

**Journeying into the World of Identities: A Study on the  
Select Fiction of Shyam Selvadurai**

Thesis submitted to University of Calicut  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

**In**  
**English Language and Literature**

by  
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## DECLARATION

I, Thushara Mohan, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “**Journeying into the World of Identities: A Study on the Select Fiction of Shyam Selvadurai**” submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a *bona fide* research work carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. Divya N, Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, P.G. Department of English and Research Centre, Sree Kerala Varma College (Affiliated to the University of Calicut), and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, title or recognition.

Place: Thrissur

Date:

**Thushara Mohan**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Journeying into the World of Identities: A Study on the Select Fiction of Shyam Selvadurai**” submitted by Thushara Mohan to the University of Calicut for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original *bona fide* work of research, carried out by her under my supervision and it has not formed the basis of award for any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar titles.

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## **A Note on Documentation**

**For the purpose of documentation, the ninth edition of MLA Handbook is used.**

## Abbreviations

- CG - *Cinnamon Gardens*
- FB - *Funny Boy*
- HG - *Hungry Ghosts*
- SMS - *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

People are marginalised and discriminated on various accounts. The sexual, ethnic and racial minorities relegated to the margins regain their voice through literary works and often arise with exceptional resilience through literary narratives. The present study investigates multiple identities in Shyam Selvadurai's texts.

The thesis explores gay, ethnic and intersectional identities in the select fiction of Shyam Selvadurai, a Sri Lankan-Canadian author. The four texts chosen for the study are *Funny Boy*, *Cinnamon Gardens*, *Hungry Ghosts*, and *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*. All four novels have Sri Lanka as their backdrop and three except *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* showcase different periods of Sri Lankan ethnic riots. Selvadurai introduces a gay protagonist in all these novels.

One of the requisite research aims of the study is to explicate the sexual identity of all the major protagonists including Arjie Chelvaratnam, Shivan Rassiah, Balendran and Amrth in the texts. All the characters hail from different family backgrounds and encounter dilemmas of lack of acceptance while conceiving their gay identity in divergent ways. Their sexual minority status becomes associated with the intersection of other identities such as racial, ethnic and migrant ones. The present study subsequently exposit other female characters in the novel who are marginalized on various accounts as well. Thus the thesis provides a wider canvas for discovering the various identities of the characters in the novels.

According to Daphna Oyserman and Markus the notion of self-concept is an important term in identity studies. One of its perceptions resides in the concept of self-worth and self-evaluation which entails what individuals envisage about

themselves. In literature the focus is on “content and evaluative judgment, asking what people describe when they describe themselves and how positively they evaluate themselves” (72).

Identity relies on three factors: continuity, uniqueness, and agency (Watslawik, et al. 8). Thus identity can never be defined as a single concept or fixed entity. It incorporates transitions in character concerning shifting circumstances, power and agency that influence individuals. However identity readings have been designed more systematically and coherent by theorists’ act of differentiating it into personal identity and social identity which is termed as collective identity. Another differentiation is drawn between role identity and personal identity.

According to Charles Taylor “Personal identity is a personal moral code or compass, a set of moral principles, ends, or goals that a person uses as a normative framework and a guide to action” (qtd. in Fearon 21). Social identity can be elaborated as the norm by which someone is associated with social categories. In the process of social categorisation people are internally connected by various factors like race, ethnicity, age, class, caste, work, and so on. According to James D. Fearon considering identity as a social category “doesn’t work when we use identity in the sense of personal identity, which may be formulated in terms of a group affiliation but need not be” (14). For instance, when pertaining to a particular gender there are set notions or membership regulations but for every individual some anticipatory personal linkages will be present even within these categorizations.

Identity theorists describe role identities and personal identities as “Role identities reflect membership in particular roles (e.g., student, parent, professional) that require another person to play a complementary role” and Personal identities

reflecting “traits or characteristics that may feel separate from one's social and role identities or linked to some or all of these identities” (Oyserman, *et al.* 74).

“Identity gives one a sense of personal location, and provides a stable core of one’s individuality; but it is also about one’s social relationships, one’s complex involvement with others, and in the modern world these issues have become even more complex and confusing” (Collins and Solomos 5).

Another distinguished facet of identity the thesis investigates is multiple identities and intersectionality. Intersectionality occurs when multiple identities of individuals intersect with each other. The multifold factors that contribute to multiple identity formation can be someone’s race, class, caste, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation and so on. The juxtaposition of these social categories engenders drastic changes in the identity of individuals inevitably leading them to possess multiple identities.

The thesis predominantly encompasses an evaluation of the protagonists’ gay, ethnic, and intersecting identities. The word ‘gay’ is defined as “An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people)” (“Gay”). Gay identity is “an identity constituted by same-sex desire—lacks definitive, permanent visible traits. Consequently, it is a “discreditable” identity that must be confirmed, repeatedly, in discourse and action” (Adams 236).

W. David Wakefield and Cynthia Hudley “define racial and ethnic identity as the sense of belonging that an adolescent feels toward a racial or ethnic group as well as the significance and qualitative meaning that the adolescent assigns to that group membership” (148). But Lolius Rostas expounds that “Ethnic identity may become a

form of oppression that pressures one to avoid disclosing their identity and avoid engaging in collective activities with other members of their ethnic group” (2).

The concept of intersectionality was first used by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 to underscore the manifold discrimination and oppression African women confronted in their lives. But for the time being the term also functions to concentrate on a wide range of oppressions and power relations that operate in society at multifarious levels. In the field of identity, psychological viewpoints of intersectionality investigate “whether and how intersectionality informs how individuals come to understand who they are (“Who am I?”) and who they are in relation to others (“Who are we?”)” (Rogers and Syed 604).

Shyam Selvadurai was born in Colombo Sri Lanka in 1963 and immigrated to Toronto, Canada with his family when he was nineteen following the ethnic riots of 1983. He completed his education at York University, Toronto, and the University of British Columbia. He has a BFA and MFA in creative writing. He has several awards to his credit: Smith Books/ Books in Canada First Novel Award in 1997 and; Lambda Literary Award for Gay Men’s Fiction (Lambda Literary Foundation) in 1997. He was also nominated for the Trillium Book Award- English in 1998, the Aloa Literary Award- Denmark; Premio Internazionale Riccardo Bacchelli- Italy, Giller Prize in 1994. He was also the finalist of the Stonewall Book Award for Literature.

Shyam Selvadurai established himself in the world of writing as a scriptwriter for Television and thereafter engrossed in composing novels and essays. The thesis deals with four of his novels including *Funny Boy*, *Cinnamon Gardens*, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* and *Hungry Ghosts*. His foremost novel *Funny Boy* a novel in six stories set in the background of Sri Lanka was published in 1994 and won WH

Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award and The Lambda Literary Award in USA.

This novel was later translated into eight languages.

*Funny Boy* got widespread acceptance for exploring the protagonist's gay identity development and ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. He provides a wider canvas of post-colonial Sri Lanka, its people, their wounds ensuing the war, and how the young boy Arjie's understanding and acceptance of his sexual orientation gets more troublesome under these predicaments.

As the novel was set in Colombo in the backdrop of Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils riots and the subsequent migration of the major Sri Lankan population to Canada and other countries Selvadurai's story can be perceived as an indubitable version of his life. Selvadurai and his family left Sri Lanka following the same communal riots. Hence the novel predominantly exhibits autobiographical traits. Selvadurai once answered the question regarding the autobiographical aspect of the novel *Funny Boy*:

I'm gay and Arjie's gay and both families left Sri Lanka, but that's where it ends. Arjie's first experience and acceptance of himself happened in Sri Lanka and mine happened in Canada. My family is also much more liberal. My father is Sinhalese and my mother is Tamil which was a huge thing at a time of their marriage so we were brought up differently from other kids. There was a lot of tolerance for difference (qtd. in Harry)

The novel *Funny Boy* is set in the background of Sri Lanka amid the racial riots of the 1970s and 1980s. It is delineated in the form of six stories from the perspective of a young boy Arjie. The evolving sexual identity of Arjie is the eminent

motif of the novel. Arjie starts to have a better understanding of his identity from a very young age. The story is told from the perspective of a child. In the beginning Arjie is completely incognizant of the bickering enclosing him and the political situation of Sri Lanka. The readers discover the complete picture when Arjie understands all these around him.

Arjie belongs to an upper-class Tamil family and his sexual awakening happens when he is in Sri Lanka. When he was seven he stopped playing cricket with boys and accompanied the girls' gang in indulging in a 'bride-bride' game where they enacted Sri Lankan marriages. They perform it surreptitiously but it is disrupted when his cousin Tanuja impedes it. Then the adults entered and one among them ridicules Arjie by saying "You have a funny one here" (Selvadurai, *FB* 14). Other family members and his parents themselves scold him for that and they start assuming Arjie's sexual identity is flowing in opposition to the social norms. At this juncture, they start trying to implement a masculine identity in Arjie. At one point when he asks his mother why he is not allowed to play with girls, she says "Life is full of stupid things and sometimes you just have to do them." (Selvadurai, *FB* 20). But unknowingly Arjie repudiated all those social norms and orders and went ahead of questioning it. Finally, Arjie breaks the boundaries of such social norms and constraints and exquisitely embraces his freedom and identity above all.

Numerous diverse ethnic groups in Sri Lanka can be "distinguished from one another on ethnic, religious, and linguistic grounds" (Chattopadhyaya 51). The Sinhalese and the Tamils are essentially the two indigenous groups. Before colonialism, Tamils were the majority population in Sri Lanka. In the wake of colonialism, they lost significance in their homeland and were marginalized. The first communal conflict began with the enactment of the official language bill in 1956 and

it apprised that Sinhalese is the only official language of Sri Lanka. This made the Tamils extremely angry. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan government formulated amendments in the constitution promulgating Buddhism as the state religion.

As an aftermath of it, there was a sort of civil war occurring between the majority Sinhala population, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE insisted for a separate Tamil state as the Sri Lankan Tamils were culturally marginalized. It was not taken into account by the government and there started a series of riots and bloodsheds. *The Funny Boy* is set in the backdrop of such racial riots and it explores how these are perturbing people and even children like Arjie. At the outset, he is not acquainted with these issues. And later, when he asks questions, the adults in a way act blind to it. When Arjie asks his father about racism he replies that "It's too hard to explain. You'll understand when you're older." (Selvadurai, *FB* 61). At several points, Selvadurai depicts the intensity of the ethnic conflicts between Tamils and Sinhalese. But despite all that we realize that Arjie's sexual partner Shehan is a Sinhalese. Here Arjie defies and breaks all the conventions and social norms in its entirety. He goes after his desires and freedom.

At many junctures in the novel this ethnic rivalry is being explored. Another character Radha Aunty falls in love with a man called Anil Jayasinghe when she returns from America. She informs about her relationship with Anil Jayasinghe but her parents reject Anil as he is a Sinhalese. They rigorously warned Radha Aunty not to communicate with him anymore and soon she becomes engaged to Rajan. It is through the conversation between Radha Aunty and Anil that the readers are acquainted with the Tamil-Sinhalese conflicts in Sri Lanka.

In short this novel is not just a coming-of-age story. It is more than that and the protagonist Arjie encounters various issues in his life. The first threat Arjie faced

was from the socially imposed masculinity and the homophobic attitude of his own family. Later he was exiled to Canada along with his family to escape the ethnic conflicts of Sri Lanka. Hence Selvadurai discusses his precarious childhood and adolescence.

Ethnic conflicts also played an important role in separating people. Radha Aunty abandoned her love for Anil as he is a Sinhalese. She was not given an opportunity to live with Anil and even a persuasion of it was considered to be calumnious for her family. In fact, *Funny Boy* is a novel that broadly outlines the concepts of ethnic and gay identity.

Shyam Selvadurai's second novel *Cinnamon Gardens* has some autobiographical elements, many of his life events and personality are portrayed in the novel. The novel is set in 1920s Sri Lanka at a time when it was known as Ceylon. The major characters Annalukshmi and Balendran, both of them aspire to live a life beyond social norms like that of Arjie in *Funny Boy*. Annalukshmi is a young school teacher who belongs to a middle-class Christian family and Balendran, her uncle who is the son of an aristocratic landowner. Both had to repress their yearnings for the sake of social acceptance and acquiescence. Their sufferings are attributable to the frustrations of the Sri Lankan Tamil people. The political scenario of Sri Lanka plays a crucial role in shaping *Cinnamon Gardens* also. Unlike Arjie in *Funny Boy*, the protagonists in *Cinnamon Gardens* are adults who can evaluate themselves and the people and occurrences around them with much adequacy. Nevertheless, they fail at many points in their life by opting for a safer track of their life. Hence Selvadurai writes not only about people who could find their own life but also about the desperate ones who had no courage to live a life of their own choice.



*Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* was published in 2015. The novel as that of *Funny Boy* revolves around a young boy Amrth who had lost both his parents at a young age in an accident. He was then raised by his mother's friend and her husband with their two daughters. Although the whole family embraced him as their family member, he had always sensed an alienation and estrangement from them. He always seemed disconsolate and was apparently insensitive to people around him. But all of these reversed with the arrival of his cousin Niresh with whom he had spent hours delightedly and effortlessly. However, it was much later that Amrth perceived his romantic desire for Niresh and his gay identity. All the bewilderment, anguish, resentment and sense of disorientation that individuals encounter during the process of self-identifying someone's sexual orientation as gay in a heteronormative society is intrinsically elaborated in the novel. The novel also elucidates the significance and inevitability of coming out for those who are closeted although when the novel concludes, Amrth determines to remain closeted until he finds a partner.

