Metamorphosis of Manhood: Unveiling New Dimension in Indian Masculinity through the Lens of Social Representation Theory

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Abstract: Work, control, power, motionlessness, and antagonism serve as the primary distinguishing characteristics of masculinity in the present situation. These features are often linked with men and are viewed culturally as being different from feminine traits. The present paper aims to examine the various kinds of masculinity existing in modern India. The paper will continue to make an effort to comprehend how different forms of masculinity are socially represented within the framework of Moscovic's 'Social Representation Theory'. It also examines the changing nature of masculinity and its effect on men. The study was conducted through an analysis of the secondary literature available in the present context. The researcher uses the content analysis technique to gather data from the existing literature. The bottom line is that the new masculinity could be a possible alternative to the patriarchal system that harms not only women but also men.

Keywords: Masculinity, New Masculinity, Social Representation, Manhood

Introduction

The modernistic approach towards gender divides it binary perspective of feminine and masculine. In the present circumstances, work, control, power, non-emotiveness, and hostility serve as the key defining parts of the nature and capacity of masculinity. The phenomenon under consideration encompasses a range of behaviours, languages, and practises that are prevalent within particular cultural and organisational contexts. These attributes are typically associated with males and are culturally designated as being distinct from feminine characteristics. Therefore, masculinity can be regarded

as a dualistic construct, encompassing both advantageous and disadvantageous aspects. It provides men with avenues to manifest their individuality and assert their distinctiveness from the feminine, so avoiding the categorization of being the 'other' (Chatterbaugh, 1990: Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). With the changing perceptions of the society, the understanding of masculinity has also evolved over time.

Masculinity is commonly conceptualised as a set of characteristics and actions associated with males, which are shaped by both biological and sociocultural factors. In relation to the construct of masculinity, specific norms associated with masculinity have been established, encompassing the suppression of emotions, the pursuit of social status, and the cultivation of physical strength. Existing research has demonstrated that the concept of "precariousness" associated with masculinity has a role in shaping specific masculine behaviour. The attainment of the status of being a 'man' necessitates continuous efforts on the part of individuals. According to Winegard et al. (2014), males have the ability to preserve the existing hierarchical structure by adopting behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity in response to challenges to their social standing.

According to Messerschmidt (2012), the concept of hegemonic masculinity may be seen as a framework that establishes and justifies hierarchical gender dynamics between individuals of both genders. This framework promotes the idea that all individuals should conform to and embody unequal gender relations, hence encouraging their assent to such arrangements. De Beauvoir's assertion on women finds resonance in Fausto-Sterling's (1997) argument, which posits a comparable perspective on males. According to Fausto-Sterling, masculinity is not an innate quality but rather a product of social constructs that are rooted in bodily foundations. The cultural understandings of these physical underpinnings are rooted on societal frameworks, either perpetuating existing ones or establishing fresh ones.

The social construction of masculinity can be understood through the theory of social representation (SR) by Serge Moscovici in 1961 as a social psychology framework aimed at elucidating the interplay between individual cognition and affect and the collective dynamics of communication within a group context. According to Wagner (2020), individuals' cognitive processes, social interactions, and their role as social entities within their immediate environment collectively contribute to their overall socialisation. According to Markova (2003), social representations can even be seen as 'thinking in motion' that is changing through conversation. The term 'new masculinity' was popularised just a few years ago, in October 2019, when GQ published 'The New Masculinity Issue'. Since far before 2019, the idea

of new masculinity has been present, and it's assumed different labels, like 'modern masculinity' and 'positive masculinity'.

The emerging concept of masculinity entails a deliberate departure from conventional notions associated with traditional construct of masculinity. Furthermore, there is a growing expansion of the concept of masculinity due to the current limited understanding of its scope. In accordance with conventional norms, the societal expectation for masculinity entails embodying alpha characteristics, displaying independence, asserting dominance, and refraining from the expression of emotions (Kimmel, 1987). The statement 'boys do not cry' embodies archaic notions of masculinity. The concept of new masculinity does not include a complete rejection of all traditional manifestations of masculinity, but rather seeks to address and challenge the detrimental aspects that have adverse effects on both genders. This phenomenon is commonly known as 'toxic masculinity'. In the above context, the present article tries to explore the new masculinity found in contemporary India. The article will further try to understand the social representation of the different types of masculinity through various agencies in the context of the 'Social Representation Theory' given by Moscovici. It also examined the changing nature of masculinity and its effect on men in contemporary society. This paper aims to create an understanding of changing masculinity in India, which helped in more acceptance of the new masculinity and added to the body of knowledge.

