culture. Thus, it is *un-cultured* and *non-national* love. Therefore, Balendran's love is a *shame*, as well as a *crime*: it is both *shameful* and *criminal*. *Unfortunately*, Balendran has fallen in love with such a love that is *out of* culture; *out of* law and order. In this falling, he has brought shame upon the family, culture and the nation. *Socially* and *culturally*, it is a *shame*, while it is a *crime* by *law*. Then, while falling in love with Richard, Balendran has *not only* become a *lover*; *on the other hand*, he also has *become* a *shame*, also a *criminal*. He is thus *guilty* just because of this love that he felt for Richard.

Yet, this love for Richard is not something that he *initiated*. Instead, it is *love* that *happens* to *him*; he *felt* it. He *cannot help* of feeling that love, because feelings or emotions, as discussed above, just *come* to us without seeking our permission. Especially, in love, one *cannot start* to love, because love *cannot* be *planned*. It just *happens*, and one *falls* there. *In love*, one can only *fall*. To love is to *fall* — one falls in love with someone. In this falling, one falls *out of* one's own *self* and moves — moves toward the direction of the *other*.[645] Hence, Balendran too has fallen *out of* him when he *fell in love with* Richard. In that *falling out*, Balendran has fallen out *from everything* that he was, which includes his *culture*. Yet, for him, none of these matters, because for love what matters is *love*[646]. Lovers seek nothing but love, and, so long as they seek each other in love, they are happy. So, Balendran moves into his flat with Richard, in London, and they lead a happy life until the "terrible time" comes. The "terrible time" comes when Mudaliyar comes to the flat "somehow knowing of his relationship with Richard"[647]. It is *the* time which made Balendran's life *terrible* and *unbearable* to him, and he is *not able* to *forget* that moment. On the other hand, he is not entirely aware of what happened in the flat after he ran out of it fearing his *father*. Until the moment, which comes after *twenty* years bringing Richard *to* his life again, he had known only *one side* of the story, and that is the story from

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[645] For further knowledge regarding this idea of self becoming other in the context of love, please see Cixous in her essay "Tancredi Continues" that appears in *"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, 1991, pp. 78 – 103, also in her *Tomb(e)*, (2014), and Derrida in his *Psyche: Invention of the Other, Volume II*, (2008).

[646] Please see Cixous in "Tancredi Continues" that appears in *"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, 1991, pp. 78 – 103

[647] Selvadurai, 1998, p. 39

his side. It is only when Richard narrates the story from *his side* that he comes to know how *badly* his father had behaved with Richard.

Here, Shyam shows *how violent* it is to *reduce* someone or something to a particular understanding that is based *only* on *self-assessment*. It is violent since the *other* is read and understood *according to my knowledge*, which is not *necessarily* true and right; because, there is always *outside* that cannot be *known* by the self. Hence, *self-judgment cannot* bring *justice* to the *other*. Yet, the incident at the flat has thrown Balendran and Richard into such *self-centered readings*, in a way that, they both end up reducing each other to their own (*mis*)understandings; thus, they go away from each other without making *peace*. They are separated for *twenty years* and each one is *deprived of* hearing the *other* part of the *story*. They continue with this *incomplete* story for *twenty* years and the *missing* part has made them feel *betrayed* by the *other*. This *revelation* unfolds only when Balendran and Richard meet in the hotel room, in Colombo.

"'Did you know that your father threatened to call the police and have me charged? It was horrible. So I had no choice but to leave. I went to my parents in Bournemouth, where I waited. Waited for some word from you. Something. I thought I knew the person you were. But I was wrong."

Balendran stepped away from Richard, stung by his words. After a moment, he started to walk back towards his chair, then turned to his friend. "Richard, you must understand things were difficult for me too."

"After twenty years of silence, this is all what you have to say."

"I haven't allowed myself to think about that time for so long."

"Well, there is nothing to talk about, then," Richard said.

"After I senselessly ran out of our flat, I was terrified of going back, of facing my father, so I walked the streets, even though it was raining. Eventually, I hailed a taxi to take me home. When I got there, my father was waiting for me. He told me that you had gone. His bags were in your room. I became ill after that. Pneumonia. During the weeks of my illness, even though my father nursed me, he did not say a single word to me. Not a word. I have never felt such despair. By the time I

recuperated, I had thought things through, and I realized that my father was right. Our relationship could not continue." He looked at Richard. "Of course I thought many times of writing to you, but, at the same time, I thought it best to leave things as they were since the break had already happened." He paused. "Over the years … this is something I have felt ashamed for. It is something I will always live with."'[648]

Father's arrival is an *event*, because it has *come* and *destroyed* everything in Balendran's and Richard's life. They were *separated* by this *event*; consequently, Balendran's life has become what it is *now*. What is this *now life* for Balendran?

5.7.3   Silent-suffering

He has got married to Sonia. Now, he is a husband, also a father. He is leading a family life with his wife at Sevena. Yet, he is not happy. There is something which keeps him away from Sonia's love, though he really loves her. The problem is *with hisown self*; it pushes him to some *dark solitude*. At the same time, he is *afraid of* his *father*; he is unable to reject father's orders. He is *not able* to *resist* this power, though he *really wants* to do so. Father is *responsible* for his *unhappy life*, since he did not *accept* his relationship with Richard. Nevertheless, after twenty years, *paradoxically*, the same father is asking him to meet Richard for getting his political agendas fulfilled. Balendran does not want to meet Richard who is going to reach Colombo in few days. Richard is his *past* and he is *moving with* this *past*. "We are both twenty years older," he told himself. "Much has happened since then."[649] 'Love. He rolled the word around in his mind. He knew that his love for Richard was long dead. The passing of twenty years, a wife whom he loved in his own way, and a son, whom the very thought of filled him with happiness, ensured that. 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 part of spectacles or a badly set fracture.'[650]

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[648] Ibid, pp. 161 -162
[649] Selvadurai, 1998, p. 38
[650] Ibid, p. 38

Shyam shows how powerful structures of the society knock down people who have gone *beyond* them. They can make one *feel guilty* for having some *desires* that are *different* from those, which are considered as *normal* and *natural*. Accordingly, in *Cinnamon Gardens*, the normal and natural desire with regard to sexuality is that which is found *within heterosexuality*. It suggests that *there is* a *given* way for feeling *desire* for love and sexual pleasure. It provides a *model*, *formula* or a *structure*; it is *only* according to this *given* structure that one is *supposed* to feel love or pleasure. In that sense, it is a *structured* love, pleasure and desire. However, the question here is *whether* one is able to love, feel or desire *according to* certain *givenness*. Are we able to love someone, *structurally*? Are we able to set our *emotions* according to some *formula*? Or, are we able to live according some *given* set of rules? If we do, do we actually *live* our *life* or *live* those *formulas* and *methods*? Sketching Balendran's thoughts that occur in his tormenting heart, Shyam portrays these questions, which haunt lives in *Cinnamon Gardens*.

Balendran is a *victim* of the *given structure*. Moreover, he has become a *victim* because he has fallen *out of* the *structure*. He has already *violated* the *border* of the *given* structure while *crossing* it. It is true that, there are many others in *Cinnamon Gardens* who have become *victims* for violating the *given* border. Annalukshmi, Arul, Louisa, Seelan, and Pakkiam are some of them to be named. They too are *victims* of *love*. Nonetheless, their love is yet *within* the *given* space — *heterosexuality*. Consequently, their love is not *illegal* but *unacceptable* in social-terms. And, some of them like Pakkiam, Arul and Louisa have been able to get along with their love *in spite of* the *unacceptability*. This ability is due to the *legality* of the *type* of *love*. Therefore, they do not have to fight with the law of judiciary, but with that of the *society*. However, there is another set of people, such as Sonia and Nalamma that cannot be placed among those who have violated the *given*. Then, *why* have they *become victim*? What kind of victims are they? What have *they* done?

These two women are *dutiful* wives and *loving* mothers. Their *love* is *legal*, *acceptable* and *admirable* because they are *ideal* wives and mothers who fulfill *all* the duties assigned to their respective roles by Tamil Hindu culture. However, neither *they* nor *their love* is ideal for their *husbands*. If they were *ideal lovers* with *ideal love*, their husbands would not have gone for other *women*. Hence, should we say that

these women are *responsible* for *what* their *husbands* have *become*? Have these women failed to live up to their husbands' expectations? Have not they loved these men in their own ways? If so, why cannot these husbands be happy and satisfied with that love?

According to the given tradition of the culture, a woman has to master *tolerance* and *patience* in order to be a *good* wife. She should bear her husband *without questioning* him. That is the *nature* of a *good* wife, which we have already discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, it is the *role* that they play within the marriage, which becomes more important in *running* the *family*, even when husbands have already *gone beyond* the institution of family in *search* of some other sexual pleasure. In the story, we see *how* Nalamma and Sonia tolerate this *bitter* truth *silently* and conceal it from others, *for* the *betterment* of the *family* life and its *image*. In that context, they both are *silent sufferers* of the *given* world governed by *stiff* husbands, who do not *admit* their *failures* by which they have *betrayed* their *wives*. They both sob *secretly* realizing how they are *betrayed* by their own husbands, while *confining* them to the *space within walls* — home. However, despite this reality that hurts them incessantly, they *continue to love* their husbands.

However, Nalamma and Sonia are two different kinds of women who belong to different cultures and times. Between the two, Nalamma is older and has gone through many miseries just because of her husband, Mudaliyar. She loses her elder son Arul. She has been ordered to not to keep any relation with Arul ever since he left home, and she does not dare to break this order *openly*, since it is against the *law* of her *husband*. Therefore, she *has to* withhold her love for her own son, *out of fear*. On the other hand, she also sees how her husband has *betrayed* her by keeping an intimate relationship with the European woman, living under the same roof. Thus, Mudaliyar has *violated* the *trust* that she had invested in him as her husband, while, on the other hand, *taking away* all her *rights to love* her son even at his death bed. She is not able visit her ailing son, since she is not allowed to ignore the order issued by the husband. But, how can a mother stay without seeing her son who is passing his last days of life that would remain "about a month, perhaps less"[651]? She has been suffering it for many years, but *no more*; because, it is *her* son who is going to *die*.

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[651] Ibid, p. 236

Therefore, if not her, at least her younger son should be able to visit the *dying-son*. So, she asked Balendran to seek the permission from his father to visit the brother.

"'Appa," […] "Should I go to him"?

[…]

Yet the Mudaliyar was confronted by a dilemma. While he wished to send Balendran, he did not want it to seem that he lightly dismissed the vow he had made his household take at the family shirine. "You know my wishes on this subject and I expect them to be obeyed," he said and waited for his son's appeal.

[…]

"Is there a reason I should alter my mind?"'[652]

Now, it is here that all the years of *silent-suffering* of Nalamma manage to find a *moment* and a language to *voice out* her *heart* — heart-full of *thoughts*-full of-*emotions*. And, it is a very crucial moment that would *emit* entire the *pressure* of all the *other* suppressed moments that she has been *silently* passing for years. Throughout these years, *silence* has been gathering *within* her *heart*; if it ever found any *ventilation*, it was only *through* her *tears* that she used to wipe out with "her sari palu". But, after hearing this news regarding Arul, that silence *cannot* stay any *further within*. It has slowly become intensified and thickened. There is no *more* space for *further silence*. Silence *further* cannot be *accommodated*, because the silence that is *already* within has *become* very *noisy*. It has *begun* to protest: 'no more silence!'

5.7.4   Letter Bursting out of Silence

She has been silent for a *reason* — *fear* for the *husband*. But, today, that fear has been overtaken by another — fear of *death* of a *loved one*, which is more *sad*, *scary* and *weakening*. She is *going to lose* her son *forever* as he is going to die. Hence, there is no any other reason *than love* for her to *open her mouth*, when Mudaliyar asks for a

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[652] Ibid, pp. 236 - 237

reason to "alter" his mind. Therefore, "[b]efore Balendran could answer, Nalamma burst out, "What reason do you want? Are you a man or a piece of stone?"[653]

Nalamma *bursts out*. It *happens* for the *first* time in her *life-time*. Therefore, it is a *surprise* to everyone including Mudaliyar. On the other hand, one should also not be surprised; because, it is not a *usual* day for Nalamma. It is a *different* day, since it *carries* the *message* of *death* of her son. While going through the story, we see how Nalamma keeps in touch with her son, Arul, *secretly*, for all these years. Though she is deprived of seeing her son, *no order* has been *able* to *stop her love* for the *son*. She has always been a loving mother. She is a *testimony* of love *beyond materiality*. Here, it is motherly love that *knows no bounds* in loving her children. It is so *powerful* and *capable* of *violating any law*. Then, it is also a *violent love*, since it *violates* the *order*. And, Nalamma, *for the first time*, *becomes that woman* who *can become violent* in the name of love; hence, she *violates* the order of her husband. Her violence is manifested by the act of questioning. Shyam tells us that "she had never spoken like this to her husband." Seeing her with her question placed in front of his face,

'[…] the Mudaliyar straightened up. Are you forgetting who you are talking to?" he said, his voice awful.