The fourth novel *Hungry Ghosts* does not merely portray gay relations but also showcases how gay people were relegated to the margins on accounts of race and ethnicity. The protagonist Shivan was born to a Sinhalese father and a Tamil mother. Unfortunately, after his father's demise he had to reside with his homophobic grandmother who upholds ethnic rivalry towards Sinhalese people. She unknowingly partakes in slaying his gay partner which eventuated his return back to Canada for the second time. The novel explores homophobic fear in the Sri Lankans and the racial discrimination among gay people in Canada.

In short, the thesis addresses the marginalization that the protagonists are exposed to regarding their sexuality, race, and ethnicity and how all these render a pivotal role in individual identity formation. The thesis will also investigate the

elements of patriarchy and heteronormativity along with race and ethnicity. The present study further propounds the effect of intersecting identities on individuals.

The various academic writings on Selvadurai's fiction showcase the widespread acclaim garnered for his literary pursuits. The article titled "To Become A Man: Rewards, Punishments and Masculinities in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*" by Pranamy Bha and Dr. Dhishna Pannikot investigates the impact of reinforcements and punishments in the creation of certain behaviours, precisely in Arjie, the protagonist of *Funny Boy*. The authors draw upon B.F Skinner's theory of operant conditioning. The article provides an analysis of the novel by employing the concepts of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment.

The article "Conflict and the Trauma of Dislocation in Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*" by Dr. Subhash Chander provides a historical review of the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*. The author contemplates the interference of Western powers in dividing the country and elucidates the function of the Donoughmore Commission in accelerating the conflicts among different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Dr Subash Chander also identifies the nastiest implications of political leaders' obsession for power which exacerbated the state of affairs particularly cumbersome.

Similarly D.Saraswathi's "Ethnic Crisis and Apartheid in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*" probes the manner in which ethnic crisis operates in the Sri Lankan society depicted in the novel. She hints at Arjie Chelvaratnam's dilemma and infeasibility to remain happy even at home as the family itself poses a threat to his freedom in pursuing his sexual instincts. The article also inspects the hardships the minority Tamils suffered in the Sinhalese majority Sri Lanka society.

Andrew Lesk's "Ambivalence at the Site of Authority: Desire and Difference in *Funny Boy*" studies the protagonist's position on varied accounts such as ethnicity and sexuality. The study expands on the concept of masculinity which operates on all levels to subjugate individuals. The post-colonial Sri Lanka's overemphasis on masculine norms is critiqued severely in the work. Lesk sheds light upon the way the plays and play spaces were partitioned among boys and girls favouring patriarchal notions.

Louis Lo's "Sexual/Textual Tendencies in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*" stresses Shyam Selvadurai's appropriate use of the word "funny" to showcase the homophobic and patriarchal Sri Lankan society. He enumerates nine different instances where the word "funny" is employed to denote multiple meanings. The article also explicates how Arjie's "tendencies" are revealed in the novel. Louis Lo also remarks on the heteronormative society's modes of addressing gay relations and same-sex desire by deploying indirect words which is conceivable through Selvadurai's writing. The article appropriately alludes to Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*'s several instances to Thomas Hardy's poem "At Castle Boterel" and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

"Naturalizing 'Queerness': A Study of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*" by Prateek examines the heterosexual- homosexual divide in society and the origin of the concept of homosexuality. The article convincingly encapsulates Selvadurai's narrative strategy of employing a child protagonist. The narration gradually attains profoundness with Arjie reaching his adolescence and his increased awareness of the political turmoil in Sri Lanka. The article also inspects Selvadurai's act of giving voice to the marginalized section of Sri Lanka by presenting a gay protagonist who belongs to the minority Tamil ethnic group. Selvadurai's manner of handling the

prospect of stereotyping in Sri Lankan society is also comprehensibly perceivable by reading the article.

The thesis would focus on sexual, ethnic, and intersectional identities. It would examine the impact of social factors such as race, class, ethnicity, caste, and sexuality on the individual identities of the protagonists which is a paramount concern of the study. Multiple identities of the characters intensified the marginalization and discrimination they had encountered in conflict-stricken Sri Lanka, contributing to further disillusionment in their life.

Since the chosen primary texts present a protagonist having gay sexual orientation the study would probe into the development of the sexual identity in the novels. The thesis investigates the concept of masculinity, heteronormativity, homophobia, and internalized heterosexism while evaluating the state of individuals having a gay sexual orientation. The present research also appraises the intervention of family in oppressing an individual's sexuality and autonomy to choose their partner.

The thesis employs identity development models to showcase the gradual acquisition of the protagonists' identification of their sexual orientation. The study also sheds light upon the lives of individuals having gay sexual orientation who remain closeted to retain the love and trust of people around them. Their deed of marrying women under peer pressure from family and the repercussions endured by their wives are also explicated in detail in the present study. The thesis also explores how family holds power as a social institution on individual choices.

The thesis investigates the different periods of Sri Lanka and the conflicts present in the select fiction of Shyam Selvadurai. It studies postcolonial Sri Lanka, the

impact of colonialism and the Donoughmore Commission in intensifying the conflict between majority and minority groups in Sri Lanka. The thesis also elucidates the Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts and riots of 1983 and the migration of people to other countries to evade the ethnic riots.

The study scrutinizes the motives behind Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts and their devastating consequences on the people of Sri Lanka. The plight of women and sexual minorities has been given a special mention in the thesis whose marginalization was intensified more with the conflicts around them. The depth in which the life of protagonists having a gay identity is adversely affected by the ethnic turmoil around them is explicated in detail in the present study.

The process of intersection often accentuates the discrimination and alienation the characters have already faced. The intersection of multiple identities such as sexuality, race, class, caste, and ethnicity amplify the hindrances in their way to pursue their individuality and freedom. Thus the research attempts to evaluate intersectional identities in the texts.

Hence, the thesis undertakes an investigation into diverse aspects of Sri Lankan society by revealing the discriminatory, patriarchal, and heteronormative attitudes people exhibited during the course of the novels. The thesis delves deep into the power structures and social norms of society as reflected in schools and other educational institutions that operate upon the same norms of the patriarchal society.

The present study focuses on the identities of individuals and the Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts portrayed in Selvadurai's fiction. The thesis examines the protagonists' gay identity and intersectional identities constituted by their class, caste, ethnicity, and race. As literature reflects society, in discussing the plight of individuals

who face marginalization and discrimination on varied accounts, the study aims to give voice to those who are alienated in society. Selvadurai himself opened up in a programme:

I was thinking more about giving voice to that certain liberal section of the community that seldom gets heard. The biggest kick I get from the response to the book is when somebody who is South Asian tells me they've been empowered by the book, or that they've given it to their parents as a way of coming out ("Interview With Shyam Selvadurai, Gay Sri lankan Author From Cananda").

The impact of intersecting identities on individuals sheds light upon the further marginalization that people face with the process of mixing multiple identities. The relevance of the research heightens with the use of intersectional theory to examine the characters in the novels. It provides a broader perspective to emphasize the minority sections in society by revealing the traumatic stressful scenarios they undergo.

A discussion of the ethnic conflicts in the novel pays attention to the political interventions that worsen a country's unity and contribute to the spread of hatred all over the country. The opposition put forward by all the political parties of Sri Lanka against universal franchise in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens* showcases the caste and class prejudices of the parties. As the investigations into the caste and class prejudices in the novels are still applicable to the present world, more relevance is added to the present study.

The way women and other minority sections of society are trapped amidst violent conflicts is a matter of universal significance. Along with their minority status

they undergo pressure to conceal their emotions and are prohibited from expressing themselves during such a horrid situation. Thus, they are indirectly forced to resort to silence all through their life.

The entire thesis will fall into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, the author, and the primary texts. This chapter also furnishes a review of relevant literature in the field of the present study by briefly explaining the earlier writings. The introductory chapter explains the methodology, research objectives and relevance of the thesis. It also explicates gaps in the field of study and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two entitled “Gay Identity and the Select Narratives” analyses the gay identity of the protagonists. Three gay identity development models are used to examine the protagonists’ development. The chapter also discusses various concepts and misconceptions related to same-sex relations and sexuality. It also examines the conservative patriarchal and heteronormative Sri Lankan society during the period of the novels.

The third chapter entitled “Ethnic Identity and Conflicts: Dimensions and Aspects” will investigate the ethnic riots in Sri Lanka and the impact of ethnicity and ethnic groups in the formation of individual identities. The chapter examines different periods of Sri Lankan history mentioned in the texts, beginning from the postcolonial period. This chapter showcases in detail the traumatic effects of ethnic conflicts on sexual minorities and women.

The fourth chapter titled “Intersectional Identities” analyses intersecting identities in the novels. The effect of intersections of identities such as racial, ethnic, and sexual identities on individuals is studied in the chapter using intersectional

theory. The chapter also investigates about those who are minoritized based on their class and caste experiencing further discrimination with the intersection of their other identities.

The final chapter summarises conclusive analysis and findings. A brief analysis of each thesis chapter has been made and the research findings are stated in the concluding chapter.

The primary sources of the thesis encompass the four seminal novels of Shyam Selvadurai including *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (2005) and *Hungry Ghosts* (2013). The history of Sri Lanka, ethnic conflicts and civil war have been studied for the research. As this thesis is chiefly based on the works of Shyam Selvadurai, an emphasis is placed on the personal details of the writer.

The present study focuses on a reading of identities based on social factors including race, ethnicity, class, caste, and sexuality. Woodman and Lenna, Cass and Coleman's models are adapted to examine the gay identity of protagonists. An analysis of the protagonists' gradual identity developments has been made by discussing the different stages of development of an individual's gay identity formation.

Davies and Neal's book *Pink Therapy* has been used as the framework to discuss concepts like internalized homophobia or heterosexism and institutionalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia occurs when "gay men, lesbians or bisexuals themselves fear and loathe homosexuality- and institutionalized homophobia- in which social structures discriminate against lesbian, gay and bisexual people" (Davies 42).



Allport's proposed stages of prejudice: Verbal rejection; discrimination and physical attack is used to examine the life of gay individuals in the texts (Davies 43). A certain set of continuing patterns while showcasing homophobic prejudices are identified by Herek which helped to analyze the presence of homophobic prejudices in the novels (Davies 43). Age and authority are the major conditions which is proved by showcasing of elders' attitudes in the novels, such as Arjie's uncles and aunts, grandmother, Shivan's Aacho, Chandralal and Balendran's father Mudaliyar Navaratnam. Even young adults in the novels who were influenced by the elders' viewpoints also showcase homophobic prejudices and express them unhesitantly both within their families and schools.

The social oppression of gay individuals in the primary texts has been studied using Theologian Thinney's seven different ways of oppressing gay, lesbian, and bisexual people: "the conspiracy of silence"; "the denial of culture"; "the denial of popular strength"; "fear of over-visibility"; "creation of defined public spaces"; "denial of self-labelling" and "negative symbolism" (Davies 44-46).

Education, leisure, and employment are the three major social institutions proposed by Charles Davies where homophobia is institutionalized. This study has adapted to investigate the role of the accelerating homophobia in the texts chosen for the present study. According to him, schools are often hesitant to speak about varied sexualities and sexual orientations which indirectly fills the minds of students with negative stereotypes. In the field of leisure Davies focuses on sports where gay individuals are alienated by imposing feminine traits on them and saying they are weak. Gay individuals are also discriminated in the employment sector as well. This concept of institutionalized homophobia is relevant for the analytic reading of the novels taken for the study (Davies 47).

The coping mechanisms that gay individuals adapt to survive homophobia and heterosexism are significant in analysing the identity development of protagonists in the novels. Thus, the thesis opts for Carmen de Montefiores' intrapsychic and interpersonal methods such as assimilation, confrontation, ghettoization and specialization (Davies 56).

Along with that Sophie's proposed strategies in dealing with internalized homophobia are used to analyze the protagonists' coming out journey. The strategies put forward by Sophie are "cognitive restructuring"; "avoiding a negative identity"; "adopting an identity label"; "self-disclosure"; "meeting other lesbian, gay, and bisexual people" and "habituation to homosexuality" (Davies 56-58).

The eight different ways of locating internalized homophobia are proposed by Margoles and her colleagues and are used by Davies in a clinical context. An in-depth analysis of these ways is significant in explaining the internalized homophobia present in the major characters. The different ways to locate internalized homophobia are "fear of discovery", "discomfort with obvious lesbians and gays", "rejection and denigration of all heterosexuals", "feeling superior to heterosexuals", "belief that lesbians and gay men are not different from heterosexuals", "uneasiness with children being raised in single-sex- households", "restricting attractions to unavailable people", "short term relationships" (Davies 59-63).

The concepts of erotophobia and xenophobia constituted by internalized homophobia are used in the thesis to examine the sort of fear the gay protagonists encounter during their process of self-discovery and coming out. Erotophobia is described as the "fear of one's sexuality" (Davies 64) and xenophobia as "discomfort with strangeness" (Davies 64).

The thesis borrows definitions of ethnicity from Philip Q Yang's "Theories of Ethnicity". Different theories of ethnicity grouped into primordialism, constructionist, and instrumentalist schools have been examined to analyse the ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in the texts. It also helps to analyse the effects of ethnicity and the influence of ethnic groups on the characters in the novels (42).

The ethnic conflicts of Sri Lanka have been established using the concepts of "adversity" and "ascription" proposed by the historian Jonathan Sarna in his theory of ethnization. The theory helps to analyse the ethnic identity formation of characters in the novels. "Ascription refers to the assignment of individuals to particular ethnic groups by outsiders" (Yang 45). "Adversity includes prejudice, discrimination, hostility and hardship" (Yang 45).