Methodology

To get a better understanding of the new masculinity through the lens of social representation, this study uses a theoretical approach to examine how masculinity is represented in Indian society. To examine this further, the researchers analysed secondary data obtained from scholarly books, journals, and other sources. A comprehensive review of the literature, including essential key words, theoretical viewpoints, and empirical data, was gathered. Themes, concepts, and arguments associated with the subject are classified and integrated through qualitative analysis, including the researcher's original ideas. According to Prasad (2008), content analysis is highly valuable for examining social phenomena, such as prejudice, discrimination, and the evolution of cultural symbols, through the analysis of diverse content sources. So, the researcher uses the content analysis technique to gather data from the existing literature. For the purpose of the analysis, 70 articles identified from different academic journals, books, reports, and other relevant sources from the last 30 years focusing on different aspects of changing masculinity

were collected. Out of these 70, 50 articles were sampled for content analysis based on their relevance to the topic.

Men, Masculinity and Social Representation

Manhood, male identity, manliness, and men's duties thematically coincide with the notion of masculinity (Connell 1993; Huang 2004). Masculinity is defined as 'the features and attributes thought to be typical of males' in the Longman lexicon (1995). Social expectations based on shared meanings, particularly gender presentation in the media, socially and historically develop, generate, and perpetuate masculinities and masculine bodies (Han & Yin, 2022; Goffman, 1979).

According to Itulua-Abumere, 2013, one of the newest fields of sociological study has its roots in research and critical studies on males and masculinity. Through various researches, different types of masculinity are defined, each offering a unique explanation of how men and masculinity are understood in the modern period (Fernández-Álvarez, 2014). The article illustrated numerous attempts made by men to create new definitions of what it means to be a man, using the example of men who support equality. This is due to the fact that a growing number of men reject the categorical requirements of conventional masculinity and the notion that being a man entails using power at all costs.

Connell (1987) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) coined the term hegemonic masculinity, which highlights the hierarchical interactions between different masculinities and how some men make it seem natural and essential to dominate most women and other men. Hegemonic masculinity encompasses various elements within the gender relations system, including a specific position, the system as a whole, and the prevailing ideology that promotes male supremacy in current society. Connell's work serves to highlight the inherent essentialistic, historical, and normative deficiencies present in previous literature on men's studies, as exemplified by the introduction of a new terminology. Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity combines feminist researchers' West & Zimmerman (1987) and Hartsock (1983) descriptions of how gender relations affect social structures with the constructivist approach of 'doing gender'.

Connell (1995) and Castaeda (2002) have identified four distinct forms of masculinity, namely hegemonic masculinity, subservient masculinity, complacent masculinity, and marginal masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity that entails the exercise of power and control by males over women and other males, accompanied by various forms of oppression, violence, and

privileges. In the second scenario, subordinate masculinity is situated at the margins of conventional ways of living and is characterised by acts and feelings frequently linked to femininity. Moreover, the concept of marginal masculinity pertains to male collectives that experience social exclusion and has limited opportunities to attain positions of leadership. Lastly, complacent masculinity, also known as accomplice masculinity, pertains to men who lack substantial access to power, wealth, or social status, yet still derive advantages from the patriarchal advantages associated with their male gender without critically examining the fairness of these privileges.

As society progresses, the form of masculinity has evolved over time. Throughout history, several groups and cultures have developed their own unique styles of masculinity (Han & Yin, 2022). Given that representations of masculinity are shared across a range of cultural contexts, it is important to compare them cross-culturally in the context of the postmodern cultural environment in order to better comprehend the various forms of masculinity that various societies construct (Darling-Wolf, 2004).