Much to his surprise, Nalamma stared back at him. The Mudaliyar grew furious at her refusal to pertinent, his outrage exacerbated by the tumult over his son's impending death. "Get out! He shouted. Nalamma's gaze wavered. "Get out of my study, you disrespectful woman!"'[654]

All the women in *Cinnamon Gardens* are victims of *male dominant ideology* manifested by men like Mudaliyar, Murugasu and Balendran. These men have got the power to make decisions regarding everything, and women should not question, but *obey* them. Another example for passing such orders is the Murugasu's letter that is sent to Louisa commanding to get the elder daughter married to the man that he has decided. '"Wife," […] "Prepare Annalukshmi to get married. The young man in question is Muttiah, my nephew, Parvathy Akka's son. […]

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[653] Ibid, p. 237
[654] Ibid, p. 238

"Muttiah has just got secured a job," the letter continued. "he is at the Land Office in Kuala Lumpur on a steady salary and is able to support his wife and family. I have known him these last few years and find him serious and dependable. He fits all my expectations and I am sure will make Annalukshmi very happy. I will notify you of Parvathy Akka and Muttiah's forthcoming visit to settle the matter.'"[655]

Men are able to say *what* make women *happy* in their *marriage*. Hence, it is not necessary to seek the *consent* of the woman regarding *her* marriage. This is what the letter *says* — the *letter* in the *book*; but, at the same time, it is also the letter that *circulates* the world out there in the *society*, *Sri Lankan society*, which is the world *beyond* the *text*. In that sense, it is *not only* a *letter*, but also the *reality* in *Cinnamon Gardens*; also many other *gardens* in Sri Lankan houses *despite* the categorical difference that prevails especially in terms of *race*, *language*, and *religion*; because, as discussed in previous chapter, Sri Lankan society can be *totalized* with regard to the question of *gender*, since its consensus *empowers heterosexually-oriented-masculine system* and its *values*. *Consequently*, women as the *other* of the *male gender*, and *homosexuality* as the *other* of *heterosexuality* are under constant pressure. Yet, this pressure cannot be seen vividly as it is covered by some *pseudo*-religiosity that is functional *in favor of* the same dominant order. However, Shyam brings out this subtle form of violence opertaive in Sri Lankan society through his writings. He brings it to the *surface of language* while the very surface itself is nothing but *language* itself.

Nevertheless, it is Balendran's problem that is intense within the text. His problem is homosexuality and it can appear only in the text; because, *homosexuality cannot* appear on the *skin* of the *Sri Lankan socio-cultural space*. If it is to appear *ever*, it has to emerge through *tearing* the *thick* skin of the *heterosexual-male dominant social-body*. Hence, the order of the society has to be violated; yet, it would not *survive*, since it cannot challenge the *law* of the State. Thus, *homosexuality* is another grave problem *within* the *ongoing* question of *gender discrimination* in *Sri Lankan* society. It is simmering at the depth of the social cauldron, yet *unheard* and *unseen*, *since* it is *deliberately neglected*. Question of *homosexuality* or any *other* sexual practice *beyond* the heterosexuality is hardly addressed by any organization

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[655] Ibid, pp. 41 - 42

that is found for taking care of social victims, especially women; *because*, it is *beyond* and *against* the law.

There is *no* law that has come up *to protect* those, who *fall out of the dominant order*. Hence, it is a lack or a failure in law. However, *unfortunately*, law *does not see* its *own failure* in addressing *this* as an *issue*, and, thereby, giving protection to those, who suffer due to *law's own failure*. Instead, it ends up finding those victims *as criminals*. In reality, they are actually *out* of law and *out* of order. Therefore, rather than seeing them as *criminals*, they should be seen as those, who *challenge* the law from *outside*, *for* law has not been able to *accommodate* them, *so that* it can *enact* its *power* over them. Hence, they are the ones who actually *push* the *law* to *think* — to think *beyond* already *what it is*: because, they *demand* the law *to* make *a move* in order to re-define and expand its *own space* and *power* by *deconstructing* the *given*. They *seem to be* saying that *there are more to come and they are coming — they come from outside law; hence, be prepared to catch them by creating new laws*. We hear Derrida's *assertion* on *this necessity* of "deconstruction of law" through his lecture, *Force of Law: The "Mysitical Foundation of Authority"*[656]. He affirms it, since he thinks that there is *always* a *future* that is *unthinkable* and *unpredictable*, and it is *to come*. Moreover, there is no way to stop it, *since* it *cannot be stop*. Accordingly, there is also a future even for the *gender* and *sexual practices*, for *beings* never cease *becoming*. It is true that the world believes in future of nations, communities, people, women, children, etc. Yet, how many of us are ready to think that there is also a *future* for *sexuality* and *sexual inclinations*? How many of us are ready to open up our own mind-sets to think *beyond* what is *given* in the context of gender and sexuality – gender of a man, of a woman; sexuality of a man and of a woman? Why do societies like Sri Lanka pretend to be blind, deaf, dumb and numb for any voice that comes *beyond* the voice of heterosexuality? Why cannot they hear it? Why do not they want to make an attempt to *include* those voices in their massive projects and endeavors of highlighting and upgrading their *cultures*? Do they attempt to say that there are no such *voices*, *practices*, *desires*, and *differences* other than what they project, highlight, upgrade, and appreciate? Or, do they try to say that all the voices and differences are

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[656] Derrida, 2002b, pp. 230 - 298

included, acknowledged and accepted *by* and *within* what they promote as *culture* and *nation*?

5.7.5   Voices Unheard

Shyam's works are all about such *voices*, which go *unheard* not only by *men* of the dominant order, but also by *women* of the same. *Though* women themselves are victims under the power of the male dominant ideology, most of women find *heterosexuality* as *the* appropriate, normal, natural, human, advanced, and cultured practice of sexuality. Accordingly, freedom that is sought by women is *within* the *given* space of heterosexuality. However, heterosexuality becomes problematic only when it underestimates and suppresses other sexual practices. This problem unfolds in Shyam's latest work, *The Hungry Ghosts*.

However, Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* suffers throughout his life due to his *different* desire, which makes him feel attracted to men, and he admits it as a part of his nature. His problem appears as an issue that can never be solved in Sri Lanka. He is *aware* that it is his *nature*, and it cannot be *reversed* or *changed* by entering the marriage with Sonia. Despite being a husband and a father who manifests the same dominant heterosexual order of the society, he is drawn toward his own nature, *secretly*. It is true that he fell in love with Richard, because he was *attracted* to him. But, his love was *disturbed* by his father and he is *separated* from Richard. Then on, he is *forced* to love women, hence, Sonia. Yet, how can he change his sexual ncliination? Can that also be changed *forcefully*? He *cannot help* it — the sexual inclinaton. That is where he finds "the young man" Ranjan.

"Balendran was fond of Ranjan in a disinterested way. Mostly, he felt gratitude because Ranjan was extremely discreet. The one time he had seen him in public, he had taken the initiative and ignored him. Further, he never haggled over money, took whatever was given to him." Hence, whenever the desire for pleasure *overtakes* Balendran and pushes him into some *unbearable* mental condition, he moves *away from* Sonia in search of Ranjan. Yet, he himself *cannot* approve what he does, because he is *convinced* that his *desire* is *wrong* and *unacceptable*. Thus, he *sturggles* with his *own* life, since there are *two* Balendrans that keep appearing within

one: on one hand, it is *love* and *responsibility* that comes to him as a *husband* and a *father*; on the other hand, it is his *desire*, love and *body* that demands him to *leave* every other responsibility in order to *be free* and *happy*. This *complexity* hurls him to some inexplicable mental condition. And, Shyam presents it as follows: 'Balendran liked to take his time with Ranjan, to prolong his bliss as long as possible. 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.'[657]

Considering Shyam's *Funny Boy* and *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, it can be seen that the protagonists in both the novels are children of young age, who are not able to understand their own *sexual inclinations*. In *Funny Boy*, it is much later that Arjie realizes why he was called "funny one". He realizes that the particular funn*iness* asserted by "funny one" is refered to his sexual inclination towards men. Also, he experiences this different sexual orientation with his friend Shehan, for the first time. But, *soon after* this experience, he finds it as a *crime*. "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."[658] He feels "resentful" and "angry" realizing that he has "done such awful things". However, Amrith in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* is different, when compared to Arjie. He is *aware of* his sexual inclination toward men; yet, he keeps it to himself. He is *afraid of* it. While he is making an attempt to *submerge* his *desires*, *on the other hand*, he *falls in love* with his own cousin, Niresh, who has come from Canada. Nevertheless, he is a little innocent boy, who is *secretly* in *love*, even without realizing what it is like *to love someone*. His love is driven by *possessiveness* and *jealousy*. He cannot bear Mala and Niresh becoming lovers. All his efforts that he had made in order to keep Niresh *only* with him become *abortive* due to this love between Mala and Niresh. It is that frustration, anger, sadness, jealousy, and helplessness which make him go *wild* at Mala, when they are in the "monsoon sea". He continues to slap Mala with water. "He could not stop himself now, even if he wanted to." Their arguent becomes intensed when he hears from Mala that Niresh loves her. "The blood thudded to Amrith's head. 'What did you say?' he screamed at her." *Out of anger*, he swims swiftly towards her. 'When he reached her, he tried to

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[657] Selvadurai, 1998, pp. 82 - 83
[658] Selvadurai, 1994, p. 262

lock his arms around her legs again. She kicked out and caught him in the shoulder. Pain shot through him. It acted as a spur. He darted at her and grasped her calves tightly. She struggled, but he held on, digging his nails into his flesh. He brought her under. Through the stirred-up water he could see her hair spilling out all over, her arms flailing desperately, a look of terror on her face. Her chest was heaving from the water she was swallowing.'[659]

Hence, for Amrith, Niresh is *more than* a desire for sexual pleasure. He is Amrith's *love*. Yet, what is that love? It is a very *complex love*, since it is *different* from the one that Mala and Niresh feel for each other. But, why is it *different* or *complex*? Shyam-Amirth is a lonely child, *for* he is *separated* from his *mother*; and, it is *death* that has *separated* him from his mother. It was his mother's *love* that had become everything for him. She was not only his mother, but also his *companion*. He had not liked his father; also, he was aware how his mother suffered *because of* his *father*. It is due to this difficult condition between mother and father that his mother had decided to send him away with her friend, Bundle. Since then, he had to live with this family of Aunty Bundle. That life becomes his *destiny* since his mother and father die in an accident. Therefore, Amirth has no relative except this family that treats him like their own son. With *sudden arrival* of Niresh, he finds a *relative* — relative *through blood*. Niresh is his *blood-relative*, and he does not want to *lose* him. He *loves* him. In that love, he *lets go off everything else* that he had loved so far, because, he wants to care for the love that he has *for* his *cousin*. He *leaves* his *own desire* for pleasure, *out of love*. There, he becomes a *lovely*-cousin.

Question of *gender* and *sexuality* is central in Shyam's writings. Besides, he also places many other issues such as question of war, migration, and poverty that prevail in the world. Moreover, state intervens in dealing with such issues since they are directly connected to politics of power. As he shows, this intervention should be made in a *benevolent* manner. However, unfortunately, it *does not happen*; because, state *instigates* further problems by *misusing* its power in order to implement its own hidden agenda. *The Hungry Ghosts* especially presents that *malevolent* nature of the Sri Lankan state in the task of addressing the *ethnic conflict* between the Tamil and The Sinhalese. However, raising these problems prevalent in Sri Lankan society, he

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[659] Selvadurrai, 2006, pp. 176 - 177

underscores how such issues *affect* human relationships that are *founded* on *love* and *friendship*. Shivan, Mili and Michael are some of such relationships that he casts in his *The Hungry Ghosts* with regard to this unfortunate confusing mass of power, state, and love.

However, it can be argued that his writings *repeat* and *revolve around* the *same question* of *homosexuality*; and, that makes them *monotonous*. But, that is the *significance* of his works; he *writes* the *same* question *many times*. It is the same question that does not cease becoming a question; thus, it never *ends*. These problems that he lays out within the text are not the ones that can be solved by granting any *material* comfort. It is true that there is a need of material comfort too, which he writes especially in *The Hungry Ghost*. That comfort is also a part of the *hunger* that everyone *feels* in life. Everyone *aspires* to have his or her own shelter, good food, clean water, healthy air, vehicle, etc. for a comfortable life. We see how Shivan, Renu and their mother, Hema aspire this material aspect of life; mere *change* of *place* from South Asia to Canada *cannot* change their *desire* for this *comfortable life*.