Information regarding the Gandhian Movement was collected from Dr. Rajan Hoole's "The Gandhian" or "1979–83: The Mounting Repression" to read one of the characters in the novel *Funny Boy* named Jegan Parameswaran and how those who were involved in the Gandhian movement were treated badly by the Sri Lankan government during the course of the novel.

Doyin Atewologun's "Intersectionality Theory and Practice" is used to provide an introduction to the concept of intersectionality in the third chapter entitled "Intersectional Identities". According to Doyin, "Intersectionality is a critical framework or approach that provides the mindset and language to examine interconnections and interdependencies between social categories and systems" (2).

The attribution of concepts of "systems of power" and "systematic oppression" put forward by Corin Ramos and Sheila Brassel in "Intersectionality: when Identities Converge" enables a better analysis of the way power operates in the

primary texts. Systems of power are the “Basic rules and norms that have been formally and informally adopted over time to govern societal institutions, such as education, employment, and criminal justice” (Ramos and Brassel 3) and “Systematic oppression occurs when institutions discriminate against groups over time and generations” (Ramos and Brassel 3).

The three inferences regarding intersectionality are used to provide a better framework for intersectionality in the third chapter. These three assumptions stress the significance of power relations in intersectional analysis and how different social categories are linked and overlapped with each other. It also analyzes intersectionality on a personal and contextual note (Atewologun 4).

Kimberly Crenshaw’s article titled “Demarginalizing the Intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics” (1989) is studied as it first introduced the earlier instance of the scope of intersectionality in examining the plight of African women and the multiple discrimination they have encountered.

Doug Meyer’s “An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People’s Evaluations of Anti-queer Violence” has been studied to analyze the discrimination and anti-queer prejudice experienced by the gay protagonists in the novels. The article provides real case examples of queer individuals of colour which can be read along the life of one of the protagonists in the primary texts.

The impact of stereotyping on Asian men is examined using Chong-suk Han’s “Being an Oriental, I Could Never Be Completely a Man: Gay Asian Men and the Intersection of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class”. It speaks about imposing

feminine traits on Asian men and the white supremacy that operates within the gay community as well. Kent Chuang's article "Using chopsticks to eat" is also used to study the same in the thesis.

Journalist Alethea Yip's article entitled "Until There's a Cure: APAs step up the fight against HIV and AIDS" is used to analyze Selvadurai's indication of issues including HIV and AIDS in the novel *Hungry Ghosts*.



## Chapter Two

### Gay Identity and the Select Narratives

Shyam Selvadurai explores each transformative phase of gay identity development meticulously through his four protagonists including Arjie Chelvaratnam, Balendran, Amrth and Shivan Rassiah. All the four novels have Sri Lanka and Canada as their backdrop and gayness as a central theme. *Funny Boy*, *Hungry Ghosts*, and *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* illustrate the gradual ascension of the protagonists' introspective consciousness leading to self-awareness and acceptance of their sexual orientation whereas, *Cinnamon Gardens* presents an adult, a closeted gay individual from the very outset.

The gay identity development and same-sex desires and relations in the texts can be well analyzed using Davies and Neal's book, *Pink Therapy*. The work elucidates three distinguishable psychological models of coming out including the models of Cass, Coleman and Woodman and Lenna, (Davies 67). In Woodman and Lenna's model, the four stages of coming out are denial, identity confusion, bargaining, and depression (Davies 71).

Apparently, all characters of Shyam Selvadurai go through these stages. Arjie in *Funny Boy* evinces the first stage of denial in his first sexual encounter with Shehan. Shivan also undergoes this stage with similar circumstances where he confronts his first sexual experience with Ronald almost strange to him. His intrapsychic world which was not still primed to accommodate his gayness steered him forthwith quite perplexed and regretful. Moreover, his attempt to hide it left the other person all the more humiliated. Meanwhile, Shivan dismisses his relationship with him in the dread of his family's discovery of his sexual orientation.

Amrth in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, initially strived to refute his homosexual sensations to himself thus denying his sexual orientation is the first stage of the development of gay sexual identity formation. The chaos, terror, and trepidation inflicted upon Amrth by the storm are not exogenous, but endogenous ones. He was quivering with disgust at the realization of his homosexuality. The things he heard earlier about homosexual people, the architect, Aunt Bundle, and Uncle Lucky's conversation regarding him, and the legal stance against homosexuality, entered his thoughts.

In *Cinnamon Gardens* Balendran's denial of his identity is perceivable when he views his sexual orientation as an impediment which he is unable to change. His marriage with Sonia, encompasses his fear of his father and familial rejection and it is also his endeavour to deny his true nature.

In the second stage of identity confusion, Arjie who has been called 'funny' repeatedly by family members moves to the point of suspecting his identity. The feelings of differentness sprouted in him as he began to sense same-sex attractions and desires which drove him forward to the second phase of 'identity confusion'. Meanwhile, Shivan could dexterously envisage it by reading through a book.

Amrth also encounters the second stage of 'identity confusion'. It was a bewildering state with all its angst and paranoias which has laid bare through the ferocious storm, the tempestuous ocean and through his wrathful indignation towards Mala. It even led him to drown her. Amrth attempted to tackle his identity after overhearing a conversation between his teacher and other students. Thus, he could discern the catalyst of his jealousy towards Mala which is his regard for Nires. In contrast to these three central characters, Balendran whose life is introduced from the



stage of his adulthood has sheer knowledge about his distinctness but he is the one who labours to confute it with much effort.

Arjie is not portrayed in the novel as experiencing any sort of depression as his tale culminates with his migration to Canada at the age of seventeen. Although Balendran has not exhibited any excruciating gestures of depression, he steers a life deprived of any contentment. Nothing makes him happy except his son. He clings to life to accomplish his obligations only. He wants to remain as a dutious and compliant son and a responsible husband in the sense that protecting his wife, is everything that he pines for. In consequence, he quashes his true disposition willfully. Consequently, after his sexual involvement with Ranjan, he felt penitent and guilt-laden for deceiving his wife. He also had the dread of discovering his sexual orientation by family and society.

Amrth nearly landed on the edge of depression, but the outward storm from which he escaped, fortunately, propped him come out of it. His survival from the horrendous storm inflamed his fortitude to overcome whatever hurdles that turn up his way.

Amongst Selvadurai's protagonists, Shivan was the one who had to bear the brunt of depression in its all extremity. Three crucial occurrences at different junctures of his life triggered depression in Shivan. Firstly, the knock-back he had received from the gay community of Canada, where he was not the "prime steak in the meat markets of Canada" (Selvadurai, *HG* 106). Only unsightly and old people showed interest in him and he had indulged in sex with people without sensing any attraction, merely to satiate his sexual instincts. But he reached a point where he

turned terribly angry and annoyed with everything which contributed to his depression.

Secondly, the murder of Mili had such a profound influence on him which drove him to depression with Mili's reminiscences haunting him forever in his life. Thirdly, he discovered his second partner Michael's flourishing relationship with Oliver. When he ponders over Michael kissing Oliver it filled Shivan with excruciating pain. Thereupon he behaves almost insanely by his depression. Thus, an intrinsic display of the protagonists' lives replenishes all possible interpretations regarding gay identity development.

The second model proposed by Vivienne Cass expands on six stages of identity development: "identity confusion; identity comparison; identity tolerance; identity acceptance; identity pride and identity synthesis." (Davies 76).

Prior to the early stage of identity confusion, individuals deem themselves as heterosexuals. In due course, triggered by myriad influences like same-sex intimacy or attraction towards people of the same sex, a disorientation occurs. Each individual's responses may deviate from each other's, for some, it would be felicitous, while others may venture on to negotiate this confusion by scrutinizing themselves with the accessible materials, like, books and conversations. Those who turn out uncomfortable with the revelation may either steer clear of all circumstances and references concerning same-sex desire or develop an anti-homosexual stance and even advance toward the extent of marrying a heterosexual individual.

The six stages of gay identity development proposed by Vivienne Cass can be spotted in each of Selvadurai's protagonists. All characters are subjected to the first stage of identity confusion. In the second stage of identity comparison an individual

who fathoms his or her differentness delves into the probability of social alienation they will have to encounter. He suggests four approaches to triumph over social alienation. Firstly to accept their homosexuality and differences. Arjie in *Funny Boy*, who was always ridiculed for his deviation from stereotypes of a particular gender, at one point finds solace in understanding that others reciprocate the same emotions as him. Amrth, towards the end of the novel, envisages and embraces his gayness with a clear conscience. Balendran discloses his sexual orientation proudly to his father unintimidated by any kind of apprehension and appraisal. Shivan Rassiah embraced his gayness quite early in his life, but his assuredness was incessantly shattered and annihilated by his family members.

In the second approach, despite gay individuals accepting their homosexuality, on the other hand, incapacitated to embrace their self-identity as a homosexual individual. A strategy applied here is the “personal innocence strategy”, where the individual conceives their homosexual identity as part of a misfortune that happened to them, consequently proliferating a negative stance towards it. Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* exhibits it indubitably over here. Despite his sexual indulgences with Ranjan, he perceives his homosexuality as a daily impediment. Thus he hits upon self-loathing and low self-esteem.

Thirdly the individual sets out to suppress their desires by restricting physical relations and behaviours with the concern of dismissal from family and friends. The indignation and antagonism Balendran exhibits inevitably every time succeeding his sexual intimacy with Ranjan is an instance of this. He is scared to pursue his desires. Shivan also expressed the same when he had his first sexual experience. He even discarded his relationship for fear of discovery by his mother and sister.

In the fourth approach, the individual who considers it undesirable to be different strives to circumvent whatsoever pertaining to same-sex desire, engendering low self-esteem and aversion, a predicament in which Balendran is exposed from the very outset of the novel. Amrth upon discovering his sexual orientation and attraction towards his cousin Niresh, struggles to disregard him. Niresh's romantic entanglement with Mala inflated his abhorrence towards Mala and to himself which channelled Amrth to even drown Mala.

Progressively through the stages of identity tolerance, identity acceptance, and identity pride homosexual individuals decisively land up at the juncture of identity synthesis, where a complete acceptance of their sexual identity takes place. Through supportive contacts and circumstances, homosexual individuals fathom that most heterosexual individuals are cordial and hospitable and not as hostile as they anticipated the entire society would be.

Eli Coleman proposes a five-stage model: "pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationships, and identity integration" (Davies 82). This model claims that gender role identities and sexuality are moulded in early childhood itself. In this stage, the child and parents become aware of the child's differentness as the child contemplates the family's perspectives towards homosexuality. This replenishes tremendously to a child's self-esteem. This point is pertinent to Arjie, who from his very childhood was vilified by his cousin and family members for his gayness. They had called him funny for his engrossment in playing "bride-bride" and impassivity in playing sports or any such activities. Here the conformist judgments of the family members inject shame, guilt, and lack of self-assurance in Arjie. Moreover, in the pre-coming out stage, an individual is not even capable of comprehending their sensations and what is wrong with them.

The stage of coming out is crucial, which will determine whether the person will bear the weight of negative conditioning further or not. If the person derives an affirmative response it will contribute to accelerate one's self-assuredness and certitude. If it eventuates otherwise, the person will again succumb to shame, regret and fear of social alienation and familial rejection. This stage is indubitably depicted in *Hungry Ghosts* through Shivan, whose coming out happens firstly to a stranger through the phone, then to his sister and his mother. The disclosure to his mother shattered the whole of the confidence he has acquired so far. However, the bafflement, disorientation and fear of coming out vary considerably for different individuals.

Thus, an intrinsic investigation of each of the protagonists can be acquired by analyzing the gay identity development models elucidated in *Pink Therapy*. Though Sri Lanka is showcased as the backdrop of all the novels, each protagonist's living conditions are different. The only correlation is the place they all reside, which is Sri Lanka and its political tensions.

*Funny Boy* is Selvadurai's first novel that introduces a gay protagonist striving to come to terms with his sexual orientation amidst the tumultuous Sri Lankan ethnic riots. The book has won and been nominated for many awards. The vivacity and vitality with which Selvadurai presented the novel led Deepa Mehta to bring about a film adaptation of the novel, with the same title '*Funny Boy*' in 2020.

The novel is set in motion with the narration of the "spend-the-days" the protagonist Arjie had at his grandparents' home, customarily on Sundays when everyone was free to gather together unencumbered from their everyday pursuits and

responsibilities. He began to discern his differentness during one such day, a point from which commenced his “coming out” process.

The process of “coming out” is multidimensional and convoluted. It is dependent on various aspects like gender, race, epoch and the prevalent attitudes of the society that one belongs to, and the territory where the individual resides.

The predicaments of a person that pertain to a minority ethnic group are exceptionally cumbersome. Along with encountering ethnic prejudice from the majority ethnic groups a gay individual may have to confront familial rejection and communal marginalization. This might become strenuous as family was the sole support system. In *Funny Boy*, Arjie lives through such a scenario, shortly before encountering the chaos and the dreadfulness of Sri Lankan communal and racial riots, he had just arrived after spending a good time with his partner Shehan, who belongs to the other majority ethnic group. For the sake of protecting his and his family’s life, he had to renounce his relationship with Shehan. After abandoning Shehan he had to migrate to Canada. Ethnic differences operate at a higher level here.

The apprehension about the appropriateness of time for coming out prolongs his coming out process. The social and cultural perspectives at the current time also contribute to his closeted life in Sri Lanka. The author employs the customs of a patriarchal society that contributes to marginalize gay individuals.