As discussed by Tan (2013), the traditional and cultural notions of masculinity in India have been moulded over many years by politics, religion, and history. A complex interaction of cultural and historical influences has affected how men are portrayed in India. The Indian caste structure and the social and economic duties that men perform are at the foundation of the traditional Indian conception of masculinity. Men are assigned certain responsibilities according to their birth and social standing under the caste system, which is still prevalent in Indian society. This has caused diverse masculinity standards to emerge for various castes, with men from upper castes supposed to exemplify a more refined and educated image of masculinity while men from lower castes are expected to exemplify a more muscular and rougher ideal. The development of masculinity in an Indian context is altered through colonization. As shared by Sinha (2022), in the gendered mode of analysis that has gained traction in the current history of colonial India, the development of masculinity as a category of historical study takes on a rather contradictory stance.

Since it initially emerged from the shadows in the 1980s, the study of masculinities has come a long way as a positive response to feminism. There is already significant and expanding scholarly work in the field, including some ground-breaking research on Indian masculinities (Srivastava, 2004; Chopra, Osella, and Osella, 2004; Osella and Osella, 2006; Kulkarni, 2007). While violence perpetrated by males against women has received more attention in recent scholarly debates, Daiya (2006, 2008) contends that violence experienced by male bodies in the public arena needs to be

given more thoughtful consideration. The way that religion is portrayed also has a big impact on how men are portrayed in India.

According to Murty (2009) and Banarjee (2012), men are given certain tasks according to their age and stage of life in Hinduism, which is the country's predominant religion. In contrast to older males, who are expected to marry and take on the role of householder and provider, younger men are encouraged to stay celibate and to pursue spiritual growth. As a result, many masculine ideals based on age and stage of life have emerged. In their book on 'Men and Masculinities in South India' Osella and Osella (2006) deliberated on how the fast changes in Indian society and the country's greater exposure to Western culture have recently had an impact on how men are portrayed in India. Western ideas of masculinity have become more visible as a result of consumerism and the media industry's expansion, which frequently conflict with traditional Indian beliefs.

Moscovici's Social Representation Theory (SRT) is a theoretical framework that aims to comprehend how people learn to comprehend and make sense of their social environment through the collaborative production and transmission of information. According to this notion, social representations are communicative and interpersonally acquired mental images of reality. These representations aid in social integration and offer people living in a society a shared perspective of the world. In the context of masculinity, the social representation of men is highly constructed through various social agencies.

Social representation refers to the cognitive framework that encompasses the information and understanding that individuals possess as a result of their immersion in everyday life. The perception of self and the manner in which persons are perceived and treated by others is influenced by representation. The concept of social representation plays a key role in shaping the portrayal of a certain group within cultural mediums, as well as in determining an individual's association with such group.

According to Moscovici (2000), in the interaction between social structure and the person, people also contribute to the development of social representations. In modern cultures, individuals have some liberty and can simultaneously be changed by digesting societal representations. People are no longer 'bound' by the thinking- and behaviour-based traditional social institutions, including family, social class, and religion (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Giddens 1994). There are more decisions about alternative ways of living and strategies to get there. As put by Moscovici:

> *"People are exposed to a wide range of specialised information from the groups they are a part of. Each individual has to choose from a real, open market of representations."* (Moscovici, 1984a)

The 'new masculinity' emerging out of the changing social structure challenges the social representation of men. The traditional construct and understanding of the masculinity driven by various agencies of religion, caste, history, social organisation etc. is gradually contributing to the changing social representation of men. Moscovici mentioned that society should not be regarded as a mere aggregation of individuals. However, it is situated within individuals' perceptions of society, encompassing the regulations, conventions, philosophies, and principles that are manifested within it. This concept serves as a foundation for the construction of social reality, enabling the existence and functioning of society. Thus the 'new masculinity' is challenging the very fabric of society by representing an alternative version of masculinity

Changing Masculinity in India

In India, masculinity is portrayed in a complicated and multi-dimensional way. On the one hand, traditional and cultural conceptions of masculinity in Indian culture continue to have a significant influence on men's roles and expectations. On the other hand, new and competing ideas of masculinity have emerged as a result of the quick changes that Indian society is going through and the country's greater exposure to Western culture. A significant cultural shift has taken place with the formation of a new masculinity, which reflects changing ideas about what it means to be a man in the modern world. It is a constructive and important shift in how we think about gender and identity. It challenges outdated stereotypes, promotes equality, and fosters healthier, more authentic expressions of masculinity (Gonzalo, 1997). As society continues to evolve, so too will our understanding of what it means to be a man, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and equitable world for all (Pakti, 2019). Various social and cultural movements, such as the #MeToo movement and LGBTQ+ rights activism, have contributed to the emergence of a new masculinity. These movements have raised awareness about issues related to gender, sexuality, and consent, prompting conversations and reflections on masculinity(Kessler et al. 2023).