Nonetheless, there is another set of problems that all of them go through in spite of the comfortable life that they manage to live, and those problems *burn* their hearts incessantly. Shivan, his sister, his mother, his grandmother, Mili, and Michal are such people, whose *hearts* are *in flame* without happiness, peace and rest. From out appearance, they all *seem to be* fine. Yet, they all have their *own wounds* that are *incurable*; because, those *wounds* are their *own hearts*. They are *wounded* at *heart* because of love and hate. These wounded hearts are *not visible*. The size and the nature of the wound *cannot be seen* by another. That is known only by the one who *bears* it and *suffers* from it. *Wound*, *pain* and *suffering* are just *within* one's *own self*. It *cannot* be shared, hence, *the* worst.

5.8   Visits of *The Hungry Ghosts*

In *The Hungry Ghost*, Shyam *paints*[660] this *pain* that *cannot* be shared even with loved ones. *Wounds* and the *pain* caused by them are *inevitable* so long as one is in

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[660] Here, the word "paint" is used with reference to what Cixous says in her lecture delivered at New

relation with the *other*. That is the undeniable *truth* of every relationship — getting *hurt* at *heart*. Moreover, he also knows that *not everyone* is *capable* of hurting another at his or her heart. It can be done only by *few* people, and those are the ones that we *love* the *most*. Hence, it is *only loved* ones who are *capable of hurting* us giving *heartbreaks*. They can commit this *crime*, because they are the ones, who have *managed to win our hearts* that we have *given* to them *out of love*. And, we believe that they would never be able to *betray* our *love*, since *they* have *become* our *own hearts*. It is the *heart* that has *moved away* from *us* towards *them* in this *relationship of love*. Hence, it is *not our* heart anymore though it is *within* us; it *belongs* to *some* other. It is that *other* who resides *within me* — the self. Thus, *I* live with *another* at *my heart*; hence, *I* have *become another* — a *foreigner* to my *own heart*. For Ondatjee, as mentioned above, this movement of heart is a sickness that people suffer from. In that sense, heart does not belong to us anymore. If it belongs to us, we would know *how* to *take care* of it *avoiding getting injured*. But, unfortunately, we are no more the owners of our own hearts; it *belongs* to *an-other*. Thus, heart is *other's territory*. Yet, it is with us and within us; therefore, we get hurt. Shivan's heart is like *that* heart which has got *hurt*, since it has *moved out* of him. But, where has it moved? To whom? To which direction?

Going through the story in *The Hungry Ghost*, it is really difficult to say *where* his *heart* has *moved* and to *whom* it has *moved*, because, it is *everywhere*, but, *in fragments*. We see how it has *scattered* everywhere *throughout* the *text* just like words and sentences are scattered in *writing* that story *of heart*. In his work, it is the *language* that is *broken* and *scattered*; but, that is also *his heart*, since he *cries* his *heart out through writing*. Within that writing in which his heart *cries*, his heart *travels* everywhere and to *all directions*; none of those directions can be denied, ignored or negated since all those directions that his heart has moved have participated in making this heart *as* heart. What does this phrase *making this heart as heart* mean here? What is the nature of heart? As discussed above, it is the most precious thing in life; it is the *center* — heart as the center; but, there is *no* center at the heart since every piece and every corner of heart is *heart*. Hence, heart cannot be *centered*. As well as, it is *fragile* in *nature* because it is *weak*. It is, therefore, most

vulnerable place; it is *vulnerable* since it *cannot be placed* where it is *placed*. It gets attacked making life *fatal*. Shivan is that *broken* and *weak* heart and Shyam meets him at the moment when he begins to travel the journey. Which journey is that and who begins to travel it?

It is difficult to say *who* travels *which journey*, because the writer and the one on whom he writes *cannot* be differentiated. Both – Shyam and Sivan – are on a *journey*. Shyam is in his journey of *language* through *writing*, while Shivan is in a journey toward past *while* he is *getting ready* to travel *from* Canada *to* Colombo. "That drive through Colombo comes back to me now, the images of my grandmother as she was then, […]"[661] He remembers everything about his grandmother whom he addressed as Aacho — out of love. Her face, "a laced-edged handkerchief", "a swell of Yardley's English Lavender perfume", "a butter-yellow cotton sari", "its pleats starched to a knife edge", "a string of pearls around her neck", "forearms garroted in gold bangles" and "a small purse woven out of coconut fronds" are coming to meet him in his *traveling-memory*. It has travelled with him all the way from Sri Lanka to Canada, from Vancouver to Toronto; yet, has not stopped, and continues to come along with him, *just like* those who come *after* and *beyond* death — the *ghosts*. He has also heard about such ghosts from his Aacho. One of the ghosts that Aacho had often described to him during his stay with her is "Naked Perethi" and she has referred to herself as that "Naked Perethi", whenever she was hurt with the realization that everything that she had loved has been taken away from her. "I am that Naked Perethi. Am I to have no happiness in this life? Is everything I love to be taken away from me?"[662] Shivan remembers these words that she uttered while "crying freely" at the moment when she came to know about Shivan's departure from Sri Lanka to Canada.

Who is this "Naked Perethi" that Shivan heard from Aacho? And, who is this "naked perethi" that we meet *through* Shyam's *The Hungry* Ghosts? Shyam-Shivan together narrates the story of the "naked perethi".

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[661] Selvadurai, 2013, p. 3
[662] Ibid, p. 73

5.8.1 "Naked perethi"

'In the story of the naked perethi, a poor woman comes upon three drunken men who have fallen into an alcoholic stupor. She steals their clothes and money. A few days later, a monk is passing by her abode and she invites him to stop for a meal. She holds a sunshade above him as he eats, her heart filled with gladness. Because of this meritorious deed, she is reborn in a golden mansion on an island in the middle of the ocean. Yet because she stole from the drunken men, she is naked and hungry. Her wardrobes are full of fine clothes, but if she tries to put them on, they burn her skin like sheets of hot metal and she flings them from her, screaming. Her banquet table is set every day with the most sumptuous meals, but if she tries to eat, the food turns to urine and feces or swarms with maggots.

One day a storm blows a ship to the shores of her island. The captain and his passengers, upon seeing the naked perethi, are terrified. But once they hear her story, they are filled with pity and offer any help they can. Among the passengers is a lay disciple of the Lord Buddha, and the perethi says to the captain, "Nothing you can offer will free me. Instead, feed and clothe this lay disciple and transfer the merit to me." When the captain clothes the lay disciple in golden-threaded garments, the perethi is immediately adorned in the finest Benaras silk; when he feeds the lay disciple, a feast appears before the perethi and she find she can eat.'[663]

In his latest work, Shyam presents a strong idea that comes from Buddhism, and the title, *The Hungry Ghosts*, itself finds its relevance in Buddhist context. The kind of *ghosts* that he writes about is called "*perethayas*". This particular type is different form the ones in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *Othello*. According to Buddhism, everyone does not become a *perethaya* after death. It happens only with those who die *out of hunger*. That is why they are called "hungry ghosts" with "the large stomach that can never be filled through the tiny mouth"[664]. However, "the perethayas that appear to us are always our ancestors, and it is our duty to free them from their suffering by feeding Buddhist monks and transferring the merit of that deed to our dead relatives."[665] In that sense, Shivan's mother also sees a "perethaya" in her

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[663] Ibid, p. 77
[664] Ibid, pp. 24 - 25
[665] Ibid, p. 25

dream and that is none other than her husband. 'He is reborn as a perethaya, a hungry ghost, with stork-like limbs and an enormous belly that he must prop up with his hands. The yellowed flesh of his face is seared to the skull, his mouth no larger than the eye of a needle, so he can never satisfy his hunger. He just stands, staring at her, caught between worlds.'[666] Her dreams are thus haunted by this hungry ghost, and "for years, the anguish of that dream would continue into her day, because my mother believed she had caused his death by her anger and there was no way to beg his forgiveness, or at least reach some companionable peace with him."[667]

This idea of "perethaya" or hungry ghost continues to haunt Shivan's mind despite his shift from *one continent* to *another*. He is continuously *haunted* not only by the *dead ones*, but also by the *living ones*. His past frequents him and knocks him down. It is the past *related* to Sri Lanka, which is soon going to be his *present* and *future* once again, since he decides to go back to Sri Lanka in order to take care of his Aacho. He, who is presently in Canada, is *accompanied* by the memory of the incident that *happened* during his stay in Sri Lanka. There, he sees his Aacho *on one side*, and Mili *on the other side*. It is *toward* them and *around* them his *heart has moved*. They are the ones who had managed to *win* his heart, also, could *break his heart*. It *torments* him and affects his other relationships, especially the one that he had (still has) with Michael to whom he loves so deeply.

As noted above, getting wounded *at heart* due to *relationships* is both *inevitable* and *sad*. But, it becomes even more *miserable* when we are not able to share it with the ones, to whom we are attached. Shyam *writes* this *misery*, while *writing* the deep *love* that Shivan and Michael shares. Michael is the one with whom Shivan falls in love. Shivan meets Michael *after* Mili's *death* and Mili is the one with whom he had fallen in love when he *was* in Sri Lanka. However, it is *the love* that Shivan's grandmother has towards her grandson becomes a *threat* to Mili's *life*, since she thinks that Mili is *responsible* for Shivan becoming a *gay*. She thinks that *it is Mili*, who has *spoiled* Shivan. Hence, she determines to *separate* Shivan *from Mili*. Accordingly, Chandralal, a local thug who is *loyal* to *her*, sends his men and gets Mili *killed*. Unfortunately, Shivan is not able to take any legal step regarding this

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[666] Ibid, p. 24
[667] Ibid.

unexpected death of his *beloved*, since they both are *culprits* of being "gay". Had he not been a *gay*, he could have demanded the law to take action regarding this *murder*, since that was a time where many people were *secretly murdered* by *different political groups* such as JVP, the government, and the LTTE. *All* of them were involved in *killings* and *abductions*, and *no one* was able to detect *who* killed *whom* for *what*. However, in front of this unfortunate event, Shivan is *forced* to *be silent* and *leave* Colombo. "Leave for Canada", Sriyani advises Shivan. Even after coming to know *what* happened at the bungalow and how his *grandmother's selfishness* caused *Mili's death*, Sriyani is not able to blame Shivan for Mili's death. 'I don't blame you for anything. You loved our Mili and perhaps that made you a little blind, but so were Ranjini and Sri. You could not have known it would come to this. If you don't mind me saying, you misjudged this country, because you are now foreign to it. You wanted poor old Sri Lanka to love and accept the person you became in Canada. But it cannot. That does not make you responsible for Mili's death.'[668]

Shivan moves back to Canada with this *misery* in his *heart*. When he heard Mili's death, it was *too early* for him to feel anything. It is an *event*; hence, it takes time for someone to come to *senses*. He is "just numb"[669] Seeing the news about Mili's death on the newspaper and looking at it while leaning back against the hotel room in Sri Lanka, he realizes that it is "too soon for feelings"; hence he feels "nothing".[670] But, he tears the article out from the paper and folds it away in his knapsack.[671] This folded paper *travels* with him to Canada, *crossing* all geo-political and legal borders. *Though* Mili and his relationship with him has now become a thing of past, it continues to live with him even in the apartment that he lives with Michael. The apartment *belongs* to *Michael*. In this new life with Michael, Shivan is *happy*; because, he *feels happy* with the love that he receives from Michael; they both love and respect each other. His heart is filled with gratitude for this enduring and comforting compassionate love that Michael has gifted him. He remembers, 'I had never been with a man long enough to know what happened once the initial edge of physical passion wore off, and I was surprised, then delighted, to experience how that sharpness of early desire softened and spread its goodness through every part of our

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[668] Ibid, p. 240
[669] Ibid, p. 248
[670] Ibid, p. 244
[671] Ibid.

lives so that I floated through the routine of my days in a warm haze of well-being.'[672]
But, how long would this happiness remain?

Shyam touches upon some deep *philosophy of* life, which is also the one that
Buddha has preached regarding life — life of being, as well as, *the truth* of *life*.
Hence, what is this *philosophy*? What is this *truth*?

5.8.2 Life Full of Uncertainties

Everything *changes*; it is *the truth*. Nothing can be exempted from this *eternal* truth,
and it *governs* everything. In that sense, life *changes*; along with that, even emotions,
such as love, hate, anger, sorrow, sadness, happiness, etc. *change*. Shyam *inscribes*
this philosophy in *The Hungry Ghosts*. Hence, the text presents some *philosophy* and
religion despite being a *fiction*. Then, what he writes is *not* a *fiction*, though it is
actually a *fiction*. It is a *fiction* that speaks certain *truth*; certain *philosophy*, and it is a
certain philosophy or a *certain* truth *about* the *uncertainty* of *life — of everything*.
Shyam writes this *uncertainty* and *impermanency* through language. And, language
reflects the same truth that is *written*, as if there is nothing other than language, which
can reflect this *truth* of uncertainty and impermanency of things. It is so, because, like
life, *language* is also so *ephemeral* and *fragile*. It is *bound to change* as it it is bound
to *break*. It can *never* be *totalized for-ever*, because it is not meant to be there *for-ever*
in its *self-sameness*. Nevertheless, it is not *unfortunate* in negative sense; because, its
fortune is inscribed *within* this *unfortunateness*. What does that mean?