Firstly, Selvadurai deploys reserving of spaces to delineate the gender differences that have operated since childhood. The segmentation of play spaces for girls and boys in the novel, “the front garden, the road, and the field that lay in front of the house” (Selvadurai, *FB* 3) for boys and “the back garden and kitchen porch” (Selvadurai, *FB* 3) for girls exemplify the gender discrepancy present in the Sri

Lankan families in the twentieth century from the very beginning of the novel. Arjie's differentness is unveiled in the first place through his exasperation in joining the boys' group and his love for girls' space. The delectation of playing cricket and tolerating the heat of the sun was something Arjie could not relish to any degree. And he was welcomed warmly by the girls' group even to play the central roles of their play. Arjie's keenness and exuberant imagination made all of their games more fascinating and delightful.

"Bride-bride" was his favourite game, where they dramatize the Sri Lankan marriages. His favourite part of the play was to enact the role of bride. He experiences an inarticulate joy in flaunting in saree, wearing ornaments and putting on makeup through which Arjie says, he was "able to leave the constraints of me and ascend into another, more brilliant, more beautiful self, a self whom this day was dedicated" (Selvadurai, *FB* 4).

Those times and moments presaged his unconscious to pursue his sexuality. Though Arjie could not envisage it then, later, he acknowledges it once after discovering his sexual orientation, that his exile from everyone and everything around him commenced from that particular juncture.

In the novel, at numerous junctures, by innumerable people, Arjie was insulted by calling names like 'pansy', 'faggot', 'sissy', and 'funny boy' etc. His cousin Tanuja vociferates the first three words: "pansy", "sissy" and "faggot". "Pansy" indicates "a weak or effeminate man or boy, uses as a term of abuse and disparagement" ("Pansy") and "faggot" which is a derogatory term for a gay man, "used as a term of abuse and disparagement" ("Faggot"). Though Arjie could not

comprehend the meaning of these terms, he could presumably sense those words were intended as a humiliation.

Besides the verbal abuse of calling names, Arjie earned defamation from elders for playing “bride-bride”. Kanthi Aunty’s act of dragging him into the drawing room and exhibiting him before everyone in his bride’s attire is a clear insult. The agency elders hold to tease and taunt children often has far-reaching consequences on their identity development. Her endeavour to expose him as a matter of funniness however turned his father and mother utterly flabbergasted. Everyone has started mocking him except his father and mother and Cyril uncle’s comment, “Ey, Chelva..looks like you have a funny one here” (Selvadurai, *FB* 14), deemed Arjie rather disconcerted.

However, his mother was condemned for Arjie’s “funniness”. Chelvaratnam attributes the blame to his mother as if Arjie becomes like Rankotwera boy, who may be a gay individual. According to Chelva, his mother’s accommodating Arjie into her room meanwhile she dresses and plays with her jewellery is the vital impetus for Arjie’s differentness. She “was silent in the face of the truth” (Selvadurai, *FB* 15).

After the incident, the kinship between Arjie and his mother takes a sudden diversion. She disregards him while draping her saree and irrespective of his constant knocking on the door, she refused to admit him and even ordered him to leave as she was busy getting ready. He despondently returned to his room downhearted and sensed an aloofness forming between them. The despicable tone in which Chelvaratnam used the term ‘funny’ and the disputes between his parents prompted him to surmise that, he had committed some misdeed though he could not apprehend it. He even eschewed the gaze of his parents to elude the unknown regret inside him.



Everything turned worse with his mother's compulsion on Arjie to play cricket with the boys' team and to stay aloof from the girls' gang. Arjie's protestation got a backlash when she threatened him not to come with them if he was not ready to accede to it. Her opinion that big boys should play with boys angered him. The sternness in her voice and demeanour are reflective of her fear of society. She is scared about people's condemnation regarding her mothering as her husband did. Thus she says that "If the child turns out wrong, it's the mother they always blame, never the father" (Selvadurai, *FB* 19).

She strived to transform Arjie in accordance with the masculine standards of society. Her dialogues revealed the fact that her concern is not about Arjie's sexual orientation, but the ramifications that he will have to face from the patriarchal society. When Arjie asks about his prohibition to enter the girls' space and permission to play only with boys his mother says, "Because the sky is so high and pigs can't fly" (Selvadurai, *FB* 19). Here the sky she referred to is nothing but the patriarchal society that retains a range of set rules that everyone is bound to obey. She infers to a certain degree that it is not just to respond in such a way. Nevertheless she justifies it by asserting that at times everyone ought to pursue the senseless things in life.

One day, after a rigorous fight with his cousin Tanuja, Arjie flees to the beach, a place so familiar to him. But at this point, he finds it strange, somewhere he has never visited in his life as the glaring silver hue of the sea down the high noon sun scorches his eyes. The searing sand and the forlorn shore are alien to him who was accustomed to dropping by the beach only in the evenings. Here sea metaphorically suggests the girls' gang in his family and their plays which were so familiar and 'delightful to Arjie earlier, that one has turned out to be an unprecedented territory by now, a place where he no longer gets access, the pleasure of it being denied to him

permanently after his quarrel with Tanuja. He could fathom the boredom ensuing in the future spending the days, having no role for him to perform rather than succumb to the boys' group passively and redundant on either side. Instantaneously the dread of loneliness he will have to face in the coming days intimidates him. All the anguish and desolation Arjie is exposed to in the present is a forewarning about his future, the mental traumas, and societal hatred he will have to encounter while exploring his sexuality and throughout his coming out process.

However, Radha Aunty's affection towards Arjie made him happy and more complacent about his life. Though born to the same family in Sri Lanka, she has finished her graduation from England which contributed to her broader perspective on topics like gender and sexuality. Although she assumes Arjie's nature, she never taunts him unlike the rest of the family as Radha is well aware of same-sex desires. Instead of mocking his fascination for jewellery and makeup, she permits him to hang around her. She even spreads lipstick, eye shadow and rouge on his face with tenderest affection and wholeheartedness. Hence through Radha, Arjie regained his lost self-admiration and dauntlessness, finally ending up at a place where he could exhibit his true self and embrace his true nature without any shame, confusion, or mortification. Radha's accommodating of Arjie's suggestions for the bride's party made him happy, as all the possibilities of entering the girls' world were shut down before him after the bitter quarrel with Tanuja. Her presence filled him with inexplicable joy.

The accepted notions of society regarding people's interests based on gender are presented in the novel at different junctures. One such instance is when Arjie's father prohibits him from reading the book *Little Women* as it is considered a book for girls, especially something boys at the age of twelve are not supposed to read. Thus,

he feels hesitant to ask his father to buy sequels of the book *Little Women*. Apart from the toys, plays, dresses, and colours, even the reading list is assigned gender stereotypes. But contrary to his father's opinion Daryl Uncle expressed his love for *Little Women* and even presented the sequels for Arjie. Thus like Radha Aunty, Daryl's attitude stands different from the normative ideals of the society which attracted Arjie to him as he was once with Radha. He even goes to the extent of comparing his father with Daryl in many incidents. Thus, he could share Nalini's anger and sadness over Daryl's death that led him to join Nalini in her attempts to seek justice for Daryl.

As part of it when they decide to meet Q.C. Appudurai Arjie is reminded of the scandal around Appudurai and his young servant boy. A similar instance can be seen in *Hungry Ghosts*, the scandal surrounding the architect and his young juniors. Scandals are used as a tool by Selvadurai in his novels for the protagonists to understand the possibility and existence of gay relations in the initial periods of their gay identity development. Another similar instance is Diggy's revelation about the sex between the Head Perfect and Shehan Soyza.

Along with being conscious about people's relations and the scandals around them, he then moves on to observe the male body as part of his developing sexual orientation and identity. The way he examines Jegan's body is an example of it. He is marvelled at the sight of Jegan's strong physique, his trousers revealing the shape of his thighs. Jegan's welcoming smile made him conscious of the way he was now observing male bodies and his transition to adolescence. As he had overheard Diggy and his father's conversation regarding puberty, voice changes, and wet dreams he is not worried about having it, instead, he longs to pass over this phase to be like the well-built men he admires around him.

Thus when Jegan was allowed to live with them Arjie felt a tremendous joy in him “the place seemed to have become sacred by his presence” (Selvadurai, *FB* 163). Jegan too seemed more interested in Arjie than anyone in the house. He even defended Arjie when his father was concerned about Arjie’s differentness. Arjie’s playing with dolls and reading habit have been seen by his father as showcasing certain tendencies, by the word “tendencies”, he meant his gayness. But Jegan supports Arjie by saying there is nothing wrong with that. Overhearing this, Arjie’s admiration towards Jegan grew stronger.

Though gay relations are illegal in Sri Lanka the hypocrisy of the government is shown by an incident that Jegan observed on the beach. He saw some foreign men with young village boys and made a conversation with Arjie’s father regarding it. Though they used to come to the hotel, he seemed less concerned about it and said that even if he stops them other hotels are open for them. When Jegan enquired about the illegality of their actions Chelvaratnam replied by saying “It’s not just our luscious beaches that keep the tourist industry going, you know. We have other natural resources as well” (Selvadurai, *FB* 171).

However, Chelvaratnam’s concern over Arjie’s sexual orientation forced him to change Arjie’s school from St.Gabriel’s to Queen Victoria Academy. He believed that Arjie will fit into the patriarchal ideals of masculinity once he is in that school, which is stated clearly when Diggy says to Arjie that their father does not want him to “turning out funny or anything like that” (Selvadurai, *FB* 210). He adds, “Once you come to The Queen Victoria Academy you are a man” (Selvadurai, *FB* 211). Blinking eyes and licking lips frequently are dealt with severe punishment in the school which is a clear indication of the patriarchal masculine ideals the school holds. But this transition scares Arjie as all he could think about was the boys in long pants and their

loud voices contrary to his friends at St.Gabriel's in shorts and shirts and he longs to be with them once he saw his new uniform of Queen Victoria Academy.

The school provides an environment for the flourishing of homophobia. Selvadurai presents the school as a place where institutionalized homophobia works. Even a simple act that does not fulfil the patriarchal notions about masculinity is treated with utmost punishment.

The principal Mr Abeysinghe whom the students nicknamed Black Tie wore a hat and a sola topee which Arjie has seen only in photographs of colonial Sri Lanka. This could be read as an indirect portrayal of the anti-sodomy rules introduced by the British which were still followed by the Sri Lankan government at the time of the composition of the novel. The missionary influences based on religion become another major reason for criminalizing same-sex relationships. Selvadurai brilliantly points it out through a hat.

However, he happened to get a friend who rescued him on the first day from Salgado and friends who is an ardent supporter of Sinhalese. He hated having Tamil students in his class. But Soyza's behaviour and manners were a little strange. He seemed embarrassed when Arjie looked into his eyes, and when Arjie tried to console him by touching him after his punishment from Black Tie, Soyza refused it by frowning and asking him what he knew about him. He often went to the toilet during class time by seeking permission from teachers and came back much later with his dress all ruffled.

The mystery of Soyza is finally revealed by Diggy. When he sees Arjie with Shehan he tells him that Shehan indulges in sex with Head Perfect. Though initially, Arjie refuses to believe it, rewinding everything made sense to what Diggy has said.

However the act of two men having sex seemed ambiguous to Arjie at the age of fourteen. The disparity in their physical appearance made him all the more confused. But the significance of this knowledge is immense and Arjie could understand the existence and possibility of such relations.

Gradually Arjie has started to develop feelings for Shehan. The way Shehan helped him to escape difficult situations made him closer to Shehan. The more he got attached to him, the more Arjie's curiosity regarding Shehan and his relationship with Head Perfect increased. One night he had a dream about Shehan and him playing in a pool. Arjie embracing him by his legs and never lets him go of his clutches, which culminated in Arjie having a wet dream the next day.

One day, Shehan kisses Arjie unexpectedly that leaves Arjie in utter shock as it was his first physical experience. Though he became numb for some moments, later when he reached home, Arjie tried to repeat in his mind what happened. He acknowledged the feel of Shehan's lips on him and he realized that he liked that experience and wanted to experience it again consciously.

But Diggy stands in strong opposition to Arjie's friendship with Shehan. He believes that Shehan can turn Arjie bad and their friendship will make Arjie a laughing-stock in the school as that of Shehan. But this too adds to Arjie's realization of his differentness to some extent. He grasps it quickly that he and Shehan are connected in some way, Shehan clears out the confusion he has had about himself for a long time. He finds some similarities between both of them and their first kiss as paving the way for that understanding.

Thus, he experiences the same curiosity and joy he had for the "spend- the days" while awaiting Shehan's first visit to his house. During the visit, Arjie

encounters his first sexual experience that leaves him loathing about it. His heart fills with guilt and regret. He feels resentment towards Shehan and the act they have committed moments before. He thinks as if he betrayed his parents and family. He was about to cry seeing his mother. All of these feelings of regret are showcased towards Shehan, especially when he is reminded of Diggy's story about the Head Perfect and Shehan. Arjie now begins to justify his father's concern about him, he praises in his mind the paternal care his father always showed, that his father was right in his attempts to protect him.

However, Shehan realizes what Arjie is going through and tries to help out. He tries to convince Arjie that it's not bad and one should not be ashamed of their sexual desires. But Arjie refuses and even provokes Shehan by mentioning his relationship with Head Perfect which culminates in Shehan getting angry with Arjie and says, "I know your type. You and the head perfect and others like you. Pretend that you're normal or that you're doing it because you can't get a girl. But in the end, you're no different from me" (Selvadurai, *FB* 265). Arjie responded by hitting Shehan.

That night he had a dream about Shehan kissing him but suddenly his body seemed of Head Perfect and the pressure Arjie felt in his body was unbearable. An interpretation of it could be that it was not only Shehan's act of intimacy or lovemaking that made Arjie angry or loathsome about the act and himself. Shehan's relationship with Head Perfect was a solid reason for his disgust towards it. However, when he woke up from his dream, his desire for Shehan's presence grew all the more stronger. Thus he is trapped between his desire and disgust towards Shehan.