For instance, in India's traditional gender roles, males have traditionally been seen as protectors and providers, while women have traditionally been seen as carers and homemakers. Through a variety of agencies, such as religion and tradition, history, political organisation, the caste system, colonisation, and post-COVID situations, the portrayal of masculinity is gradually changing towards 'new masculinity'.

Religion and Tradition

Religion has a profound influence on the construction of masculinity in India. In Hinduism, for example, the warrior king, or *Kshatriya*, ideal is promoted as a symbol of strength, power, and masculinity. Consequently, contemporary culture has developed the expectation for men to exhibit qualities such as bravery, protection, and courage. Indian society is predominantly characterised by a patriarchal structure, wherein men usually assume the role of family leaders and primary earners. The reinforcement of this social construct frequently occurs through the utilisation of religious texts and practises, which establish particular duties and obligations for males within familial and communal contexts. The aforementioned phenomenon has played a role in the continuation of patriarchal norms and the cultivation of a distinct manifestation of masculinity linked to religious leadership. (Gao, Woods, & Cai, 2021)

The emergence of the concept of new masculinity can be attributed to various global and local processes, such as the influence of globalisation, urbanisation, and the dissemination of liberal principles. This paradigmatic shift promotes the active engagement of men in questioning and challenging the limitations imposed by traditional gender norms, while advocating for the adoption of a broader and more equitable conception of masculinity that encompasses a range of various expressions. Academic researchers and religious authorities are engaging in a critical re-evaluation of religious scriptures in order to advocate for gender equality and question prevailing patriarchal interpretations.

As an illustration, scholarly interpretations of Hindu scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita place greater emphasis on spiritual attributes rather than adhering strictly to conventional gender roles, so cultivating a broader and more encompassing perspective on masculinity. The integration of women into religious practises that were historically controlled by men is posing a challenge to conventional understandings of masculinity, such as the acceptance of female priests. Traditional initiation rites frequently prioritised attributes like as physical strength and emotional resilience, whereas contemporary reinterpretations place greater emphasis on introspection, empathy, and communal obligations. There exists a societal encouragement for young males to openly exhibit sensitivity and empathy as integral components of their developmental process towards adulthood.

History

The multifaceted and dynamic construct of masculinity is influenced by a variety of cultural, social, and historical elements. India experienced substantial

transformations in socio-cultural norms and gender roles during the era of British colonial rule. The British colonial presence in India brought forth the introduction of Victorian ideas of masculinity, which frequently encountered resistance and incongruity with the prevailing traditional notions of manhood in Indian society. During this era, there was a notable transformation in the societal expectations and expressions of masculinity among Indian males. Following its independence in 1947, India embarked on a comprehensive endeavour of nation-building. This entailed the promotion of specific notions of masculinity that underscored self-reliance, physical prowess, and bravery as vital qualities for the establishment of a contemporary society. (Connell, 1993)

According to Daiya (2006), the portrayal of the resilient and independent Indian male figure emerged as a significant component within the narrative following the attainment of freedom. Over the past few decades, India has undergone a significant process of urbanisation and globalisation. Consequently, individuals have been exposed to a wide range of ideas and cultural influences, encompassing Western conceptions of masculinity. The process of urbanisation has also resulted in alterations to lifestyle and career trends, which have had an impact on conventional male roles as primary earners and providers. The media, encompassing various platforms such as television, cinema, and the internet, assumes a pivotal role in influencing societal constructions of masculinity. The portrayal of masculinity in Indian media encompasses a range of depictions, including the conventional archetype of the "macho" hero as well as more nuanced and progressive representations. The depictions of masculinity in media significantly influence individuals' self-perception of their own masculinity. The last years have witnessed a surge in the momentum of social movements in India that advocate for gender equality and women's rights. These social movements have posed challenges to conventional patriarchal standards and have concurrently fostered a reassessment of the construct of masculinity. Men are increasingly being called upon to embrace more inclusive and empathetic forms of masculinity. Different generations within India may have varying perspectives on masculinity due to evolving social norms and experiences. Younger generations may have more progressive views on gender and masculinity compared to their elders. (Sinha, 1999)

Colonisation

According to Sinha (1997), the process of colonisation exerted a substantial influence on the transformation of masculine ideals within the context of India.