If we see life negatively due to its fragile nature, we would have to give up on
everything, in the sense that it would necessitate us to give up on living itself. In so
doing, we would give up on the world, since it is this *world* that throws us into such
misfortunes. But, *on the other hand*, this world would continue *in spite of* our *death*,
since world does not *mourn* over our *demise*. There would soon be *another* to *occupy*
the place that we have *left*. This is what the *history* of the human world shows us.
Therefore, giving up on life in order to give up on the world would stop nothing but
the very act of *questioning such systems of power* that subjugate and discriminate

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[672] Ibid, p. 314

people. Hence, it is necessary for people to *survive* and *remain* in this battle till the last moment of their lives, so that *questioning* does *not stop*; so that attempts of searching alternatives do not come to halt. Human history shows how the world has continued to be brutal and violent despite the innumerable deaths of people brought by all kinds of wars. On the other hand, the same history demonstrates how *revolutions* have taken place through those who could not help of questioning and throwing away the repressive orders of the world, so that the others, who are *going to come* to this world, could live and carry the revolution ahead. Hence, the history necessitates and demands our *survival*. It is necessary to survive not for one's *own self* but for *others*. It is a *responsibility* with which one is bound and that *responsibility* is kept *in the name of the other*, whose name, face, nationality, gender, race, caste, and land is *unknown*.[673] The other is thus a *complete stranger*, and this *responsibility* kept *in the name of* the unnameable and unknowable otherness is *unnamable* and *undefinable*. Therefore, it is a responsibility that *cannot* be pre-defined. It is not *given*, because it *cannot be* given. No one knows *how to be responsible* to a *stranger*. Hence, it is a responsibility that is kept much *before* the *arrival* of the *other*, *in the name of the other*. It is a *promise* kept *in advance*. Derrida asserts this promise *often* through his *writings*. His philosophy, which is also his demand, is about this *promise* that promises to be *responsible* to the *other* — to *mourn*, to *welcome*, and to *forgive*, *out of love*.

Then, there is another *necessity* to not to view this *unfortunate nature* of life in a negative manner. If everything is bound to *change* and if it is the *nature* of everything, there is *no way* to *change* it; because, *whatever* the way that we take is also *bound to change*. Hence, this nature demands and commands us to surrender in a way that we *have to accept* the *reality*, the *truth — changing nature* of everything. Nevertheless, that truth is *harsh*, *bitter* and *life-taking*, and, we are *not strong* enough to *see* it, *hear* it, *experience* it and *accept* it. That is where we enter this *battle* with *truth* in order to go *against* truth. Yet, if it is the *truth*, it *chases us*, day and night *across* lands, rivers, deserts and oceans, and we *run away* from it — *out of fear*. We *fear* truth. But, *to fear* truth, one has to be *aware of truth*. Then, *again*, there is a question to be asked: are we *aware of* truth?

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[673] Derrida, 2000

It is difficult to say whether we are able to have a complete understanding regarding *truth*. For example, death is an undeniable *truth* that we carry with us. We are aware that we should die someday — certainty. But, we are not able to gain complete knowledge about this truth, because, we *cannot be* completely *be* there with our *death*. We have to die *in death*. We are *busy* with *death* while *dying*. We are *occupied* and *obsessed* with *death*. Hence, we *cannot be aware* of *what happens* at that *last* moment of our life. Death is *robed* away from the one who is dying. Therefore, death continues to be *mysterious*. It is this *mystery* of death, which makes us *afraid*, despite our *preparedness* for the same. Therefore, Cixous says "[h]owever prepared we are, we are never prepared."[674] Our preparedness is *insufficient* — to face *truth*, the *death*; because, it is so *powerful* in its *force*, since truth is not a *thing*. Instead, it is a *force*, which is capable of *entering* us and *running* through our *being*. It *shakes* us, and we *tremble* out of *fear*. We are *not able* to *run away* from it *anymore*; nor are we able to *hide* ourselves from it, because it is like those *ghosts* that Shyam has heard about. They *never* stop coming *until unless* they are *treated* and *redeemed* by *passing merits*. They keep *staring* at *us*; their demanding eyes are *fixed* on us even in our dreams, which continue to affect us even during day just like Shivan *feels* seeing Mili in his dream or his mother *feels* seeing her husband in dream in *The Hungry Ghosts*. They are just in front of us, *forcing* us to *submit — no more escape*.

5.8.3 Truth that Risks Everything

It is this *inescapable truth* that *torments* Shyam's Shivan. He is *afraid of* the truth that he has kept as a *secret* in Michael's apartment. For Shivan, Michael's apartment is *more than* an apartment. It is his *life*, his *home*, his *happiness*, *peace* and *comfort*, because Michael and the place where he resides is Shivan's *world*. He *lives* there, because, he is able to live *only there* — where his *heart is*. So, Michael is his *heart*, and he does not want to *break* it *by* making it *hear* the *truth*. If he does, he would end up *murdering* that *heart* — which is Michael's *heart*, also *his* heart. Yet, there is no way to run away from this *crime*, because Michael is *pleading*. He hears Michael's plea that he makes *out of love*, *in the name of love*. "'Shivan, if you love me, if you

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[674] Cixous, 2005, p. 92

value me, if you value the life we have built together, I beg you to tell me the truth. The truth that you have, I know now, hidden from me for as long as we've known each other.'"[675]

Now, *who* is *afraid of* hearing this *truth*? Is it Shivan or is it Michael? Shivan, being the one who is *already aware of* what he is going to reveal, should not be scared about *that truth*. In that sense, it should be Michael, who should be afraid, *for* he is the one, who is *unaware of* it. Shyam tells us *how afraid Michael was* to hear what he has demanded. "It had taken all his courage to ask this, and he kept his eyes closed, as if fearful his gaze would weaken my own resolve."[676] "But I did not need courage. I was at the end of my rope, and there was nowhere to go except to the truth or its alternative, the end of our relationship."[677]

Truth is *dreadful*, because, it *risks* everything. Hence, *truth* is *risky*. Now, choosing to *hear* the truth that was kept *hidden* for *two years* and agreeing to fulfill that demand *out of responsibility*, Michael and Shyam have thrown themselves to a *risk*. It is *not* the *truth* that is *at risk*, but their *relationship*. There is no assurance that they would continue their relationship just the way it used to be *after* this *event* that is brought in and through *revelation*. Shivan still remembers how that revelation happened.

'I walked past him and went into the bedroom. When I unfolded Mili's obituary, the brittle paper cracked. I laid the article gently on our bed and gazed at Mili's smudged image for a long moment, as if bidding it goodbye. "Michael" I called.

When he appeared in the doorway he was prepared for the worst, his face impassive. He glanced at the newspaper clipping, then leaned against the doorsteps as if needing to keep a distance from it.

"This is someone I loved. Very much. An old school friend. But there is more. Much more."

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[675] Selvadurai, 2013, p. 336
[676] Ibid.
[677] Ibid.

And so, palm resting on the obituary as if taking an oath, I told Michael my story in a last attempt to keep at bay the death of all that was good in my life.

At some point, Michael came and sat on the other side of the bed, half turned from me, leaning forward with fingers knotted as he gazed ahead.

When I was done, he put his head in his hands. "How awful, how awful".

I was frightened by the hollow anguish in his voice.

He stood up. "Thank you for telling me all this."

"Michael, I beg you, let's start again."

He folded the duvet, put it on a chair, then began to get ready for bed, taking off his clothes, putting on his boxer shorts and T-shirt. After a while I did the same, both of us following the ritual that had been ours for two years. As always, Michael used the washroom first to brush his teeth, and while he did so, I, as always, filled two glasses with water and put them on our bedside tables.

Once we were in bed, the lights off, Michael said, as he turned away on his side, "I wish you hadn't told me. I wish I hadn't asked. *Perhaps* [my italics] I didn't need to know."

"No, you *had to* [my italics] know."

"So I can find out the last two years of my life was a mirage?"

"Ah, don't say that, Michael. It wasn't a mirage, we love each other."

He pushed the top sheet aside and sat on the edge of the bed. Then he gathered his pillows, his water glass, and left. I listened, frightened and helpless, as he prepared the living room couch, going to the linen closet for a spare blanket.

For the first time, we slept apart in our home.'[678]

This is the *eventuality* of truth caused by the *event* of *truth*, and that *cannot* be *explained*. There is *nothing* to *explain*; because, *everything* has *happened* — truth

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[678] Ibid, pp. 336 - 337

taking place. *Word of truth* becomes the *last* word, since truth *breaks* everything just like *heart breaks*. Thus, *truth* is a *breaking point*; that is why we *run away* from *it* as we do not want things to *break*. In front of truth, one *fails* in *language*, since *language* is *never able* to say what *exactly* one *attempts* to *say*[679]. It *betrays*. We would dare to speak truth *only if* one is able to assure that we would not *lose* anything *because of* telling truth. Hence, truth is *decisive* and *crucial*, and Shivan and Michael are just *in front of it*. Truth is laid out there just like the obituary of Mili's death is laid on the bed. But, it is laid out there *in* language; it is in front of *our* eyes, which are reading the *letters* of *truth* scattered over the *pages* — pages of the text. Moreover, truth *cannot* be put together into any *form* or a figure *as such*.

However, Shyam has been trying to narrate Shivan's truth; but, it is not *totalizable*, because *language* is not *totalizable*. But, it is centered on someone called Mili, who is already *dead*. Shivan has seen Milli; has shared his life with him; but, now, he talks about him as a person who is *dead*. There is no person that he can name or address as Mili. He *still* sees Mili in his *dream*; yet it is *not* the *same Mili*, but Mili's *ghost* or the *specter*. He is haunted by Mili's *ghost*. But, after all, it is *that Mili*, to whom he had loved so much, that comes to him *through* his *dream*. He can be there with him *only in dream*. Yet, he *cannot live in a dream* for dream *ends* when the day *breaks* while getting out of the sleep. There, when he *opens* his *eyes*, Mili is *not there*; instead, it is *Micahel* who is sleeping next to him. Michael is his *reality*; his *truth*; his *life*; his *love*; his *present*, his *day*, also his *future*. Thus, *in truth*, there are at least *two* figures that appear in front of each of them: for Michael, it is Shivan and the *unseen* Mili, while, for Shivan, it is Mili *through* his *ghost* and Michael.

5.8.4   Impossibility of Belonging

However, it is obvious that Michael is familiar only with Shivan. He does not know anything about Mili other than what he is told by Shivan. Hence, Mili is a *complete stranger* to Michael. Yet, for Shivan, Mili and Michael are very *close* and *familiar*. He has been *in love* with both of them. It seems now that he has had *two hearts* within

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[679] Derrida, in the interview that appears under the title "The Truth that Wounds" in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetic of Paul Celan*, explains the inevitable violence that language involves in interpretation. 2005c, p. 168

one heart; it suggests that he had loved both of them *equally*, yet *differently*. How can that be possible — to love two people at the same time?

Shyam writes about Mili and Michael through Shivan's *memory*. And, at the moment this narration happens, both the friends have become whom he had met in *his* past. In that sense, both are among the *dead ones*, for they have *already gone* from the *present*. Their presence is *absent;* it is the *absence* of them that is *present* to Shivan-Shyam. They are *present* in *absence*; His memory belongs to *both the friends*, Mili and Michael. He is not able to close himself from *hearing their voices* and *seeing their faces* in his *dream* or in his *solitude*. Mili and Michael are stories of his life and they "jostled up against each other"[680]. Here, Shyam tells us the *impossibility* of belonging *only* to *one* world and *one* time, because, there are *many* worlds, which have got their *own stories*. And, all of them are waiting to *pounce on* us. However, this impossibility of belonging to one world, one place, one time and one identity is due to our *own mind* that keeps *travelling* back and forth along the *passage of time*, where one hears "cacophony"[681] of past and present. It is a *noisy passage* — passage *of* time and life, and one is not able to tune the ears in order to listen *only* to one particular voice or a sound. Hence, *life* is like "one of those South Asian bazzars, with their bargaining, carnival-like milleu"[682].