The next day at school they both avoided their gaze. But Black Tie punished Shehan again and asked to come to his office. He had become the "ills and burdens"

already when he saw Shehan with his long hair. The ones who go against the dictates of Black Tie are labelled “ills and burdens”. They will have to remain the same forever and that every day he has to report to Black Tie’s office and stay in front of it and be bound to accept the punishments. Here, Shehan was included in the list for having his hair grown up to shoulders and tying it to avoid Black Tie noticing it.

The thought of Shehan staying the whole day before the Principal’s office made Arjie sad. In his absence, Arjie began to analyze his disgust toward Shehan and concluded that he misunderstood Shehan and that the act was purely out of love. He shared his love with Arjie and it was not something Shehan did deliberately to degrade him. This realization made Arjie all the more sympathetic toward Shehan. He later visited his home and found out about how his mother had left him to live with another man in America after her divorce from his father. The story of his loneliness made Arjie sad. He apologized for his rude behaviour.

Shehan is presented in the novel as someone who suffered all the loneliness of being a single child of divorced parents. Because of his relationship with the Head Perfect, he does not possess friends in school as well. Arjie was the only one who seemed to show some interest in Shehan and called him by the name Shehan whereas everyone else called him by the name Soyza, though it’s common in their school to call each other by their last names. But both Shehan and Arjie take the freedom and warmth to call each other by their names. Thus, the rude attitude of Arjie towards Shehan shatters him because he is the only one who shows some sort of affection towards him, In addition to that, Black Tie’s punishments make him all the more depressed about his own life. That’s why he says, “I can’t stand the constant punishments. If I don’t get out of this, I think” (Selvadurai, *FB* 272). Shehan shared



this with Arjie because he was the only solace the world had offered to him in his lifetime.

Gradually Arjie starts to realize the unfair world around him. He realizes it primarily through Shehan. He was misused by the Head Perfect knowing his vulnerabilities and the way other students mocked him with their privileges, how Black Tie has used his agency/power on him. The unjustness of the world provokes him. Later he thinks of his relationship with Shehan, and the rightfulness of their choice to love each other. Diggy is the only one who suspects their relationship and tries to convince Arjie to end his friendship with Shehan. Arjie even thinks about the unjust act done to Radha Aunty and Anil by their family members.

It is only now that Arjie becomes conscious of the invisible agency of power that operates in society and families. He asks himself who gave these people the power to decide the lives of others. He answers the question with the word 'power' and that the powerless ones are destined to follow others. He began to indulge in revolutionary thoughts to escape the unfair world.

However, he makes a plan in his mind to rescue Shehan from the clutches of Black Tie. The significance of his poetry recitation on the prize-giving day was conveyed to him by his English teacher Mr. Sunderalingam. He told him that if he recites well, there will be some hope left for Black Tie to continue in the school as principal. However, he dislikes the Vice Principal Mr. Lokubandara for his efforts to turn Queen Victoria Academy into a Sinhalese one while denying schooling to Tamil students. But the only way left for him to rescue Shehan was to recite the poems as worse as he could.

Though he has made up his mind, the pride with which his parents were present in the hall to listen to his recitation and the warm treatment of his teachers made him a little confused. But once he entered the stage, he looked for Shehan and stuck to his decision. He recited the poems in jumbled order and used all possible ways to make them sound as utter nonsense. Seeing the failed expression on Black Tie's face, he could recognize that he had succeeded in his attempt to rescue Shehan. However, he was a little regretful to look at his parents and Mr. Sunderalingam, his teacher.

Shehan was the sole reason for Arjie's bold attempt. All he had in his mind was to stop Shehan's suffering that has become unbearable to him. Arjie himself wonders at his boldness and the transformation he had from a scared boy seeing older boys, their laugh, their way of playing the rucker game to such a bold one who could even withstand the terror of Black Tie's punishments. Shehan realizes Arjie's love when he says, "I couldn't bear to see you suffer anymore" (Selvadurai, *FB* 284). This bold attempt was an answer he gave to himself for the questions he had about overcoming the agency of power that operates around them. Their love story ends in the novel with both of them walking together ready to face the hurdles that come their way.

Selvadurai's second novel *Cinnamon Gardens* presents a closeted gay individual who lives within the constraints of traditional Sri Lankan society and his oppressive father, Mudaliyar Navaratnam. It's a tale of suppression of feelings, fear of parents and society and the later's exploration and acceptance of one's sexuality. The book is relevant for all time as it kindles courage in individuals to overcome social stigmas and internalized homophobia and to lead a content and satisfied life.

Though the protagonist Balendran achieves it much later in his life after the courageous disclosure of his sexual orientation to his father Mudaliyar, it added a new vitality and vivacity to his life. Throughout the novel Mudaliyar is presented as a figure representing all the social stigmas around same-sex desires. He ventures through every path to destroy Balendran's relationship with Richard.

Thus the story revolves around these two characters. Mudaliyar is the ultimate trap in which Balendran is trapped for years. Even the novel begins on the day of Mudaliyar Navaratnam's birthday and ends on the same day along with the reminiscence of one of his earlier birthday parties in which the family lost their elder son Arulanadan forever.

Mudaliyar represents the whole of the masculinized patriarchy that embodies Sri Lanka at the time of the novel. Arulanadan fights with Mudaliyar to live with the woman he has loved named Pakkiam, a lower caste woman and a servant at Brighton house. Arulanadan ends up attacking his father Mudaliyar on his birthday party which led ultimately to his secluded life in Bombay with Pakkiam and seelan, breaking off all his ties with his family. By operating his power in the society and family, Mudaliyar won the casteist and patriarchal battle with his son, thereby dismissing all of the family's relation with Arulanadan.

The character of Arulanadan is portrayed in direct contrast to Balendran. Arulanadan broke all the clutches of social pressures and norms. He led a life satisfying to his inner self. On the contrary Balendran's life is decided by his hypocritical father and his codes which go hand in hand with everything that suits a classist, casteist, and patriarchal framework. All the privileges of Mudaliyar are shattered when Arul chooses his life with Pakkiam above everything. Arul could have

enjoyed all the fortunes provided to Balendran, but he was determined enough to embrace the freedom and contentedness that life offers when one opts to live according to their aspirations.

Obedience to parents is an important element of many cultures where children even after becoming adults are bound to stick to the opinions of their parents. They are not allowed to challenge or question their decisions even if they affect them. The novel discusses the five fathers elaborately.

Annalukshmi whose story goes in parallel with Balendran is a strong-willed girl living a life defined by her own rules and aspirations. Her father Murgasu was a rebel earlier in his life. He was infamous in Jaffna for decapitating the Gods enshrined in their family dwelling following a dispute with his father. Later he converted to Christianity in Malaya and married Louisa against the opposition from her family as well. But despite all this he was a loving father to his children. He made Annalukshmi learn basic accounting and swimming. He made her aware of the workings of the rubber estate which at a time was the only field of man alone. He was not at all concerned about not having a son even while people constantly console him for that.

But his character was completely altered after his father's death. Being repentant for not doing his duties as a son after his father's death, Murgasu gradually began to abandon Christianity, thus leaving the warmth of his family behind. One day Annaluskhmi saw him coming out of the temple and thereafter a silence began to take place between them. Hereafter he started to physically abuse Annalukshmi out of his anger. Here the change in Murgasu is caused by his remorsefulness in opposing his father, for not being a 'good son' according to the Sri Lankan culture.

Balendran also believes in this ideal of a dutiful and obedient son. Mudaliyar Navaratnam sees him as his pride who looks like “a younger version of his late father”. Once seeing Balendran Mudaliyar got reminded of his favourite verse from the Tirukkural, “The service a son can render his father is to make men ask ‘How came this blessing?’” (Selvadurai, *CG* 28). But this in turn ended up in Balendran leaving behind all his desires and aspirations to prove himself to be a dutiful son. Balendran’s attire is not at all suitable for the Sri Lankan climate but considering the European attire providing a dignified look he dresses himself in a coat. Balendran is pretty sure about Mudaliyar’s concerns well. Thus, at the beginning of the novel Balendran is portrayed as someone obliged to societal norms and familial expectations. He lives not according to his wishes but merely to please people around him.

Consequently the amount of regret and guilt Balendran carried all through his life was so high that it was revealed at the very moment Balendran is told about Richard Howland. He got shuddered. The name ‘Richard’ had made such an impact on him that he turned excited even after long twenty years of not seeing Richard. Seeing his appalled look Mudaliyar squeezed Balendran’s shoulders as the pressure of it was not just on his shoulders, but on his entire life for all these years. This action of Mudaliyar brought him back to his senses. The boundless excitement he felt while knowing about Richard’s arrival to Ceylon was immense and showcased the profoundness of their relationship. While talking with Nalamma too, he was not out of thoughts about Richard and the memories of their college days together.

Balendran tells Nalamma that “We have no choice but to obey” (Selvadurai, *CG* 34) when she expresses her desire to restore connections with her elder son Arulanadan. But this is a reminder of his inner self in terms of his relation to Richard.

He still longs for Richard's love and care irrespective of long years of aloofness between them. His excitement at the thought of meeting Richard indicates the coldness life offers to him presently with Sonia which is imposed upon him by his father Mudaliyar.

After Mudaliyar's demand to meet Richard, he left the house for Galle Face Green Park. Upon reaching there he jumped out of the car "as if he were escaping from some stifling room" (Selvadurai, *CG* 36). Here the 'stifling room' could be a metaphor for the life he is trapped in and the escape from it would be Richard's arrival. So, he prepares enough to initiate the conversation between him and Richard. He imagines the sort of conversations that will happen between them. In one such scenario, Balendran imagines Richard accusing him of being a coward, for abandoning and not loving him. And Balendran consoles himself by assuring him that his love for Richard is long dead. He relies on his family to reassure it: "a wife whom he loved in his own way, and a son, whom the very thought of filled him with happiness, ensured that" (Selvadurai, *CG* 38). Balendran loved Sonia in his own way, indicating that the love they shared is not the kind between a husband and wife.

Balendran does love Sonia, but not the way he loves Richard. He has a kind of dutiful love towards her, sympathy knowing her past and her longing to have a family, a love someone has for a friend or even for a stranger. Sonia on the other hand was too emotionally dependent on Balendran. Though she was aware of his neglecting her emotions, needs, and convictions, she could not think of a life without Balendran, even dreadful about him leaving her alone in the house. Sonia lost her parents very early in life, so for her marriage was something that would offer her own family.

The comparison of Sonia's ebony bed to a funeral bier is metaphorical. For a couple, the bed ought to be a place of intimacy where they would share the warmth of their love. Each time the bed reminded Sonia of the funeral bier. It indicates the kind of relationship they shared. They slept in two rooms and his very act of lovemaking was formal. When she looks at Lukshman's room, she sees it empty. This fills her with ultimate despair. This action reveals what united Balendran and Sonia together all these years and the absence of him troubling them.

Sonia was completely unaware of Balendran's mind. For her, the love she had for him was enough. She considers herself as a dutiful wife who values her husband, son and family above everything. For her it's a sort of tending plants and trees, the pleasure she received from seeing them was enough. Though the plants and trees are unable to communicate, so is Balendran. But the very act of caring and loving him gives her pleasure and happiness.

Balendran is portrayed as a victim of forced heterosexual marriage. He gave up his relationship with Richard due to his fear of his father Mudaliyar Navartnam and to safeguard Mudaliyar's social prestige. After his marriage, he often used to cite the verse from Tirukkural which says "As one by one we give up, we get freer and freer of pain" (Selvadurai, *CG* 38). He consoled himself by thinking that giving up his relationship with Richard would relieve him of all the tensions and conflicts of life. But it happened the other way.

His nights became sleepless after marriage. He felt suffocated lying near Sonia thus leading her into a victim of internalized homophobia. She could sense Balendran's resentment towards her though completely unaware of the reason behind it. Lukshman's birth developed a little love between them, only through him they

loved each other. It was not the love between partners. Mudaliyar's reasserting of affection towards Balendran gave him a reason to live a life out of his own will. But above all Balendran was lacking the warmth of love in his life. His forced marriage with Sonia affected his happiness which ultimately led him into a position to reject his love for Richard.

The memory of Mudaliyar visiting Richard and Balendran's flat knowing about their relationship still has the power to shudder him. There were clutches of parental control in choosing life partners in the 1920s in Sri Lanka. The case with gay individuals was even worse at the time. Mudaliyar with all his power and masculinized patriarchy was successful in creating fear in Richard and Balendran thereby ending their relationship.

Shyam Selvadurai contests the view that reproduction is the sole object of sex. After reading Edward Carpenter's *Intermediate Sex* Balendran questioned the view regarding sex as a mere tool for reproduction. The life between Merrill and Edward Carpenter energizes and renders them new rays of hope around their relationship. Both of them got inspired "from the way they had carved a life out for themselves, despite such societal censures" (Selvadurai, *CG* 59).

Balendran is portrayed in the novel as someone with internalized homophobia. He thinks of the kind of love Richard and Balendran shared or of his sexual orientation as "a daily impediment, like a pair of spectacles or a badly set fracture" (Selvadurai, *CG* 38). He thinks of it with regret and something that he can not change though he wishes.

The internalized homophobia in Balendran works so strongly that it leads him to believe that Mudaliyar made the right decision as a father. He tries to justify



Mudaliyar as a father. He thinks that it is Mudaliyar's pure love towards his son that led him to take such a rude stand as if protecting him from something dangerous.

Though he was aware of all the difficulties and mental trauma he had overcome so far, he tried to imagine his father was wise enough to act in such a way.