The advent of British colonisation in India for 200 years facilitated the introduction and dissemination of Western notions of masculinity. British imperialists and Victorian ideology actively propagated their own notions of masculinity, which frequently diverged from the indigenous Indian understandings. This encompassed the advancement of a stricter, male-dominated manifestation of masculinity, distinguished by physical strength, dominance, and power.

The process of colonisation in India exerted a significant and multifaceted influence on the creation of masculinity. Although the initial impact of this phenomenon was to strengthen conventional patriarchal norms, it also facilitated the development of a blended form of masculinity that incorporates elements from both Western and Indian cultural influences. The period after colonialism has witnessed additional transformations, as economic upheavals and cultural forces have posed challenges to conventional gender norms. The trajectory of India's progression towards a redefined concept of masculinity exemplifies the continual transformation of societal expectations around gender roles, influenced by a multitude of factors. Colonial control played a significant role in perpetuating and legitimising traditional power structures that upheld male dominance. Colonialism exerted a significant influence on conventional gender standards, concurrently fostering the development of a hybrid manifestation of masculinity that amalgamates facets from both Indian and Western societies. The advent of Western-style schooling during the era of colonial governance in India facilitated the exposure of Indian males to novel conceptions of masculinity. Prominent individuals such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi advocated for a broader and more equitable conception of masculinity. The workforce has undergone transformations as a result of economic reforms and globalisation, resulting in a notable increase in the involvement of women in areas that were historically dominated by men. These alterations have posed challenges to conventional conceptions of male roles as breadwinners and providers. The widespread presence of various media platforms, such as television and the internet, has facilitated the exposure of Indian males to a wide range of depictions and portrayals of masculinity.

The influence of popular culture, particularly Bollywood cinema, has been essential in moulding contemporary notions of masculinity that are characterised by increased flexibility and fluidity. As argued by Kaviraj (1994), the intricate dynamics between colonialism and masculinity remain a subject of academic investigation and cultural contemplation in present-day.

Political Organisation

Political organisations play a significant role in changing masculinity in India by advocating for gender equality, challenging patriarchal norms, and promoting policies that support gender justice (Messner, 2000). It works towards formulating and advocating for policies that advance equal rights and opportunities for all genders. They push for legislative reforms that address gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and gender equality education. The political organisations also organise social campaigns to raise awareness about harmful traditions and practices that perpetuate toxic masculinity, such as dowry, child marriage, and gender-based violence. This helps challenge existing notions of masculinity and promote healthy and respectful relationships.

The process of economic liberalisation that took place in India during the 1990s brought about substantial transformations in the composition and dynamics of the labour force. The entrance of women into industries that were previously dominated by males has led to a transformation in the conventional understanding of male breadwinning and provider responsibilities. The promotion of gender equality has been significantly advanced by civil society and political organisations. Various social movements, such as the women's rights movement, LGBTQ+ rights advocacy, and men's support groups, have arisen with the aim of promoting a more inclusive and egalitarian kind of masculinity. India has observed a wide array of male political figures, from Narendra Modi to Rahul Gandhi, who each exemplify unique facets of masculinity. The contrasting attributes of Prime Minister Modi's strongman persona and assertive communication style, in comparison to Rahul Gandhi's compassionate and general approach, exemplify the changing dynamics of political masculinity within the Indian context. Again, it promotes gender-sensitive governance by encouraging the meaningful representation of women in decision-making roles. They strive to increase women's political participation through quotas, reservations, and affirmative action, which could contribute to a shift in societal perceptions of masculinity. (Sivakumar andManimekalai, 2021).