Hence, past *cannot* be *separated* from the present; nor can it be buried forever. It is a part of the *story* of *life*. But, on the other hand, it is *impossible* to live in the past since one *keeps moving* in life. One *has to move* since life is a *movement*. In this movement, "[i]n front of us the way is seen, but behind us the road is gone"[683]. Only thing one can do is *to remember* — to remember *to look back*. It is *only if* one *looks back* that one is able to see that "behind us the road is gone". Therefore, *looking back* is a *necessity* while we are moving *ahead* so that we remember those *memories of childhood*, *of adolescence* and *of our own affairs* — *affairs of heart*. That is what one could do *in the memory of* those who have *gone*. It is a *responsibility* and a *promise* that one has kept *before* the *other*: i. e. to remember those dead ones in their absence; to remember to love them when they have gone too far from us. Hence, one should

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[680] Selvadurai, 2004, p. 13
[681] Ibid, p. 14
[682] Ibid.
[683] Shyam, 2013, p. 25

love and *be responsible despite* death or separation. It is this lesson of *love*, *responsibility* and *care* even *beyond* death that is reminded us by Shyam through his *The Hungry Ghosts*. In this task, he remembers Buddhist *jathaka* stories about "perethayas", in which the idea of transferring merits by doing good to another *in the name of the other*, who suffers without *redemption*, is described. In fact, this is a different kind of redemption; because, it is not a *direct* way of doing things, but an *indirect* way.

5.8.5   Responsibility of the Self

Redemption is for those who *suffer* from pain and misery. Since pain and misery is *common* to everyone, *every being* is a *suffering* being. Hence, everyone longs for redemption. Nevertheless, one *cannot* redeem one's own self. One has to free one's own self from the *Self* for redemption. One has to be free from *one's own self* since it is the *desire* for the *self* that causes pain and suffering, and Buddha's teaching carries this idea of *giving up on the self* in order to be *free*. But, Buddha too demands this detachment of the self *for* the self. In that sense, is not it another *self-centered approach* that is taken for the benefit of the self?

Certainly, it is a self-centered approach, but initiated in a *different* way. It is a *different approach* to self, where *self* is approached *through* the *other*. Accordingly, it is the *other* who comes *first* — prior to me, in the sense that the *other* becomes the foremost necessity *for* me to be there. It necessitates the *presence* of the other *before* me, because *I cannot* be there *without* the *other*. *I* can think of me only *in relation* to the *other*, since other has *already* been there *before* me[684]. Hence, *I* am not the *center* here, because, *I cannot* be *centered* due to the *presence* of the other; therefore, there is *no direct* way to approach the *self*. It – the self - is a *route* to be taken *via/across/ through* the *other*, due to which one *has to be* in relation with the *other*. One has to be *friendly* with the *other* making *peace* with the other. How to be friends with the other and makes peace with the other? It can happen only by *opening up* of the *self* to the *other*.

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[684] In this regard, please see Derrida in his *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Orign*, (1998).

It is a difficult task, because we *love* our *own self*. We have already fallen in *love* with our *own self*, which is our *own image*. In that sense, *we* are like *Narcissus*[685]. We love *ourselves* than others. It is *our desire* for our *own selves*; we see *only ourselves*, thus, become *blind* to the *love* that we are *given* by *others*. We *see* none other than *us*, through which we are *bound to* our *own selves*. We do *not* want to *break* this *spell* by which we are surrounded and enclosed within *ourselves*; we make that space further ours and continue living in that *sovereign space*, where no one matters but *I* — the *self*; consequently, *others* become *victims*. This is what we see in relation to Shivan and his grandmother.The story shows *how* Mili *becomes* a *victim* of *Shivan's love* and *loses* his *life*. It is obvious that Shivan *loved* Mili so deeply and *never expected* that his love would casuse death of the beloved. He did not love *to kill* Mili. He *loved* him, because Mili was *his love*. Mili was his happiness and he wanted Mili to be with him despite the law and the order of the society. In this love, he did not see *who* followed them when they had gone to the apartment to be alone. It was *Shivan* who took Mili *in spite of* Mili's *hesitance*. Thus, Shivan was *blinded* by *love*; as a result, he *lost* Mili *forever*. *Similarly*, Shivan becomes a *victim* of his *grandmother's love*. Grandmother's love for him is such that she does not want to lose him for anything. She is *possessive* of her grandson. She wants him to love *only her*. Therefore, she *conspires* to separate Mili and Shivan. However, she does not expect Mili to be killed by Chadralal's men; her will is to *break* Shivan's *relationship* with *Mili*. "Ah, Puthey, nothing bad will happen come to that boy. I just wanted him given a good scare, to stop him corrupting you."[686] But, things do not happen the way that we *expect*. There is always something that would happen *unexpectedly* and it would make everything *upside down*. She realizes it only when she comes to know that Chandralal's men had killed Mili. Yet, this news of Mili's death does not disturb her much, since Mili is *no one* to her. But, she knows that *Mili* is *everything* for Shivan and that is where she begins to *tremble*; she feels miserable, because she does not know *how* to deliver this message to Shivan. At the same time, she does not know how Shivan would react to this dreadful news in his life.

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[685] http://www.britannica.com/topic/Narcissus-Greek-mythology (accessed on 24.06.2015)
[686] Ibid, p. 233

'"Puthey those men … they did not know to be careful with that boy. One of them struck him. He fell and hit his temple against the corner of a table and …" She began to cry.

I grasped her hand. "What are you saying, Aacho?"

"In the middle of the night, they took the body and released it beyond the reef so it will not float back to land."

I got up and hurried towards the door as if I had somewhere urgent to go. "Aiyo! See what that boy has brought on us. He was a curse from the moment he walked into this house.'"[687]

Now, grandmother is helpless. It is her *extremely self-centered love* for Shivan that has become the *curse* of Shivan's life. It has brought him this *disaster*, from which he would *never* be able to *recover*. But, does she realize it?

She is *not able* to *realize* it; because, she knows that her grandson is *alive* and *unharmed*; she has *somehow managed* to remove the *source* of *evil* from his life by separating Mili from him. She has always been *good at* removing *people* from *her properties*, whenever she realized that they would be *harmful*. If someone has ever disobeyed her orders, she could always get them evicted with Chandralal's *violence*. It cost her nothing but some money. This time too, she has applied the same method on the *relationship* between Shivan and Mili, since, for her, Shivan is yet another *property* that *belongs* to *her*. She has already *bought* him *by* giving him *money* and *power* to take care of her properties. Shivan is *expected* to be *immobile* just like the houses and the lands owned by her. But, Shivan is *mobility itself*. He has *always moved*, because, he *has always been moved* by *relationships*. However, here, the death of *Mili*, the beloved, has struck him and disturbed him. He is *not able to move anymore*. Moreover, he is not able to move anymore, because Mili's death has *already moved* him *far from* where *he was*; *who* and *what* he *was*. He has been *sent away so far* with this *heart-breaking* news of *Mili's death*. *His heart*, where his *treasure* had been kept *safely*, has been *ransacked* by grandmother's *selfish love*. He is not able to say *what* her *love* has *done* to him. He does not *say* anything; instead, he

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[687] Ibid, p. 237

just acts. He has already packed his suitcase to leave — leave for Canada. But, will he be allowed to stay in his silence? Will he be allowed to leave at his own will by someone like his grandmother?

'Seeing his suitcase, she lets out a cry: "But what is this?"

Even though I was turned away, I knew she was referring to my suitcase.

"I have to leave for Canada." […] "It's what your man, your thug, wants. I have no choice in the matter."

"No, Chandralal would never harm my grandson. He would never do that."

[…]

"I will go and speak to Chandralal. He would never harm my grandson."'[688]

But, *what harm* does she talk about here? Why does not she realize that she has *already harmed* her grandson? Why does not she *see* that?

She *does not see*; because, she sees *only what* she *used to see*. *Her eyes* used to *see only what* she *likes to see*, and it is *her grandson* that she *wants* to *see unharmed*. According to her knowledge, he is unharmed as there are no wounds to be seen in his body He has *just* got a *headache* which she is going to cure by giving a "Disprin": "I'll tell Rosalind to get you a Disprin." It is here that Shivan is no more able to keep his *silence* regarding what she has done. He could have kept his silence and moved out of her house had he not been *compelled* to *hear what she* was *saying*; but, hearing assertive words of *her power*, his *silence breaks*.

'"Are you blind? I am already harmed." I opened my arms. "Look, look, I am damaged. And you have done this to me."

"Ah, Puthey, don't say that," she said, her voice cracking. "You're speaking in anger."

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[688] Ibid, p. 241

"Remember how you said our Sinhalese ended up eating themselves by causing the riots? Now you have eaten yourself. Through your stupidity and evil, you have lost the thing you value most."'[689]

Thus, in two different ways, Shivan and his grandmother have *lost* their *loved* ones. Both of them have to incur this heavy loss *silently*, since *they* are the *culprit* for this *lost*. They cannot blame anyone else for what has happened. However, in this context, Shivan *differs* from his grandmother. Shivan knows that *no one* makes him *responsible* for *Mili's death*, since everyone, except himself, understands that Mili's death was *beyond Shivan's control*. However, he *thinks that he is the one* who brought *death* to Mili. He *regrets*. He thinks that he *could have* saved Mili. He realizes that he could have *thought differently*.

'Late at night, I would place my basement, stopping to stare out the window, my mind frantic as it reconstructed various paths I might have taken that would have saved Mili. If only I had listened to Sriyani; if only I hadn't pushed Mili to visit that house in Mount Lavinia; if only I had taken my grandmother's anger and disgust at Mili more seriously. I should not have agreed to leave the bungalow once those thugs had taken him, I should have phoned Sriyani right away instead of wasting time coming back to Colombo. I should not have trusted Chandralal's assurances. And always, always, my thoughts returned to the terror in Mili's face just before they dragged him away, his heels resisting against the cement floor. What did those men say to him? They must have told him he was to be taught a lesson for corrupting me, insulted him, called him ponnaya. Did he hate me then? Did he curse me for putting my happiness before his safety? I would sit on the edge of my mattress, head in hands, unable to prevent myself from imagining the impact of their fists on his body, his face.'[690]

5.8.6   Loving the Other with Responsibility

Shivan's thoughts on Mili's death *assert* the *impossibility* of *running away* from one's *own mind*. Shivan could *leave* Sri Lanka *after* the incident; moreover, no one in

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[689] Ibid, pp. 241 - 242
[690] Ibid, p. 272

Canada would *question him* regarding *Mili's death*. Yet, he *hears* the *questions* rising *within his own heart*, without letting him sleep; he *hears those inner voices accusing* him for Mili's death. They tell him that he *could have saved Mili* if he *listened* to *others* who had already *warned* him regarding the *consequences* of their relationship. It was a *time* that he was *obsessed* with *Mili's love*; hence, he *did not* want to listen to others. If he listened to them, it would have *compelled* him to *leave* the *relationship*, *sacrifisn*g his love *for Mil's sake*. However, we know that it is this *sacrifice* that was demanded by someone like Sriyani, who *was aware* of the socio-political and legal scenario in Sri Lanka. Yet, it is a demand which asks Shivan to do something *impossible*. It is *impossible* for Shivan to *sacrifice his love* by *letting Mili go*, because he *loves* him. On the other hand, Shivan is the only person who could initiate this *impossible task*, which is *his responsibility*. He *should* leave Mili *out of love*. But, is it not a *strange* responsibility in the context of *love*? How can one *leave* someone if he/she really *loves that* someone? What is this *paradoxical* demand and responsibility?

It is a *strange responsibility* that needs to be taken by Shivan, *if* he *really* loves Mili. *Unfortunately*, Shivan is *not familiar* with such kind of *responsibility* in love, which *demands* the lover to leave the *beloved*. He does not know *how to love* in *separation*; *how to love* the beloved *by letting* him *go*. He is *familiar* only with the *usual way of loving*, which is the *love* through *unity*; *love* through *being together with each other*. Thus, the love with which he is familiar is the *one* manifested through the *presence* and the *proximity* of *lovers*. There is *no love*, if the lover decides to *leave* the *beloved*; if he does so, it would be a *betrayal*. Hence, Shivan did *not* want to *betray* his *beloved*. So, he *continued to love* him in his *familiar* way, which is also the *given* way. In that sense, he did not know how to love *otherwise*; how to love *despite* his *own self*; how to let go off everything *in his love* to the extent that he does not even care for his own existence in this love. Instead, he sought to *exist* in his love; he should be *there* in order *to love*. And, he *can* be there *only if* he has Mili's *love*, since, *in love*, his *heart* has *moved* to Mili. In such a condition, if he lets Mili go, he would *lose his heart*. And, he would not be able to bear it. He would be *left* with *nothing —* *not even his heart*. He *fears* this *utmost poverty*. *No*! He *cannot* do that; he *cannot lose* his *own self* by leaving Mili. This *fear* — fear of *losing one's own self* pushes him to

continue with their relationship; thus, he becomes *closer* to Mili; he wants to spend *his time* often with him. And, eventually, Mili *becomes* the *victim* of this *great love*.