Selvadurai attributes some feminine traits to his gay protagonists. They are so keen on the way to observe female attire. Balendran is never attracted to any woman in his life but he adorns and enjoys the way women dress. He is aware of everything related to dressing from its fabric and matching jewellery to current trends. On seeing Annalukshmi, Balendran first glances at her Kanjivaram saree.

The first obvious instance in the novel that reveals Balendran's sexual orientation is the physical relationship he has with Ranjan. However, he could give up his relationship with Richard fearing Mudaliyar and finding excuses to prove Mudaliyar's true concerns and rightfulness. Balendran still satisfies his sexual instincts in other ways. He uses Ranjan as he believes that Ranjan will not reveal this to anyone since he is indebted to Balendran for the financial help he has offered.

Though he enjoys the physical relationship with Ranjan and wants to prolong it, he starts to regret his action soon after. He accuses himself of not considering his family and the disgrace that will bring on Mudaliyar. He thinks as if he could have avoided the whole scenario. A terrible anguish follows the event. The internalized homophobia within Balendran is showcased through this.

Balendran used to enjoy his relationship with Richard during his college days. He had never experienced any feelings of regret and guilt while he was with Richard. However, when he met him after twenty years both of them felt an embarrassment. After the uncomfortable silence they started speaking, Balendran's introduction of his

‘wife’ Sonia brought some kind of disdain in Richard. Richard imagined Sonia as traditional and “naïve to the ways of the world and certainly to the ways of her husband” (Selvadurai, *CG* 104). Richard consoled himself by glancing at Alli while reassuring himself that he too is not alone. Richard’s partner Alli was fourteen years younger than him and was a handsome boy in his twenties.

During their relationship phase Balendran and Richard used to criticize the institutions of marriage and family. Balendran always had a resentment towards the marriage customs of Tamil community. Likewise, they found that the fact that middle-aged men have much younger partners to be funny. But in reality, life has brought them to these same scenarios that they have once looked at with aversion.

Sonia though unaware of her husband’s sexual orientation could easily recognize the kind of relationship that existed between Richard and Alli. It is understood that she too poses some homophobic notions when Sonia says “It’s funny how those sorts always are” (Selvadurai, *CG* 110). She calls them “inverts” and “Friends of Oscar” (Selvadurai, *CG* 111) and becomes concerned about the age gap that exists between them. Balendran’s internalized homophobia is revealed when his heart beats rigorously at the fear of discovery. That is one of the major traits of internalized homophobia. He disagrees with Sonia by saying there were no such signs to think so. He tells Sonia it’s a “terrible thing to say about someone” (Selvadurai, *CG* 111). His use of the word ‘terrible’ is indicative of another trait of Balendran’s internalized homophobia, which is a rejection of same-sex desire, exhibited as a heterosexual and an act to assert non-normative concerns.

Another character Annalukshmi whose story goes parallel with Balendran is a strong-willed woman whose aspirations and ambitions focus on her career as a

teacher. But Annalukshmi is not entirely hesitant. Instead, according to Annalukshmi the hardest part of marriage is to leave her career. At one point in the novel, Annalukshmi thinks of Balendran and Sonia as an ideal couple who share an equal companionship. In reality, both of them are entrapped in the relationship and the ties tighten only by their son Lukshman. It is paradoxical for Annalukshmi to think so. Though forced marriages can possibly cover up all issues inside, humans inside are ready to burst at any point.

Though Sonia is unaware of Balendran's sexual orientation she is not happy with her life. She acknowledges that something is lacking in her life and is somewhat regretful about the life she has chosen. The very reason leads her to advise Annalukshmi to wait patiently until she becomes sure about her choice or else Sonia will have to compromise for the first thing that comes in her life which may offer a life full of regrets. Sonia understands this from her own life.

Although Sonia could sense the kind of relationship that existed between Richard and Alli, she could never imagine her husband having such an inclination. She thought of Richard only as a friend of Balendran. The remorseful look on Balendran's face when Sonia addressed Richard as "your friends" is not perceptible to Sonia.

Balendran believes in the concept of a dutiful son as he considers it to be a part of their culture. An instance of it could be seen during a conversation between Sonia and Balendran, while Sonia asks him about his ultimate obedience to his father in all matters. He replies to her that "He is my father, It's our way" (Selvadurai, *CG* 138).

After the meeting with Richard, Balendran feels remorseful for not telling the truth about Sonia to him. He was unable to bear Richard thinking about him as unfaithful and treacherous. He experienced a heap of emotions and memories. He thinks of the time he and Richard spent together. He also reminisces about Richard's attractive physical attributes. Richard on the other hand thinks of Balendran as unfaithful through his relationship with Sonia.

The distance between Richard and Balendran had not decreased their love. Balendran is ashamed about the way their relationship ended. He was living with that shame all these years after parting with Richard. When Richard told him about his disappointment about Balendran, he got shattered. Richards's words and actions still mattered to Balendran.

Similarly for Richard, the meeting with Mudaliyar was uncomfortable because of the memory of previous humiliating experiences. The humiliation that gay individuals face from their own families always had a negative impact. The masculinized patriarchal concepts had always led the parents to take control of even the relationships of their children. The way Mudaliyar responded to Richard and Balendran's relationship was so horrible, that Balendran even ran out of their flat "without even a coat, in the middle of winter" (Selvadurai, *CG* 141). This very event is indicative of the terrible harassment and mental trauma the gay individuals experience in their families.

Mudaliyar Navartnam is a patriarch who knows well how to shatter the confidence of people. The easiness with which he led Richard to plead to him on his knees, to make him silent and irresponsive even while Mudaliyar slapped him mercilessly is an example of it. He told Richard that he would inform the police about

their relationship and charge him with sodomy. Richard was terrified because sodomy was considered a crime during the period.

Richard and Balendran were so sure about their relationship and were living happily. But the very intervention of Mudaliyar made them carry the shame all through their life. Balendran was affected the most and it led him to marry Sonia, thus compromising his sexual orientation. He had to indulge in a heterosexual relationship which is out of his will. One of the reasons gay males have heterosexual relationships is “denying same-sex attractions” (Dube 125). Here Balendran’s father forced him to deny his same-sex partner and to marry a woman. Another reason for gay males to have relations with women is the “hope to disguise their true sexuality by dating heterosexually” (Dube 126).

At the same time, he kept a secret relationship with Ranjan only for the sake of sexual fulfilment which in turn fuelled his internalized homophobia. His anguish reached its peak each time after his sexual encounter with Ranjan. Gay relations were highly stigmatized in the 1920s in Sri Lanka, it’s commonplace to have such relations. Not just in Sri Lanka universally it was so, “many sexual-minority males either eschew such relationships, participate in them secretly” (Dube 125) as it is the only option left behind them.

After the encounter with Mudaliyar Richard returned to his parent’s house. Unlike Mudaliyar, Richard’s parents were acceptive of their son’s sexual orientation and did not force anything upon him that made his disclosure much easier and helped him live a life of his own will. There are no traits of internalized homophobia in Richard throughout the novel. He is portrayed as following his same-sex desire by living with Alli. In the narratives internalized homophobia is associated with the

acceptance and awareness of parents. “Youth with aware parents showed less internalized homophobia” (D’Augelli, et al. 481). Unlike Balendran Richard thus finds a partner who matches his sexual orientation.

Thus family support became something of great importance while coming out and embracing one’s sexual identity. Gay individuals ought to be protected primarily by their families to negate social homophobia that leads to individual fear. On the contrary, Mudaliyar relies on the support of the police to ruin his son’s happy life. He indirectly threatens the impending social homophobia and the subsequent harassment that they will have to encounter throughout their life if they choose to live according to their will.

Though Richard left their flat in fear of Mudaliyar, he waited at his home awaiting Balendran’s reply. But Balendran did not reply. He carried the shame of his inability and fear throughout his life. He says that “This is something I have felt ashamed for. It is something I will always live with” (Selvadurai, *CG* 162). Shame became one of the major traits associated with internalized homophobia and Balendran thinks that he will carry it all through his life.

In spite of Mudaliyar’s role in shattering his relationship with Richard, Balendran’s sense of duty and obedience to his father is high. Balendran gets pneumonia by walking in the streets during the rains without a coat as he is afraid of returning to their flat after Mudaliyar’s arrival. He believed that his father was right in what he has done as he remarks “I realized that my father was right. Our relationship could not continue” (Selvadurai, *CG* 162). It becomes clear that it was Balendran who left Richard due to his fear of his father and gradually on the assumption that he was

right in his deeds. Here Balendran is blindly following the norms of patriarchal society imposed upon individuals.

Another toxic trait of patriarchal society is interrogating others' lives. Many consider it right to interfere in other people's lives. F.C. Wijewardena is one such person. F.C had sent an anonymous note to Mudaliyar revealing about Richard and Balendran's relationship. He had followed them and enquired about them. F.C.'s intervention and involvement in their relationship becomes a great shock to Balendran who considered him as his close friend. F.C had considered it as his duty to save Balendran from the shackles of wrongdoing. Same-sex desire is a crime in the eyes of F.C that leads him to send a revealing note to Mudaliyar.

After the initial shock at hearing F C's intervention, Balendran had felt a strong contempt towards him who ruined his happy life with Richard. In their next meeting, Balendran indirectly bursts out at F.C for intervening in others' lives, "meddle in other people's lives, make decisions for them, because, after all, aren't you superior to them, don't you know what's best? I have nothing but contempt for people who are like that" (Selvadurai, *CG* 166). He considers it a shame to do all these. In another instance he tells F.C that "When we act according to our opinions, we can end up ruining other people's lives" (Selvadurai, *CG* 184). He indirectly conveys to F.C that he has ruined his life with Richard. All these incidents in the narrative are indicative of Balendran's coming to terms with his sexuality. Balendran gradually asserts his sexual identity to himself and the world around him.

Selvadurai had portrayed his gay protagonists as not interested in sports. The protagonists Arjie or Balendran differed from their elder brothers who had an interest in cricket. The author depicts Arjie's hatred towards playing cricket and his intense

interest to play “bride-bride”. Selvadurai attempts to portray the gay protagonists as more feminine. In *Cinnamon Gardens*, Balendran’s brother Arulanadan is a person who is interested in sports. Arulanandan considers Balendran’s lack of interest in sports as effeminate and mocks him.

Thus, he begins to resume his relationship with Richard as he is the only one who knows Balendran in-depth. Amidst his friends and wife, he misses Richard like as “a stranger in such a gathering might think with longing of his own home, his wife and children” (Selvadurai, *CG* 167). According to Balendran home means his relationship with Richard where he can be himself, without any mask or drama. So after telling a lie to Sonia he flees to meet Richard.

Balendran while planning a trip with Richard avoids Sonia as her company would irritate him. Balendran is still physically attracted to Richard. Richard’s naked body brings back all his fond memories of them together. The gentle kiss of Richard fuels Balendran’s desires. He understands again that he can be himself only before Richard. But when Richard tells him that he has fallen in love with him again, he keeps silent thinking about the societal pressures on his shoulders including his family. He was concerned about everyone except his feelings. His feelings and emotions are controlled by social norms. But the good old days of his life haunts him and the thought of their impending departure makes him sad. Though he did not express his love for Richard, he could sense it.

Balendran’s concern over people around him and their relations towards him keeps him away from resuming his relationship with Richard. He considers his father, son, and wife as important. For Sonia, his feelings are more of a sympathetic one, for he knows she is too dependent on her concept of family, him and their son. Their



home named Sevana and her family is the sole form of happiness to her. She has no existence without it. Balendran has mixed feelings of love, fear and obedience towards his father. The fear of rejection from him horrifies Balendran. On top of everything, his concern is all around Lukshman, whom he loves like no one in the world. The fear of him rejecting Balendran, his attitude changes, and “the smile leaving his son’s face replaced by horror and revulsion at his father’s crime” (Selvadurai, *CG* 204) terrifies him.

This very attachment towards his family finally led him to end his relationship with Richard. Even it was difficult for him and he somehow told Richard to go back to England as he no longer wanted to continue their relationship. It had a terrible effect on Richard who was willing to leave his life with Alli for Richard. But Balendran was not in a state to leave anything behind. He told him that “I am married with a child” (Selvadurai, *CG* 207). By the time he left Richard behind, he was running as if to escape otherwise he may get into him once again. But he felt a void filling him thereafter. This was a real struggle for Balendran to leave his true love life behind. “He wanted to weep. Yet he was the Mudaliyar Navaratnam’s son and such things were not permitted in the presence of the driver” (Selvadurai, *CG* 208). He was unable to even express his feelings.

Balendran fears the discovery of his sexual identity by others, especially his wife Sonia. Thus “the look of contentment and serenity on her face made more horrible the thought of discovery” (Selvadurai, *CG* 209). Similarly, he fears Lukshman and Mudaliyar’s responses once his sexual orientation is revealed to them. He tries to comfort himself by asserting his love for Sonia, who is his dear friend. He expects that his love for Richard would gradually fade or “become a familial

impediment” (Selvadurai, *CG* 209). Thus in his attempts to repress his feelings, he suffers from internalized homophobia. Social morality immensely influences him.

On the other hand, Balendran’s brother Arulanadan is portrayed in the novel in direct contrast to him. When Balendran left his love behind in the fear of his father and society, Arulanadan was strong-willed to live with the love of his life. He rejects everyone and everything that creates hurdles in his life with Pakkiam. Though he had to leave every fortune and status he would have got as the elder son of Mudaliyar, he had led a content life with Pakkiam and his son Seelan. By providing Seelan good education, they could get out of the clutches of Mudaliyar entirely. Meeting with Arulanadan and family opened Balendran’s eyes who was roaming only around Mudaliyar. He realised that a life is possible even without being dependent on him. This is the first time that Balendran understands the powerlessness of his father.