Caste System

The caste system in India has exerted a significant influence on the notion of masculinity and its historical development. The caste system is an inherited social stratification that has engendered discrete social categories, referred to as castes, each characterised by its own set of entitlements, obligations, and societal norms. The caste system has delineated the specific types of labour or profession in which

individuals are permitted to partake (Rao, 2018). Certain social groups were involved in manual tasks or occupied positions that were perceived as 'lower' in status, whereas other groups had vocations of more prestige or were engaged in intellectual endeavours (Chakravarti, 2003). The aforementioned phenomenon has engendered a perspective wherein specific professions are imbued with a masculine connotation or perceived as superior, hence perpetuating gender-based norms and societal expectations within distinct caste communities. The caste system in India exhibited a pronounced patriarchal structure, wherein men occupy positions of power and authority within their own castes. Consequently, within higher caste groups, masculinity has exhibited greater prominence, being closely linked to authority and the exertion of influence over others. (Kumar et al., 2002). On the other hand, men from lower status also suffered because of the patriarchal system, as lower caste men were often criminalised and suffers atrocities from the higher caste men.

The pursuit of social justice and equitable rights has sparked notable transformations in the perception of masculinity within Dalit communities. Prominent figures such as B.R. Ambedkar placed significant emphasis on the importance of education and self-empowerment in the context of redefining Dalit masculinity, hence defying prevailing societal prejudices. The rise of Dalit political figures, such as Mayawati and Ram Vilas Paswan, has contributed to the increased recognition of diverse manifestations of masculinity. These leaders have adopted a more forceful and politically focused form of masculinity, thereby questioning the dominant influence of upper-caste masculinity. The intricate social fabric of India is characterised by the convergence of caste, class, religion, and geography in the formation of masculine identities. Various caste groups frequently exhibit distinct manifestations of masculinity that are shaped by the interplay of these intersecting variables. The availability of educational resources and economic prospects has facilitated the ability of certain individuals belonging to historically marginalised castes to question and deviate from conventional notions of masculinity. Education has a pivotal role in enabling individuals from the Dalit and lower-caste communities to transcend conventional societal expectations and strive for positions of authority and impact.

Post-COVID Situation

The COVID-19 pandemic has exerted a substantial influence on the transformation of conceptions of masculinity in India especially in Indian family system, akin to its effects observed in several global contexts. The ongoing global pandemic has

engendered a distinct array of difficulties and opportunities that have exerted an influence on the perception and enactment of masculinity. The COVID-19 epidemic has precipitated a notable transition towards remote employment and flexible working arrangements, hence affording men enhanced prospects for increased engagement in domestic duties (Wojnicka, 2022). The phenomenon has posed a challenge to conventional gender norms and facilitated a more equitable allocation of household responsibilities. The contemporary period has witnessed substantial transformations in the perception and enactment of masculinity within the Indian context. It has encouraged more flexible and inclusive notions of masculinity that emphasise care-giving, emotional openness, and community support. However, it's essential to recognise that these changes are not uniform across all segments of society, and traditional gender norms still persist in many areas.

The global health crisis has compelled organisations to implement remote work arrangements, resulting in a convergence of work and home boundaries. A significant number of Indian males have assumed additional family duties, such as childcare, culinary tasks, and domestic upkeep, thereby undermining conventional gender roles linked to the role of primary earner. It has brought attention to the significance of mental health, leading to an increased willingness among men to engage in open conversations regarding their emotional well-being. The de-stigmatization of seeking therapy and support has resulted in more emotional transparency and authenticity within interpersonal relationships. It also propelled discussions of gender equity to the forefront of public discourse. Online platforms have emerged as essential tools for communication, work, and leisure. Males actively participate in online environments, wherein they delve into and articulate their identities in manners that beyond conventional limitations imposed by the physical realm. The utilisation of social media platforms has played a substantial role in disseminating information and raising consciousness regarding various social concerns, notably the matter of gender equality. Numerous male social influencers actively engaged in online activism, effectively questioning prevailing prejudices and fervently calling for transformative change. The impact of the pandemic on masculinity is an ongoing process with complex and evolving dynamics. (Barker, G., Burrell, S., &Ruxton, S. 2021). This phenomenon gave a breathing space for the new masculinity to enter the Indian Family system.