But, *how* can we *accuse Shivan* for Mili's death? If Shivan were *able* to think and love *otherwise than* the *given*, he *could have* done so since he *loved* Mili. Going through the story of Shivan, it is obvious how he *loved* Mili even *beyond* his *death*. Then, it would be *unfair* to say that Shivan was *selfish* in love and did not care for Mili. It is not Shivan's *fault*. He was *just ignorant*. It is the *ignorance* of Shivan. This *ignorance* is blinding and *he* was *blinded* by it. But, what was he ignorant of?

He was *ignorant* about his *own love*; he was not able to see what *his love* is *capable of*. Hence, he was blinded and cheated by his *own* love. He has been *betrayed* by his *own self*. That is hard to believe; it is *too bitter*; *too harsh*; *too cruel* to realize that his love has *robbed* his own *love away* from him. *His love* has *killed* his *own beloved* — the friend. It is a *murderous* love. But, *love* is always *murderous*. That is what Cixous, Blanchot and Kafka writes. In love, there is *only death, murder* — either of the two has to *die*[691]. In this love between Shivan and Mili, it is Mili — the *other*, who is *murdered*. That is why Shivan is not able to *forgive* his own self. He is *awake* even late at night, being *disturbed* by this *horrible feeling* that he killed his friend. In that sense, he is *no better than* his *grandmother*, who brough this tragic end to *his love*, out of her *love*. He tells himself thinking: 'I had told my grandmother that, through her selfishness, she has lost the thing she valued most. But I was no different. By placing my happiness first, I, too, had destroyed the thing I cherished.'[692]

Nevertheless, he is not able to *undo* the *past*. Only thing he can do is to *take care* of the *present* through *learning* something *from the past*. In present, he is in a *relationship* with *Michael — again*, *out of love*. But, *this time*, it is *imperative* for him to *love* Michael in a way that Michael is *protected* and *taken care*. He needs *to be responsible* for Michael in all ways and means. This time, he *cannot be blind* in love. Through the passage of time, he realizes his *responsibility* as a friend or lover. Finally, he *learns* to *love selflessly* by *risking* everything *including* his *own self*. This

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[691] Cixous in her *Tomb(e)*, writes on the relationship between love and death as follows: 'As soon as there is Love enters Death. Death makes its nest in love. Everywhere, in any literature, in any reality, there are always two of us plus Death. Death as a plus, as a witness. It is as if 'iloveyou' had a synomym 'we're going to die''. One of us will outlive the other. And he will die from this survival.' 2014, p. 13

[692] Ibid

time, he lets go off everything *in the name of love*; he is not going to count or measure the *economy* of love or friendship. He has to *give up on expecting profits*. He does not know whether he himself would be able to survive this *extreme step* that he is going to take in the name of *love*. He *risks* his *life*; his *future*; his *happiness* — his *whole being*. Hence, he *decides* to reveal the *truth* in front of Michael's plea to know the truth. He narrates what happened to them — to Mili and Shivan, their love and their life. It is the *only option* that he is left with to *take care* of his *relationship* with Michael. This time, he *shares* this truth that he had kept as a secret closed within his own self, *not* in order to say how much he had loved Mili; but to *express how much he loves and values Michael*, *his love* and *friendship*. He wants to care for Michael, also his relationship with Michael, because he loves him. 'I was at the end of my rope, and there was nowhere to go except to the truth or its alternative, the end of relationship.' Hence, in *telling truth*, he may have to bear the *end* of relationship. So, should he say this *menacing* truth? Even he has to say, he can say the same thing in a *different* manner so that he would be *benefitted* at the *end*. He could have said something *other than* what he told Michael at this moment of revelation. What did he say there?

"This is someone I loved. Very much. An old school friend. But there is more. Much more."

This is what he said. He did not stop only with the introduction, which introduced *dead Mili* as an old school friend. Instead, he said that he *loved him*. Also, there is *more*; "Much more" — much more that he cannot verbalize; because, it is *too much* to verbalize and *no language* would be *adequate* to explain that *quantity* which is "Much more". Even he attempts to say *what* that "much more" *is*, there would still be *more* to it, because there is always *more* — more in *relationship*, more in *love*, more in *language*. Thus, it will *never* end — truth. More he attempts to reveal, more will remain to be revealed. Hence, it was all that he *could say*.

But, our question is: why did he say it — the truth that he loved Mili and there is *more*? He could have said something *different*; he could have *played* with truth by *playing* with *language* — words. Even he says something different, how would Michael know whether he said something *other than* truth or *different* from truth? Shivan is the only one who knows the truth. *No one knows* anything *better* or *true* about their relationship *other than Shivan*. There is no *witness* to *truth* other than

Shivan. Derrida discusses this idea of truth and witness in his interview that is given to Evelyne Grossman, which appears under the title "The Truth that Wounds", where he questions the liability of truth. As he argues, truth can never be guaranteed since it is laid out through language in which nothing can be said *exactly*. Hence, there cannot be any witness to truth as it is already in language, which is capable only in saying either less or more about the thing it says; because, it can never say the *same* thing or the thing *exactly*. Hence, there is "an inaccessible secret to which no proof will ever be adequate"[693]. In that sense, everyone *can* escape from the danger that would be brought by revealing the truth, and this escape is facilitated by *language*; it can be done only through *language*. But, *on the other hand*, truth can be witnessed and guaranteed only by the self where the self is required to be genuine to its own self — the *self-witnessing*.[694]

Here, Shivan is the *witness* to *his own* truth; he is the *testimony* for the *truth* that he *utters*. It is a task. And, Shivan performs this task by narrating the truth *despite* the *consequences*. *This time*, he has done *violence* to his *own self*. He has *murdered* his *own self* in order to care for Michael. Though he pleads Michael, "Michael, I beg you, let's start again", there is no guarantee that Michael would agree with his suggestion. But, he makes his attempt; that is all what he can do — making attempt to bring things back to *the way they were*. At the same time, he is aware that it is *impossible*; the *rupture* has *already happened*. This time, he has taken the *responsibility* demanded by *ethics*. It is to response some *ethical demand* that he has taken this *responsibility* of telling the truth. Therefore, *this time*, his love is that which kept as an *ethical responsibility* to the other. Here, it can be argued that Shivan could have revealed this truth to Michael *at the beginning* of their relationship. If he wanted to be *ethically* responsible, he *should not have* kept this truth as a *secret*. Now, revealing it after two years of relationship, he has ended up *hurting* Michael; also, he has *cheated on* Michael and *betrayed* their relationship. This is what Michael begins to feel *after hearing* it. He questions Shivan, "So I can find out the last two years of my life was a mirage?"[695]

[693] Derrida, 2005c, p. 164
[694] Ibid, p. 165
[695] Selvadurai, 2013, p. 337

Michael's question suggests Shivan's delay in *revealing* the *truth*. He has let go *two years* without revealing it. In this *delay*, he has caused *pain* to Michael. If he *chose* to *not to reveal* this truth before or within these two years, he should have continued with the same choice even *now* — the *now* that comes *after two years*. But, why should he reveal it *now*? Does he do anything *better* saying it *now*?

"I wish you hadn't told me. I wish I hadn't asked. Perhaps I didn't need to know"[696], Michael says after hearing the truth. And, Shivan says, "No, you had to know."[697]

It is *strange*. Shivan says that Michael *had to* know. The term, *had to*, says that it was *mandatory* for him to *know* that. But, why did not he *realize* it *before*?

For last two years, he *could not* say it. But, *after* two years, he is *compelled to* say the same, and he *agrees* to do that. *Suddenly*, *after two years*, he *feels* the *urgency* of *truth*. It is *urgent* for him to *reveal truth*. He reveals it *out of urgency*, which has come *after two years*. Derrida, in the essay "Ethics and Politics Today"[698], says that "urgency" of taking a decision can come even after many years; what matters is taking a *decision* in an *emergency* situation. The decision taken in an emergency is done without *calculation*; without having *prior* knowledge regarding what is going to *follow* this decision. The *urgency* is governed by *time*; in *emergency*, there is no *more* time left *to wait* and *think*. One has to act *quickly*.[699] Now, it is this *quickness* that we see in Shivan in taking the *decision* to reveal the truth. And, that is a *decision* taken out of *ethical responsibility* that is kept in the name of the other. All these years that he lived with Michael, he was *not aware how* he could be *responsible* in this relationship. It was *not given*; instead, it *has to arise out of necessity* that erupts with *suddenness*. That *suddenness* of *event* demands him to do the *impossible*. It is precisely due to this condition that the *responsibility* is *entwined* with the notions of *impossibility*, *event*, *disaster*, and *decision*. Hence, the *responsibility* taken up by him has brought him *disaster* and, it is the *end* of the *relationship* by *losing his love*, *his heart*. This time, he has *wounded* his *own self* by *choosing to care for Michael*, and he is going to *live with* that *wound*; he is going to *travel with* it.

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[696] Ibid.
[697] Ibid.
[698] Derrida, 2002a, 295 - 314
[699] Ibid, p 300 - 301

Travelling with wounds is not new to Shyam-Shivan. He is *wounded*. He *is* nothing but *a wound*. *Once*, he travelled to Canada since he was wounded by socio-political situation in Sri Lanka, which was operative to eradicate Tamils from Sri Lanka. *Secondly*, he travelled back to Canada from Sri Lanka bearing the *death* of Mili. Now, for the *third time*, he is *again* wounded due to the way things *fell apart* with Michael. And, this time, he decides to *go back* to Sri Lanka leaving Canada. The pain *of years* and years *full of pain* has not let Shivan *rest*. The pain which is *dark*, *thick* and *gloomy* has been *torturing* him throughout his life. It *does not* seem to *end*. He has to *survive* through this pain, while surviving the *pain itself*. The *source* of this pain is *love* and *attachments*. In this *chain* of *attachments*, the one that he had with his grandmother is significant. She is the one who has *wounded* him in the worst manner by *separating* him *from Mili*. Even he left her out of anger, her *ghost* has been continuously following him till Canada; even till Michael's apartment and finally into his relationship with Michael. She will *not leave* him until she is *satisfied* with his love; because, she has done all these *out of her desire* to win his love. But, how can Shivan love his grandmother? He *hates* her; he does not *want* her in his life. Yet, is he able to stay stern with his decision?

5.8.7 Attempting the Impossible Forgiveness

In life, it is *impossible* to have any *continuity* regarding *anything*, because there is always the *other*, who keeps *coming* to us and demands to *break* from the "spontaneity"[700] of *self-sameness*. Hence, despite all the discontinuities happened in his life due to this demanding otherness, he is *still* commanded and expected to face further discontinuities. That is why his mother and sister visit him in Vancouver after six years. He is aware that there is some *definite* reason for this *sudden* visit, and the conversation between mother and Shivan that is quoted bellow would show the reason for this journey.

"'Shivan, I am so pleased to see you have a happy life here." […] "I think you are healed enough to begin some reconciliation with Aachi. It's important you do so. She won't live forever."

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[700] Levinas, 1969

I went back to studying the sign, lightheaded with relief. So this was the reason for her visit, not something unimaginably terrible.

"Has she accepted responsibility for what happened?"

"Whether she accepts responsibility or not isn't the issue. The issue is-"

"Only time will heal what happened, and as you see, it is already doing that." I held out my arms to show proof.

"Time isn't enough, you must also forgive."

"How can you forgive someone who hasn't taken responsibility for their actions?"

"You start by forgiving yourself, that's where you start."