Arul teases Balendran for not living according to his passions and for living his life following the dictates of his father as he says “living by codes everyone lays down but nobody follows” (Selvadurai, *CG* 273). Balendran could understand that by ‘everyone’ Arul meant his father. Balendran’s respect for Mudaliyar vanished when he knew about the way he misused Pakkiam’s mother. He now thinks of Mudaliyar’s hypocrisy in blaming and punishing Arul and Balendran. He was reminded of the verse from Tirukkural that Mudaliyar often used to quote: “Integrity and shame are natural, only to the well-born” (Selvadurai, *CG* 279). For the first time in his life he felt respect for Arul.

From this point onwards, Balendran starts to question whatever Mudaliyar had done to himself and the whole family, each of his decisions. Mudaliyar’s real face and his hypocrisy are revealed to him. Balendran even thinks of himself as a hypocrite.

“He had been blind, blind to the realities of life” (Selvadurai, *CG* 279). He lived a life not following his true nature. Because of that though he had everything in life, wealth, status and job he was not happy with his life.

Arul thus offered a realization phase for Balendran. He feels regretful about believing in Mudaliyar and spending half of his life according to the codes derived by his father. He was exiled from his true self. Mudaliyar’s significance in Balendran’s life is diminished as he is the sole reason behind the distress of Balendran and Arulanadan. Thus, he starts to raise his voice toward Mudaliyar.

Balendran realizes that he was fooled by his father by granting everything temporarily to him. Everything was offered to him in return for his blind obedience to Mudaliyar. He came to witness Mudaliyar’s relationship with Miss Adamson as well. All the respect he had for his father is now transferred to his mother who despite all these was able to maintain her calmness, being kind to everyone around her. His terrible anguish towards Mudaliyar was fuelled more by this event, for he made Balendran and Arul victims of his hypocrisy. “he felt a terrible anger well up in him against the unfairness of the world (Selvadurai, *CG* 314).

He decides to answer Mudaliyar through Seelan and makes sure to rescue Seelan from the codes of Mudaliyar as “to not let his grandfather stand in the way of his happiness (Selvadurai, *CG* 316). When Seelan was humiliated by Mudaliyar, Balendran was reminded of the distress he had faced twenty years ago when Mudaliyar came in between his and Richard’s lives and spoiled their happy life together. He decides not to allow Seelan to be a victim of his father’s hypocrisy. Though he was denied all his happiness, he vows that it won’t happen to Seelan because of his father.

Balendran thus started the conversation with Mudaliyar on behalf of Seelan. He started by reminding Mudaliyar about the wrongs that he did to Arul, their mother, Pakkiam and Pakkiam's mother. Mudaliyar justifies it with the name of love which led ultimately Balendran to ask, "The same love that drove you to London to destroy my life?" (Selvadurai, *CG* 367). Mudaliyar still thinks that he was right in doing so, by rescuing him from degradation and offering him a good life. But Balendran finally finds the strength to open up without any hesitation and shame and with much assurance that he loves Richard. He speaks about the kind of happy and content life he was denied by his father. When Mudaliyar considers it as a filthy thing, Balendran corrects him by saying, "This is how things are with me. And there isn't a day that goes by that I don't live with the pain of knowing this and not being able to do anything about it" (Selvadurai, *CG* 367).

Finally, Balendran embraces his true self unashamed, and achieves his freedom by breaking all the codes put forward by his father. The disclosure fills him with content and satisfaction. But still, he is not out of the familial pressures, his wife and son. Thus, Balendran says to Annalukshmi at one point, "It is good to know these things before one makes an irrevocable choice" (Selvadurai, *CG* 383), indicative of his own life. He has chosen a life out of his will. But he considers it selfish to leave Sonia and Lukshman.

However, Balendran still longing for Richard's love, writes a letter to him using his father's pen. He admits to Richard his fault and misconception about everything. He expresses the amount of alienation he had in life despite having his wife and son with him. Through the letter, he asks for Richard's friendship as the only one in his life "to whom nothing is a secret, to whom one can lay open the inner workings of one's heart" (Selvadurai, *CG* 385). He considers it a brave act from his

side as he has not lived his life according to his wishes and desires with a lack of courage.

Finally, though Balendran is not leaving behind his life with Sonia and Lukshman, he has gained enough confidence about himself. He had become unashamed of his sexual orientation and brave enough to seek Richard's friendship again. The novel ends on a positive note with Balendran's coming out to his father and his disclosure that eliminated his internalized homophobia to a great extent. He now carries no shame about his true self.

Amrth in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* on the other hand is presented as completely unaware of the existence of same-sex desires. On turning thirteen, Amrth observes some changes in his body which go against his mind. He finds his body and mind not in harmony with each other and Amrth develops a sense of detachment from his own body. Being completely unaware of his gay nature and sexual orientation Amrth reaches a confused state which fuelled the intensity of the haunting memories of his life's previous tragic incidents and his present life. It increased his loneliness thus escalating his sorrow for having no real family of his own.

Selvadurai indicates Amrth's gayness by stating that "Amrith had no interest in girls, and he had never really thought of marriage before" (Selvadurai, *SMS*, 36).

Amrth's teacher was the first to identify his sexual orientation and what happened to him even before him. As she comprehended what he was going through. She became more kind and gentle towards Amrth which created an uneasiness in him. By presenting the inclusive mentality of a teacher, Selvadurai is underlining the significance of having a gay-friendly atmosphere in schools.

Another incident through which Amrth's growing sense of sexual orientation is revealed is when his classmates teased Peres for a particular scene that he has to enact, where Cassio mistakenly shows some sort of love act to Iago. The way his friends teased Peres and read the particular scene creates a kind of uneasiness in Amrth. Some concern starts to haunt him that he is unable to understand.

Through the character of Lucien Lindamulage, the architect, Selvadurai portrays the mindset of Sri Lankan people in general and the government and constitutional laws that stand in opposition towards gay individuals. Lucien, an architect and friend of Aunt Bundle is a gay individual. He takes his male secretaries with him for business trips which agitates Uncle Lucky as he fears that police will arrest him. It is illegal in Sri Lanka to indulge in gay sexual activities and relations. Though Aunt Bundle tries to justify him by considering it only as rumour in reality she is concerned and frightened about Lucien and his future if he gets caught by the police.

Amrth also heard about Lucien and his secretaries from school. His classmates called him "Ponnaya". Though the word is not fully comprehensible to Amrth, he understood that it is an act of depriving the ideals of masculinity of a man and thus comparing him to a woman's femininity. However, he enjoyed the company of Lucien where he always felt relieved and comfortable.

Amrth is keen about Niresh's physical attributes and gestures. He even experiences an erection seeing Niresh's naked body that makes him embarrassed. To overcome his embarrassment, he relies on the prayer, "Hail Holy Queen" which is symbolic of the religious constraints which prohibit one from expressing his true emotions and the rigidity of religion. Though it helped him to relieve the

embarrassment or dismay, he feels a sort of shame to face Niresh thereafter for some time.

Amrth is completely unaware of the nature of his feelings that paves the way for growing shame in him. If he had the slightest knowledge about the possibility of such feelings and relations, it would not have created such an embarrassment in him.

Although Mala, his sister tries to excuse herself remembering their previous conversation, to let Amrth spend enough time with his cousin alone, he compels her to stay as he does not want to be alone with Niresh. Amrth had not yet come out of his embarrassment and shame that was there before.

However, during the night he develops some strange feelings for Niresh. He could not help watching Niresh's body and gets an erection as happened before. However, this time Amrth tries to lay close to Niresh as he moves his legs under Niresh's thighs to feel the warmth of his body. When Selvadurai writes, "Amrth's body that he seemed to be burning up with fever" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 167), he means nothing other than Amrth's increasing desire for Niresh.

However, Amrth is completely unaware of his sexual orientation. A hint of it was provided from the conversation his teacher had with one of his seniors, Wanigasekara. When Wanigasekara tries to tease Amrth, Madam strongly warns him after Amrth has left saying, "I have friends in the theatre who are that way inclined, and it's no laughing matter in this country (Selvadurai, *SMS* 224).

Madam takes such a strong stand while being in a country where same-sex desire and relations are considered a crime and a taboo. She strongly warns Wanigasekara by saying she does not like ridiculing such people. She refuses to use

the word 'gay' in her entire conversation as it could be interpreted wrongly in the context of the strong anti-gay rules that exist in the country.

Selvadurai uses the violent side of nature and its calmness to symbolize the workings of Amrth's mind. Trapped in the violent storm alone, Amrth recaps the incidents and people in his life. It is then he could grasp the meaning of "that way inclined" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 224) when he was sitting in the hut after the heavy storm. The storm is representative of his own heavy heart and his act to drawn Mala out of his jealousy towards her for being Niresh's lover. He finally attempts to identify the nature of the love he has for Niresh. He realises that "He loved Niresh in the way a boy loves a girl, or a girl loves a boy" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 234). After that he wonders whether Niresh, Selvi and Mala could recognize the nature of his love towards Niresh.

He continued to ruminate over his love for Niresh and dislike towards Mala and Selvi while sitting inside the hut. But when the wind grew more fierce coconuts began to fall off from the trees and Amrth could somehow escape one from falling on him. "He had no choice but to leave" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 235) the hut is indicative of his act of letting go of his possessiveness towards Niresh as Niresh had already found a partner in Mala. The prospect of coming out of the hut into the strong wind and storm also symbolises Amrth's decision to face the challenges life will offer to him as a gay individual.

"The sea was massive and swollen" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 237) is a personification of Amrth. When Amrth tries to escape the violent sea, he falls back a few times. It indicates the intensity of his difficulty to leave Niresh and his feelings towards him. Somehow, he overcomes it. Though Amrth could let go of his feelings for Niresh, his absence makes him a little sad and he finds other ways to engage himself.



Contrary to Amrth's earlier interest in seeing Lucien, his presence now creates an uneasiness in him. He sees himself in Lucien. Thus, others' way of referring to Lucien and his relations pop up in his mind when he sees him. He can not even withstand Lucien's casual talk with him, even regarding Kuveni. His touch shudders Amrth.

Amrth finds a reflection of himself in Lucien which scares him to the core. He realises that the words others used to describe him, now apply to him as well. "A ponnaya- that was what he was, a ponnaya" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 266). He feels helpless and eager to share this with anyone. But the question "where to turn, whom to appeal to for comfort" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 266) echoes in his mind. As an answer to this, he had a dream that night in which his mother asks him, "Now what were you so worried about son?" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 266).

The next morning, he reaches the cemetery. By kneeling before his mother's tombstone, he whispers, I am...different" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 267). Though the word he first remembered was "ponnaya" which he refuses to use understanding the negative connotation of the term. He was not ready to succumb to the societal shame imposed upon his sexual identity. However, he felt relieved by revealing his sexual identity to his mother. "Amrth felt the burden of his secret ease a little. It was all he could do for now" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 267).

Amrth decides to keep this to himself until he finds someone with whom he can share it confidently. He decides "to teach himself to be his own best friend, his confidant and guide" (Selvadurai, *SMS* 267). Amrth no longer carries any trait of shame and internalized homophobia. His waiting for coming out could be understood only in terms of the appropriateness of time.

Towards the end, like as in Lucien Amrth finds his reflection in Kuveni as well. He could connect his silence with Kuveni who is not exhibiting any signs of anxiety and depression like feather plucking. Thus, he decides to leave Kuveni as she is that he believes one should find solace in oneself, before finding it in anyone else. The novel ends on a positive note with Amrth realizing his sexual orientation and becoming perfectly content with the realization.

Selvadurai's fourth novel *Hungry Ghosts* portrays homophobia extensively. The protagonist Shivan and his partner Mili Jayasinghe are the victims of it. Being unaware of its extremity they fell into the ditches of a homophobic society.

The novel begins by describing Shivan's longing to be with Michael and it's not Mili who is introduced as Shivan's partner in the beginning. He reminisces his love with Michael and Shivan asking Michael to promise that he will not leave him. Though Michael assures to be with him forever, Shivan says "But I feel you will leave me. I deserve to be left" (Selvadurai, *HG* 16) foreshadowing their ultimate parting and the trauma of loss he still carries inside.

Shivan's mother used to call his father often the terms 'ponnaya' and 'faggot' while "railing at his weakness and incompetence" (Selvadurai, *HG* 19). Both are offensive words that are used to describe a gay individual. Being homophobic is normalized in Sri Lankan society that leads her to use these words at times of fury. This is indicative of the homophobic way gay individuals were perceived as weak and incompetent.

Selvadurai employs plays, toys, colours, and garments to indicate gender notions that exist in the world. During a fight for a scooter Shivan's sister Renu

demands it by saying that the scooter is a girl's toy, and Shivan counters it by saying "Blue and green are boys' colours, not girls" (Selvadurai, *HG* 35).

The realizing moment for Shivan about his gayness was just after the completion of reading the biography of Montgomery Clift. It was when he first came across the word 'homosexuality' through the book. He tells "I read with growing wonder about his love of men; read about where such desire led- the soliciting of sex in dark streets and the backrooms of seedy bars, his body pawed over by rough sailors" (Selvadurai, *HG* 55). He now gains clarity over his life and his sexual aspirations. Apart from that Shivan gets warned about the impending troubles that he may have to face in the future.

Thereafter, Shivan loosens the grip over his adolescent lust for boys. Earlier, being unaware of his sexual orientation Shivan was clueless about his attraction towards other boys. He starts to enjoy and admire the male physical features and even the minor sense of touch. He describes the "brushing against a classmate's hips when entering a class, the boy with whom I was sharing a textbook unconsciously pressing his legs against mine, his heady smell of sweat and Lifebuoy soap" (Selvadurai, *HG* 56). Shivan who had always hated sports in his life wanted to indulge in it only for the sake of being with his classmates. He describes his desire

to grab a boy by the waist and bring him down in a tackle, to lie on top of him, crotch pressed against his crotch or stomach or buttocks; to embrace a boy who has scored a goal, to stand with my arm around the sweaty hot shoulder of a teammate (Selvadurai, *HG* 56).