Conclusion

In recent times, there has been an increasing recognition of the necessity to re-define the concept of masculinity in a manner that encompasses a broader range of

individuals, is less inflexible, and diminishes the repressive effects experienced by both males and females. The transition in question is being propelled by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the rise in gender equality, the evolving dynamics within families, and the transformation of social values. Religion and tradition retain significant significance within Indian society; however, they do not exclusively dictate the construct of masculinity (Mahajan et al. 2020). Moreover, their impact is undergoing transformation in light of shifting social dynamics. The evolution of masculinity in India is intricately intertwined with its historical backdrop, and it persists in adapting to societal, economic, and cultural transformations (Srivastava, 2004). Although conventional conceptions of masculinity persist, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the necessity for broader and forward-thinking interpretations of male identity within modern-day India. The political system in India has significantly contributed to the questioning and redefining of conventional concepts of masculinity. Political groups have played a significant role in fostering gender equality, diversity, and inclusivity within India's developing conception of masculinity, employing a range of movements and policy efforts. The economic liberalization in India has brought about significant changes in various aspects of society, including gender dynamics and the concept of masculinity. While it has led to greater economic opportunities and individual aspirations, it has also posed challenges to traditional norms and roles. Men in India are navigating these changes by redefining their roles and expressions of masculinity, leading to a more dynamic and diverse understanding of what it means to be a man in the modern, liberalized India. The social movements in India have had a profound impact on changing masculinity by challenging traditional norms, fostering awareness, and promoting more inclusive and equitable expressions of gender. These social movements have not only given a voice to marginalized communities but have also encouraged individuals to question and redefine their roles and responsibilities as men in a rapidly changing society.

In recent decades, there has been an increasing recognition of the imperative to confront the entrenched caste-based discrimination and inequalities that have maintained conventional conceptions of masculinity (Anandhi et al., 2002). Various social and political groups, in conjunction with legal initiatives, have endeavoured to advance the cause of enhanced equality and social justice. This endeavour encompasses the re-evaluation of masculinity, aiming to foster a more comprehensive and fair understanding of this concept. Nevertheless, the influence of the caste system on masculinity in India continues to be a multifaceted and persistent matter. The Dalit masculinity is a complex and evolving concept that

reflects the interplay of caste, gender, and social justice in India. It encompasses both the historical struggles and the resilience of Dalit men in the face of systemic discrimination. As society progresses towards greater equality, it is essential to recognize and support the agency and aspirations of Dalit men in shaping their own identities and contributing to the broader struggle for social justice and equality within the caste system. Colonisation in India exerted a significant influence on the transformation of masculinity, primarily through the introduction of Western ideas and the subsequent disruption of established social and economic frameworks (Sinha, 1995). The impact of this phenomenon on the self-perception and societal roles of certain Indian males was significant, leading to both opposition and endeavours to restore traditional concepts of masculinity during the post-independence era. The post-COVID-19 era has brought about significant changes in how masculinity is perceived and practiced in India. It has encouraged more flexible and inclusive notions of masculinity that emphasise caregiving, emotional openness, and community support(Cannito & Scavarda, 2020).The way masculinity is depicted in the media is one of the most glaring examples of this. One of India's most powerful and well-known media outlets is the Indian film industry, generally referred to as Bollywood, which has a significant impact on how men are portrayed. Bollywood movies frequently feature powerful, dominating males who are the guardians and breadwinners of their families. However, these representations frequently come at the expense of showing women as dependent on and subordinate to men(Höijer, 2011).But recently, we have seen the 'men written by women' trope in Indian cinema. Though it is not a new phenomenon, many female writers have portrayed male characters in literature, movies, and theatres who challenge the patriarchal role of masculinity or hegemonic masculinity.

These agencies, through social representation, are shaping the new masculinity for future generations, where we can see better representation of men in society. The successful advocacy for the recognition of a distinction between sex and gender during the 1960s, asserting that an individual's biological sex is not what determines their gender, has been a notable outcome. Consequently, there has been a significant body of scholarly work dedicated to investigating gender disparities and their underlying causes. The primary focus of early feminist writers revolved around the issue of women's subjugation within society and the construct of femininity. Insufficient emphasis has been placed on the study of males and the concept of masculinity. Now the concept of 'new masculinity' is very popular in modern society, which supports gender equality. Thus, the bottom line is that a possible alternative to the traditional patriarchal system that harms not only women

but also men could be 'new masculinity'. And through better social representation by the various agencies, this can be inculcated in the next generation. The gradual changes in the social representation of men are starting to fight the preconceived notion, prejudice, and accepted image of hegemonic masculinity as "real men", who masked their emotions, engaged in casual sexism, and disguised their vulnerability with aggression towards the "new masculinity," representing sensitivity, empathy, and vulnerability as symbols of manhood.

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