"What should I forgive myself for? Did I kill Milli? Is that what you think?"'[701]

This is another juncture in Shivan's life, because, he has to let his grandmother *in* his life. It is a *necessity* and *responsibility* that is reminded to him by his mother, who has come to him through crossing the distance from Toronto to Vancouver. She has come to *remind him* that he should *forgive* his grandmother, since she is not going to live *forever*. Here, Shyam highlights the *necessity* of *forgiveness*: forgiveness is a *necessity*. It is *imperative* and *indispensable* to life; because, life is not *forever*, for everyone is *bound to die*. But, how to forgive someone who does *not ask* for *forgiveness*? Also, how to forgive something which *cannot be forgiven*?[702] It is possible for mother to make this request, since she is *not* the *victim* here. She is not the one who *lost Mili*; Mili was not her *love*, *friend* and *life*. This injustice is done to Shivan. He is the *victim* and he has lost Mili *forever*. There is nothing which could bring Mili back to life. Hence, *what is the need of forgiving her*? It is *impossible* for him *to forgive* her; because, what she has done is *unforgivable*. Grandmother is *the unforgivable* in his life. She is the one who makes the *forgiveness impossible* through

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[701] Selvadurai, 2013, p. 329
[702] Idea of forgiveness that is intended to highlight in this chapter finds its direct reference to Derrida's notion of forgiveness that unfolds in his essay, "On Forgiveness", that appears in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 2001c, pp. 27 - 60

her *crime*. Hence, mother asks him *to do the impossible*. Shyam writes the *impossibility* of forgiveness; also, *impossible forgiveness*. Accordingly, there are two things that rise *at the same time*: on one hand, there is the *necessity* and *demand* for *forgiveness*; on the other hand, there is the *impossibility* of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is *unlike* love. In *forgiveness*, one has to be *intentional*, since it has to be *initiated* from the *side of the victim*. In love, there is only *falling* and one does not fall there *intentionally*. It just *happens*; moreover, there is no reason for *why* one *falls* in love. Yet, one *falls* and one is not able to *realize* that; when one realizes it, it is already *late*; one has *already fallen* — in love, *out of love*. Thus, it happens despite the law and order, for there is *no law* in love. Rather, love *breaks* all the laws. Contrastingly, one does not *fall* in *forgiveness*. Instead, one has to *knell down* in front of the victim and ask for forgiveness, since forgiveness is that which has to be *granted*. Here, it is only Shivan who can grant forgiveness. On the other hand, it is not the *culprit*, his grandmother, who asks for *forgiveness*. She has not even taken the *responsibility* of what she has done to Shivan. Of course, how would she be expected to take the responsibility when she does not know *what* she has *done* to Shivan? She is not *aware of* what she has done; hence, she would *never* ask for *forgiveness*. Moreover, she *cannot* ask for forgiveness, as she does not know the *gravity* of her deeds and *how* it has *affected* Shivan. Hence, it is only Shivan who is *aware of* what she has done to him. The *effect* of her deeds is *immeasurable*, *unexplainable*, *undefinable*, *uncalculable* and *unforgettable*. He is the one who bears the wound that *never heals*. It is in that *incurable* pain and *unrecoverable* loss that Shivan realizes *how impossible it is* for him *to forgive* his grandmother — his *enemy*.

As noted above, *The Hungry Ghosts* is a story, which presents people, who are *in search of peace*. Here, the idea of peace that Shyam attempts to underscore has got some *religious touch*, within which the idea of *religion* itself is lifted *beyond the given* notion of the same. Accordingly, religion is projected as *peace* that everyone yearns for their own *burning hearts*. For this *peace*, there is *no particular color*, *race*, *caste*, *class*, *gender* or *language*, because there are no *such categories* for *emotions* like love, hate, pain, sorrow, misery and helplessness. Every being is *suffering* at *heart*; everyone's *mind* is *burning*; everyone is a *travelling wound* and everyone needs some medicine *not to* heal, but *to calm the pain down*; because, it is not possible to heal

wounded-hearts. However, this calming down at heart can never be attempted by seeking *vengeance* out of anger and hate; *anger* and *hate* can only *further* the disturbances and the unease at heart. They are very *dangerous*: "WHEN THE MIND BURNS WITH ANGER, immediately cast aside those angry thoughts or they will spread like an unchecked fire travels from house to house."[703] — Shivan has heard his mother repeating these words from a book called *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.[704] Therefore, it can be attempted only by *attempting the impossible*, which is *forgiveness*. Shyam *writes* this attempt; so doing, he makes an attempt to *forgive the unforgivable*. He writes about such an attempt that he had heard from the *same* grandmother, now on whom he is to *forgvive*. What he had heard from her is a *story*; it is the story of ""The Demoness Kali", begins with this line: *As a forest fire raging out of control only stops when it reaches a lake or river, so hatred and vengeance can only be quenched by the waters of compassion*."[705] Now, this *jathaka* story has *become his story too*, yet, with *different people* at a *different time* in *different context*. The *incidents* are *different*; but, *emotions* are *alike*: love, hate and pain. It is *Shivan's heart* that is burning, and, that fire will keep raging just to destroy him further *until* his *death*. His life has *already become* a *hell*, since his relationship with Michael also has begun to *break*. He realizes that he cannot fix anything; it is a *past* that can *never be reversed* in order to make it *better*. On the other hand, though it is ireversible, it keeps coming in its own forms and, he is not able to leave it *behind*. He is *not able to move* leaving it behind. He is his *past*, and his grandmother is also a part of that past. *Wherever* he has *moved*, he has moved with all that, *yet with anger* — anger *with* the past. It is this *anger* he has to root out from his heart so that he feels *peace at heart*. His anger is with his *grandmother*; he *should settle* it, to which he has to think of *going back* — back to her; back to that place — the *house*, the *land*, the *country*. Conversation that happens between Michael and Shivan reveals this thought of Shivan *going back* in order *to move on* with life.

"'You're thinking of going back."

"I … yes, I'm considering it." I shoved the cushion away, realizing I had pulled a long thread out of its embroidery.

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[703] Selvadurai, 2013, p. 43
[704] Ibid.
[705] Ibid, p. 260

Michael switched off the television. After a moment, he rubbed his eyes fiercely, then was still. "Why do you have to go back? All that is past. Put it behind and move on."

"But you can't just put things like that behind you, Michael. I must come to terms with her, with everything that happened, otherwise, I, we, will never move on.""[706]

Throughout the story in *The Hungry Ghosts*, Shivan is *haunted* with a *sense of responsibility* that is related to *past*. *Ghosts* come from that *haunting past* and remind him that there is a *responsibility* through which they are *related* to *him*. If he *leaves* that past *unattended* or *unacknowledged*, there would not be anyone to *redeem* them. They would continue to be "perethayas", and, he would always be *haunted* and *held back by them*. Hence, he has to *free* them from their condition. In this task, he needs to take a step *out — out* from *his house*, *his heart*, which is his *own self*. He has to *risk* his *own self* in order to *take* this *responsibility — stepping out*. At the same time, there is no assurance that *whether* he would *succeed* in this attempt. He *does not* know, *because*, he *cannot* know. It belongs to *future*. In case he fails in this attempt, he *cannot* go back to the life that he had with Michael; because, Michael has issued an "ultimatum" on him. "I am issuing you an ultimatum. If you go and she doesn't forgive you, don't come back to me." [...] "No, I mean it. You take that risk if you go."[707]

That is *how* his *decision* to go back becomes an *ethical responsibility*; he *risks everything for nothing*. But, this time, he is not going to hold him back from doing *what* he *must* do. He *must* do it *out of necessity* and *urgency*. It is *urgent* and *necessary* for him to *make peace* with *the past*. Past *cannot* be treated as his *enemy*, since it is *always with him*. He has to be *friendly* with it through *learning* to *love* it. In that sense, he *has to learn to love* — to love the *past*, which is also *to love the enemy*, in a way that there is no *more* enmity. Instead, there is only *humanity*. *Everything* needs to be taken only *as a part of humanity*, since *everyone* is *just human*. Then, *humanity* can *never be defined*; it *does not* have *particular figure*, *form* or a *definition*, because, it *cannot* have. If one withdraws into *solitude* breaking away from the crowd

[706] Ibid, p. 346
[707] Ibid.

of the *everyday life*, he or she would be able to *hear* all those *voices* and *faces* appearing within *the heart*. There, he or she would find his/her *own self* is *at fault* just like *any other* is found to be *at fault* by *the self*. This is what Shivan *begins* to *hear* from *within*. It is this *self-realization* that is most important in life, *through* which one *feels afraid* to *hurt another*. As a result, one *begins* to *care for the other*. In this attempt of *caring* for the *other*, the *self* has to *break away* from his *own circle* so that the *other* can *enter* just like grandmother enters Shivan's life again *through* his *memory*. 'The memory of my grandmotehr's voice, her gestures, are with me now as I sit on her new bed and watch the grey light come into this room. I think again of her bedroom in Sri Lanka." [708]

5.8.8   Travelling Wounds

He is *already displaced*. He kept moving from one place to another, since the time he was *forced to move out* of Sri Lanka. And, he knows *how painful* it is to become someone, who *neither* belongs to *this* world *nor* to the *other* world. It is *painful* to be *torn apart* in *two different* worlds, just because of the *very inability* and *impossibility* of belonging *only* to *one* world. However, he *cannot help* for what he has become. He does not belong to any world — he *cannot*. That is his *destiny*. Neverthelss, since he has come to this *self-realization* of what he has *become* through *becoming* the *cohabitation of love and pain*, he wants to take up this *responsibility* caring the other. Hence, he does not want to *displace* his *grandmother* by taking her to Canada from Sri Lanka. She is compelled to leave Sri Lanka for there is *no one* to *take care* of her at her old age. But, if Shivan is *ready to leave* Canada and to go to Sri Lanka, she would continue to be there *till her death*. In that way, she would not die in *this* country, Canada, which is not *her country*. That is how Shivan *thinks*. That is his *responsibility* and he should take it, *since* he is the only one, who is *able* to *fulfill* it. He has to take it *out of love* in a way that he has to *begin to love* his grandmother.

'This understanding has revealed itself to not in a flash, but slowly through the course of the night, like the persistent lap of waves that wear down the surface of a rock to reveal the glittering mica beneath. It is my fate to remain in Sri Lanka so she

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[708] Ibid, p. 369

can pass her last years in her own home. It is I who must give up Michael, not he who will leave me; I who must break us out of our cycle of anger, then peace, then anger again. This time, I will save the person I cherish most by giving him up. My past has tainted Michael, changed him from the man who opened his door, his life, to me two years ago, wearing that ridiculous batik shirt to impress. He has become someone he does not recognize. And, I like that naked perethi, will find release only by offering it to another, by putting another before myself.'[709]

Another *exile*, another *departure*, another *crossing* and another *travelling* thus begin to *unfold* in front of Shivan's life. It is not *easy as* it *tears him open* just the way *that sari* is *torn apart* in *Funny Boy*. It was a *sari*; but, *here*, it is *his heart* — the *skin*, the *flesh*, also relatonships. Here, it is not the threads of the sari, but of *human relationships* that are hanging in the air. His heart is *full of such threads* and all are *tearing* apart in such *unmerciful* manner that his heart *bleeds*. Hence, it is this *blood* that comes out *through* his *thoughts*; his *thoughts* are nothing but *blood*. And, they are written just before the flight to Sri Lanka. Here, we are thrown to ask this question. *Whose heart* is *bleeding*? Is it Shivan's or is it Shyam's? It is Shivan-Shyam and Shyam-Shivan with his *heart*, with his body that is *already* a *wound*, which keeps getting wounded *again*. And, that is where the *feminine* being of Shyam as a *writer* unfolds; there, Shyam feels the blood: "I'm just a bloody writer. Period."[710]

[709] Ibid, p. 370
[710] Selvedurai, 2004, p. 1

CONCLUSION

Present study titled "**Religion, Nation, and Gender: A Study of the Problematic of Representation and Violence in the Context of Sri Lankan Literature**" consists of five chapters preceded by an introduction. Pertaining to the question of being and language, the study has attempted to probe into the question of identity and violence in relation to two different domains: on the one hand, in the context of religion, nation and gender; on the other hand, with regard to the domain of literature through writing, for which Sri Lankan literature is the backdrop. Highlighting poststructural approach to being, language, and culture, the present study has tried to view language as the crux of the question of identity that unfolds in terms of religion, nation, gender, race, culture and so on. Accordingly, language has been casted as the central problem, in relation to which every other problem with regard to identity arises, asserting the idea that every community, category and identity as a *manifestation* of language. Any kind of community that comes into existence in socio-political, cultural and economic categorical terms has been projected as both construction and manifestation of language. Then, the study has gone onto to explore the nature of that language, within which language is seen as that which undergoes transformations due to its ephemeral nature. It is in relation to this idea of language that the question of identity in the context of being has been discussed, where the notion of violence is shown as indispensable in any attempt that asserts on the sense of belonging to any identity *as such*. Hence, the question of identity in the context of being, the question of language and the question of violence are the three major inquiries that are deeply studied in each chapter of the thesis.

Accordingly, the first chapter probes into the way in which the question of being has been approached by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas. In the discussion, at first, Heidegger's notion of being has been shown as a self-oriented philosophy, which asserts on the *possibility* of becoming the Self through death, since the self is cut off from the other in and through death. Similar kind of self-centeredness could be seen even in Sartre's philosophy of being and death. However, in the attempt of comparing and contrasting these two philosophies,

it could be seen that how both the philosophers have attempted to assert on the necessity and the possibility of realizing the self through cutting down, resisting or overcoming the other, since the other is a hindrance in maintaining the continuity of self-sameness. Therefore, in the chapter, we have tried to understand how Heidegger and Sartre have demanded the separation of the other from the domain of the self and, this understanding necessitates us to investigate Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophy of being *beyond* the domain of philosophy, following which the very idea and function of philosophy as an institution needs to be problematized. It is here we have sought to question Heidegger's own political instance regarding Nazi politics in Germany during World War II. The second part of the chapter has presented the Levinasian philosophy of being with regard to the idea of violence, within which Levinasian view that has deliberated on unavoidable relationship between self and the other in terms of ethical responsibility has extensively been discussed. While highlighting the significance of Levinasian idea of ethical responsibility towards the other, which demands the self to break open from the closure of the self, in addressing the question of violence in the context of identity, this section of the chapter, on the other hand, has explored how Levinasian philosophy has *yet* facilitated some violence that is operative in the domain of the dominant self. Here, the discussion has found the extreme importance of Jacques Derrida's critique on Levinasian philosophy that appears in his essay titled "Transcendental Metaphysics".

Second chapter has directly dealt with the question of being as a question of language that has determined the tradition of Western philosophy that has produced the existing knowledge and truth regarding being. Here, the question of metaphysics of being and language has widely been discussed with regard to the idea of *presence*, which suggests being as an empirical and analyzable entity. The appropriation and analyzability of being has been shown as a possibility enabled through language, due to the notion, which reads speech as language through which the presence and the proximity of being is manifested. Hence, the chapter interrogates this idea of language, pertaining to which the understanding on language from Plato to Saussure has been problematized. In that sense, the chapter also has placed a critique of modern linguistics that privileges speech *over* writing. However, this argument has been built with reference to Derridian critique on Western philosophy and metaphysics that especially appears in his *Of Grammatology*. In the next section of the chapter, we

have discussed Derridian idea of writing, within which the notion of violence in language is analyzed. Here, the chapter has investigated how Derrida has deconstructed the traditional idea of language, writing, and violence, by bringing the idea of ethics to the domain of violence. Consequently, the chapter has sought to understand the way in which Derrida juxtaposes these two opposite domains together and simultaneously in analyzing the impossibility of doing away with violence in the context of being, identity, and language. This idea of Derrida has widely been discussed in the chapter in terms of ethical violence, projecting Derridian philosophy as anew impetus that should really be attended to in treating the question of violence in a subtle and effective manner. The question of the subject and the power of discourse is another theme that has been central in the chapter, where Michel Foucault's thoughts regarding subject, power, and knowledge have gained much attention. The latter part of the chapter is based on the idea of language as writing, in which Blanchot's views on literature through writing and Walter Benjamin's and Jacques Derrida's thoughts on translation have been expatiated.

Third chapter has addressed the question of identity in relation to gender, wherein the idea of subject with the gendered body has been discussed with regard to culture and discourse. Taking the gendered body as that, which is described and analyzed by the language of culture, the chapter has foregrounded the question of gender identity as a question of language. Moreover, it has tried to understand the way in which cultural and communal hegemony enacts violence on individuals in order to continue its sovereign space through maintaining the self-sameness. Accordingly, the chapter has projected every culture and community as an institution that is involved in certain politics of repressive power that functions through dominating and subjugating the other. Here, the study has explored how violence has been imposed on women by projecting them as the *other*, who should be subjugated under the power of the socio-cultural, political and economic discourse that is based on male dominant ideology. Thus, the chapter has elaborated on how women have been historically imprisoned within a particular identity that is assigned by the ongoing powerful discourse. And, this subjugated condition of women has been addressed with regard to the question of freedom, within which historical indiscrimination that has been done on women through defining and fixing them negatively onto a particular identity has widely been investigated. It is here that the chapter has emphasized the necessity of unconditional

opening up of the closure that prevails with regard to gender identity. The necessity of *unconditional* opening up has been demanded due to our own unawareness regarding future, which is 'to come'. This argument has been built especially upon the ideas presented by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler regarding the question of identity and sexuality. Moreover, the chapter has also dealt with the question of sexuality, under which different sexual inclnations of different individuals in addressing their desire for sexual pleasure have been taken into consideration. The question that is raised here is that on what basis that the heterosexuality has been granted the legitimacy to privilege, declare and manifest itself as the natural, right, and civilized sexual practice *over* the other sexual practices, such as homosexuality, bisexuality, and so on.

Fourth chapter titled as "Religion, Nation & Gender: Freedom in the context of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist Women" has addressed the question of gender identity and violence in the context of Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist women. At first, it has attempted to project how Sinhala Buddhist discourse has become the dominant discourse and ideology in Sri Lanka, where the significant role played by the Sri Lankan history, which unfolds in the greater chronicle *Mahavamsa*, in building Sri Lanka and its nation as a predominantly Sinhala Buddhist nation has been elaborated. Here, the chapter has interrogated the politics that is involved in writing history, under which the ethnic conflict between the majority Sinahalese and minority Tamils has been explored. Subsequently, the chapter has analyzed the Sri Lankan nation as a politically divided society majorly due to ethnic differences followed by other differences such as religious, cultural linguistic and so on. While addressing the question of nation in the context of Sri Lanka, the discussion has necessitated the importance of understanding undeniable politics played by Sinhala Buddhists, following which Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been projected as another institution and instrument of state politics. In that sense, Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been viewed as a mechanism that is used in camouflaging power and violence that is operative in excluding, repressing, subjugating and silencing all the others, who are not Sinhala Buddhists. Then, the chapter has focused its attention on how all these differences, which could be seen in everyday society majorly in relation to socio-political and linguistic identities, such as race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language and so on, disappear in understanding and defining women within the same divided society, in relation to which involvement of religion in constructing and shaping the given

identity of women has been discussed. Here, the discussion has dealt with the consensus by all the religious groups in Sri Lanka, which reads, analyzes and defines woman and her nature, negatively. However, the analysis in this regard has been carried on only with reference to Hinduism and Buddhism, since Buddhism is the religious ideology that dominates day-today life of Sri Lankan society, for it is the religion of the powerful Sinhala majority. Accordingly, it has sought to problematize some popular beliefs or assumptions held in Sri Lanka regarding its Buddhism: one is based on the idea that emphasizes Sri Lankan Buddhism as *the* pure Buddhism; second idea is that, which presents Buddhism as a religion within which women are treated with equal power and freedom on par with men. It is in relation to these two questions that the rest of the chapter has gone on to understand the way in which woman has been seen and analyzed by Hinduism and Buddhism, where both the religions have been understood as those which share some sort of common ideology in relation to women. This understanding propels us to explore the undeniable relation between Hinduism and Buddhism, as a consequence of which the obsession regarding pure Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been challenged. In understanding Buddhist ideology regarding women, the chapter has highlighted the significance of Sinhala Buddhist literature, under which *Jathaka* stories have been brought into the discussion.

In this section of the chapter, the attempt has been made to underscore the prominence of Sinhala Buddhist literature in constructing and shaping up the cognition of the society regarding women and to consider how this particular image and knowledge regarding women could not change despite the number of Western colonial invasions that the society has undergone. In this regard, politics of Sinhala Buddhist-male-dominant-nationalistic movement led by Dharmapala has been analyzed as another project that has attempted to underestimate the freedom of women by confining them to perform the *given* roles of a mother, wife and a daughter, in the disguise of nation building. Accordingly, chapter has sought to underline the hypocrisy and arrogance of nationalistic movements and of their leaders such as Dharmapala, who are commemorated as national heroes by the ongoing Sinhala Buddhist discourse. Moreover, it has underscored the urge of re-reading, re-interpreting and re-writing certain texts, such as *Mahavamsa* and *Pansiya Panas Jathakaya*, that bear certain socio-political, historical, cultural and linguistic significance; because, that would open up the prevalng dominant discourse in a way

that those who are excluded, suppressed, marginalized and discriminated as insignificant others, whose voice have been muffled in the history submerged by the language of nation, religion and culture, find a space for their own voices.

Fifth chapter of the study has dealt with the idea of literature through writing within which literature has been investigated as "violence of the letter". Pertaining to this idea, the chapter has addressed several existential problems that every individual stumbles onto. So doing, it approaches the question of being from the side of language and literature through writing, by projecting literature through writing as the locus of "crude" being. The idea of crudeness and becoming suggests the impossible continuity of self-sameness because of the transformations that constantly occur due to the exposure to outside. This inevitable exposure has been discussed here as a weakness that lies within the being itself, yet positively, since it is that weakness, which makes the being experience its own possibilities to become further being. Hence, the chapter has given a great deal in explaining this idea of weakness as new power that is different from the general notion of power. It is in relation to this notion of weakness inherent in being that the study has elaborated on the idea of feminine and masculine, where masculinity or the male gender has been projected as the strong and the powerful, due to the way it has already been constructed by the history of human civilization. Accordingly, the chapter has tried to analyze how existing knowledge regarding male gender has already exhausted its possibilities of becoming masculine, further. Masculinity of the male gender has been viewed as that, which already has come to saturation in all possible forms and aspects just because of the power it has always possessed as the powerful. In that sense, male gender has been discussed as the *center* of power that has been able to subjugate *every* other.

In contrast to male identity, the chapter has showed how woman or the feminine gender has historically been constructed as the other, who is weak and negative in entirety. Hence, highlighting the intrinsic and historical weakness assigned to feminine gender, the chapter has discussed this weakness as that which is intrinsic to being. Moreover, this weakness is seen positively since it *disempowers* totalities which create centers of power. The chapter has built this argument with reference to Cixous's idea of feminine in which the feminine is discussed with regard to the idea of writing. Accordngly, we have asserted the necessity of viewing language through writing as the language of feminine, within which being is able to experience its own

ceaseless becoming — the period being. The notion of becoming through writing has been explored with reference to Derridian notion of "violence of the letter". Here, the idea of violence is viewed in terms of wounding the *given* language through writing, where language breaks open and becomes further language. And, that language has been shown as the *other* of the given language and the language of the *other*. The chapter has casted this violence as that which is enacted not only on the given language, but also on the *given* socio-cultural, and political discourse. Consequently, the chapter has presented writing as that, which enables and spaces the other, and this idea has been elaborated and exemplified with reference to the literary works by Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Shyam Slevadurai.

Present study that deals with the question of being, identity and violence in the context of gender, nation and religion finds the extreme relevance of Shyam Selvadurai's writings, since they "murmur" the problematic of representation and violence that is indispensable in fixing identities in terms of gender, religion, nation and so on. His writings have been explored as that which manifests the impossibility of belonging to any identity *as such* due to the unavoidable and irresistible coming of the other from outside the self. However, the chapter has focused on the question of violence in the context of gender and sexuality that unfolds within all the four novels written by Shaym. Meanwhile, the study also underlines certain philosophy that runs through these writings, which propels us to re-think regarding the legitimacy of the distinction, which distinguishes literature from philosophy and reality from fiction.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the present study is an attempt made in understanding and addressing the question of language that is central to many other questions, which are *seemingly* beyond language or completely away from language. Especially, question of violence that is indispensable in any project that asserts, demands and searches for an identity has been kept far off from language, since the idea of violence is often understood in relation to armed conflicts and power. Hence, the present study necessitates the deconstruction of the *given* language. Deconstruction of language is shown as a way of deconstructing all the traditional concepts, which demand us to follow and belong to *this* or *that* tradition, by creating closures against the other. However, it is important to note that there is no *one particular* way to deconstruct any *given*ness. In that sense, every research, every work or every text is certainly a text that involves certain amount of deconstruction. Yet,

following Derrida's idea of deconstruction, the present study underscores the necessity, significance and urgency of deconstruction as an ethical responsibility that is kept in the name of the other out of utmost generosity — *selfless giving*. It is this selfless giving, which is the most difficult *giving*, that has been demanded by the writings of Shyam. Moreover, Shyam has surrendered to that demand by giving his own self for writing. Therefore, the idea of deconstruction that is affirmed and demanded by the present study is that which is taken up in the name of the other by emphasizing the necessity of the existence of the other for the the survival of the self. However, apart from the question of identity and violence, it also discusses the idea of love, giving, death, hospitality, forgiveness and question of history and humanity.

Though the study has focussed on discussing such notions, it has not been able to go deeply into each of these notions due to the problem of limited time provided for writing a thesis. On the other hand, language itself has become a barrier in expressing and explaining my own understandings regarding the philosophies that have been referred to throughout the study. Another important fact to be mentioned here is that most of the texts that are referred to are the English translations of certain texts, originally written in French or German. Hence, my understanding on all the concepts dealt here is based on the knowledge grasped by reading translated versions. Nevertheless, I do not underestimate the knowledge gathered by reading translations; in fact, this study would not have been possible without the availability of these translations. Instead, what is attempted to assert here is the certain inevitable loss that takes place during the process and procedure of translation, due to which translation becomes another text, which is neither entirely different from the original nor exactly the same. This in-betweenness indispensable in translation brings its impact on the present study too. However, pertinent to such limited space determined by time and language, the present study has managed to address all the intended research questions and objectives that had been set initially while explaining the necessity of engaging in this study. Nevertheless, these questions that are addressed here do not exhaust doing further studies regarding the same, since they never exhaust themselves as questions. Therefore, the present study emphasizes and demands the necessity of probing into the same questions now and again, since they can never be addressed *adequately*.

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