He begins to think about sexual freedom and somehow from his friends' talks understands about America as a hub of sexual adventure. He had joined the American

Center Library after reading an article on the gay movement in San Francisco and New York from a Time Magazine. The images of men together sharing love enhanced his desire to be there. He spent his time in the library collecting SAT and TOEFL study materials and information regarding American universities and scholarships. He prepared for his future to explore his sexual desires. He wanted to live without hiding his true self. He thinks that he can be handsome in America which is indicative of the lack of assurance he has about his own body in a world dominated by masculine figures. Shivan first meets Mili at the American Library and his charm attracts him.

Shivan's grandmother is portrayed as a "naked perethi" (Selvadurai, *HG* 77) who despite having everything in life, is unable to live a life of happiness, and who has done both good and bad deeds in her life.

Once Shivan reaches Canada, he notices images of male models: "the hard, gleaming bodies of men in an underwear ad" (Selvadurai, *HG* 83). Shivan's disinterest in women is hinted at when he fails to understand the attraction the salesgirl in a shop felt for him.

Finally, a way opens before him to explore his sexual orientation in Canada. He received a pamphlet with the question, "Are You Gay" (Selvadurai, *HG* 94) from a bookstore. Shivan, after inspecting if anyone is noticing him put that pamphlet into a book and bought it, he opened it only after making sure neither his mother nor sister was watching him. The pamphlet offered help to individuals who think of themselves as gay to come out and establish connections with the gay community in Canada. Though Shivan desperately needed this, the initial trouble to come out prevented him from calling the helpline number provided in the pamphlet. For him, it was like "trying to rise and do a chore when delirious with fever" (Selvadurai, *HG* 95).

However, he decided to call the number at 11 p.m. in the hope that no one would pick up his call. But contrary to his expectation someone took the phone and after some casual talks, Shivan for the first time opened up to someone that he is gay. But the magnitude of this revelation was more than enough for him to carry easily, thus he slipped into crying and sobbing. But the man whom Shivan was talking through the phone, Ronald, soothed him by sharing his own experience of coming out and elaborating reasons for not being ashamed or nervous about it, that it's completely alright to be a gay. Ronald's words offered comfort to him and they decided to meet at a cafe.

Shivan always had a curiosity and a desire to be with the gay community of Canada. Ronald's severe contempt towards them prevented shivan from making any contact with them. He told Shivan that the gay community is disgusting and that he "will fall easy prey to those vultures and make your life a piece of trash" (Selvadurai, *HG* 103).

After their meeting, they constantly talked to each other. He was invited to Ronald's home one day. There Shivan had his first sexual encounter with Ronald. Though Shivan longed for it, his internalized homophobia led him to avoid Ronald thereafter. Ronald who truly understood Shivan's inhibitions and insecurities consoled him by saying: "It's okay to be frightened, to even be repulsed by what you have done" (Selvadurai, *HG* 105). But Shivan in the fear of discovery by his family ended all his relations with Ronald.

A month later he came to know about Gay bars from the gay newspaper 'Xtra!' and visited one alone. A feeling of strangeness took hold of him as most of them came in groups and no one was paying attention to him. Only a man in his fifties

approached him and irrespective of his unattractiveness, Shivan had sex with him. Soon he understood that racial discrimination existed in the gay bars of the 1980s. He had not received love and companionship. Only sex is offered and he “attracted only the old and ugly” (Selvadurai, *HG* 106).

Shivan on the other hand avoided non-white men as he did not want them to understand the similar condition that he was trying to overcome. However, it was obvious that they were outsiders in Canadian Gay bars because of their skin colour. This realization led him to avoid attending these gay bars.

Soon after, he joined a coming-out group to overcome his loneliness. But in the group dating was not allowed as the group leaders who had set the norms were rather old social workers. Shivan could sense the same racial hierarchy of the bars that operated in the coming-out group as well. But towards the collapse of the group, Shivan came to know about the relationship between a blond boy and a black man from Trinidad. This increased his anguish and frustration at his inability to establish satisfying relationships. He thought about himself as lacking something.

Renu urged Shivan to open up about his sexual orientation to their mother. She told him that “You won’t be truly free until you do so” (Selvadurai, *HG* 114). But the same Renu changes her opinion once she withdraws her connections with her Canadian friends and joins a Sri Lankan group. She thinks that their mother’s reputation will be ruined in the conservative Sri Lankan society once Shivan’s gay nature is revealed. This made Shivan angry and calls her homophobic. Shivan’s sense of loneliness is revealed when he wants to join his mother and her friends to be with people around him.

Shivan's fear of discovery and the following familial rejection are portrayed in the novel through his repeated dreams about his mother, the same dreams repeating all over. In the first dream she walks ahead of him and can not recognize him as her son. Instead says that she has no daughter named Hema. This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it shows Shivan's concern about his lack of masculinity and secondly Shivan's fear of his mother rejecting him the same way his grandmother had rejected his mother.

In the second dream, Shivan sees his mother as a beggar in the street with full of sores on her body. Here she does not speak to him and turns away from him. Here Shivan himself offers the reason that either she has gone mad at the thought of Shivan abandoning her. However, the two dreams foreshadow the rejection he will face from his mother once he reveals his sexual orientation to her.

Finally, Shivan somehow gains enough courage to come out to his mother with the support of Renu. Her response was more severe than he had expected. She thinks being gay is something that would destroy someone's life. She tells him that gay people will have to die young, indicating that AIDS issues revolve around the gay community. She asks him, "Are you an idiot to choose to be gay when this plague is going on?" (Selvadurai, *HG* 129). Renu intervenes to convince her that it is not Shivan's choice rather this is how he is naturally. Hema becomes disgusted about her son's revelation and is not ready to listen to anything further. She said, "If I had known you would throw away your life, I would have aborted you" (Selvadurai, *HG* 130). Her frustration about her son being gay is so obvious that she continues to say, "I would have strangled you at birth" (Selvadurai, *HG* 130). This was more than enough for him for his final outburst. Shivan burning with anger tells her she did not deserve to have children because she brought misery to their lives and that it was

better for him to be strangled at birth. Thereafter their life became more troublesome. Renu became his only solace. He could thus understand the meaning behind his dreams. Contrary to his expectations, Shivan finds no desirable companion. His dreams reflect his sexual desires and longing for a partner.

When he reached Sri Lanka, he meets Mili and this time they both recognise their desire for each other. Shivan notices some kind of change in Mili. He is too eager to unite with Mili at the party and wonders whether Mili is sexually attracted to him. Their first physical encounter happens during the party inspired by Lionel Wendt's photograph of a naked young man. The love-making scenes are explained elaborately in *Hungry Ghosts*. Shivan can be himself when he is with Mili as he shares the same history and culture as him. His days with Mili are blissful as "with Mili, it felt so peaceful" (Selvadurai, *HG* 169).

Shyam Selvadurai uses symbols of plays and toys to hint at the sexual orientation of his protagonists. He also presents the possibility of gay individuals to have an interest in sports through Mili, "the cricket captain, motorbike fanatic" (Selvadurai, *HG* 170). He points out that masculinity has nothing to do with being gay. Likewise, sports, plays, colours, and toys have no relation with being gay. But Mili's friends thought of him as not fit for married life as he is a rough and tough man who will not fit in for the subtle love of women.

His days with Mili were blissful. But the lack of freedom restrained them in numerous ways. With much difficulty they controlled their sexual thrive in Shivan's home. It was a usual thing in Sri Lankan houses to keep open the windows for proper air circulation. This intrigued their privacy and personal moments.



They explored their sexual desires and companionship mostly at Sriyani's beach house. The quality time they spent there helped them to know each other which in turn also increased their confusion and tensions about the reality of their acknowledged love life in Sri Lanka where same-sex desire is a criminal offence at the time in which the novel is set.

The inquisitiveness about the partner's sexual past is present in Shivan and Mili's relationship as well. The challenge in finding the right partner in gay relationship is the initial phase of identifying and understanding others' sexual orientation. Shivan had always wondered how Mili understood Shivan's same-sex desire.

Sri Lanka and its people endured a tough time during the riots. The plight of sexual minorities was even worse. During the riots, when both Sinhalese and Tamils were trying hard to strive for their ethnic purity it was too tiresome for the queer individuals to come out. This tension affects Shivan and Mili as well. Mili thus asks, "What about us Shivan" (Selvadurai, *HG* 177). He has a clear idea about the anti-queer stance Sri Lanka has already taken. The rules are all against them and it prohibits the gay couples from having a family of their own. If they live in Sri Lanka, they will have to hide their sexual identity from the Sri Lankan homophobic society and government.

For Mili, no other choices were left as he is living in Sri Lanka. But for Shivan who is living in Canada, the doors to explore his sexuality are open before him. However, Shivan decides to choose his life with Mili, as he had felt true emotions only towards Mili, although he has shared physical relations with many men.

After the conversation they had made love in Shivan's room as if rebelling against the anti-queer Sri Lanka. But "Mili's body trembling, half with desire, half with fear" (Selvadurai, *HG* 178) is indicative of his fear of discovery and the internalized homophobia that he carries.

In the homophobic Sri Lankan society, less masculine men were often a culprit of mental, verbal and physical harassment. An instance of it could be drawn from the novel, in which a tenant when asked for rent, insults Shivan by teasing him for his "pretty hands and face" (Selvadurai, *HG* 181). The tendency to compare less masculine men to females is revealed when the tenant compares Shivan's face and hands as soft as girls.

He even crosses the limit by saying, "Get inside and I'll fuck you for the rent" (Selvadurai, *HG* 181). He calls Shivan 'ponnaya' a term used for men who are attracted to men in the Sinhalese language. When Shivan was leaving, he shouted "Aney, look a ponnaya" (Selvadurai, *HG* 182). Though the tenant does not understand Shivan's gayness, his feminine attributes trigger his masculinity to tease and insult him. Masculinity oppresses gays. The humiliation and harassment that less masculine men faced in Sri Lanka is so evident through this very incident.

Chandralal who is unaware of Shivan's sexual orientation has now developed an interest in Shivan getting married to one of his daughters. He had arranged tea time with Shivan to make them familiar to each other. Shivan on the other hand feels uncomfortable to sit with the girls. For the sake of pleasing Chandralal he acts pleasantly with the girls against his will.

Though not sure about his future life with Mili, Shivan plans to have a flat for them to live in. He even makes Sunil mama prepare legal things to transfer the

property to his name. He imagines himself and Mili living in the new house having all their privacy and sharing a blissful life there intrigued by no one.

Mili's parents noticed the change that happened to Mili with the arrival of Shivan. They expect him to be a good influence on him and tries to convince Shivan to tell Mili to resume his studies and give up his human rights work. Shivan in the hope of being together with Mili proposes a plan for Mili to study in Toronto, which his mother accepts wholeheartedly. But none of Shivan's attempts wins in making Mili agree to give up his human rights movement as it ends up in a fierce argument between the two.

Shivan's grandmother wants him to end all his relationship with Mili as she is afraid of his human rights acts. But Shivan insists on his decision to stand by Mili as friends should be there with each other in difficult times. He goes against Aacho's command by going to see Mili the very afternoon after this talk.

Mili was deeply affected by Ranjini's murder. His misery is so intense that he starts to cry at the thought of the tragedy that happened to Ranjini. When Mili says he finds nothing to believe in these days, Shivan tries to console him by letting him find solace in their love by saying, "There is us" (Selvadurai, *HG* 212). He visits Mili the next evening in the hope of weakening his distress. It helped Mili to come out of his distress finally to an extent. He agrees with Shivan that their love and togetherness are enough to maintain his happiness.

The novel discusses short-term relationships. Shivan had experienced many such relationships that lasted for a single night or merely hours which relied only on satisfying sexual thrives. Likewise, Mili also had a short-term relationship with a man

named Otto that ended all of a sudden when he got transferred to another country. However, both of them want their relationship to be unaffected by these past affairs.

The ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka were sure to make an impact in their relationship. It is revealed through Sriyani's conversation with Shivan. After learning about their affair, she arranges a meeting with Shivan to inform him about the impending disasters that they may have to face. Sriyani is most concerned about Mili's fate with his involvement in gay relations as Sri Lankan constitutional rules are against it. For Shivan, it is easy to escape the danger by leaving Sri Lanka or through seeking help from the embassy whereas Mili has to face the consequences.

According to the law one has to spend ten years in jail if found to involve in same-sex relationship. The real picture of the severity of Sri Lankan riots can be seen in the way these laws are used to suppress those who are found to be a threat to the government. Mili being a human rights worker is on the nuisance list that scares Sriyani more.

Shivan wonders at how Sriyani came to know about their affair. Thus, she reveals the fact that everyone around him knows it except his parents. She then points out Sri Lankan society's way of seeing gay individuals and relations. They usually pretend to be unaware of it. Sriyani is also aware of Mili's internalized homophobia. She says: "Mili can't accept that anyone knows, because the shame and embarrassment of it would be too much for him" (Selvadurai, *HG* 215). An instance of it could be seen in Mili not wearing the jacket Shivan gifted to him, in the fear of discovery of their relationship. However, the love towards Shivan led him to wear it despite all his fears.

Though Sriyani is progressive, she urges Shivan indirectly to give up his relationship with Mili to save their lives as she is completely aware of all the issues happening around them. She considers it her duty to warn them about everything that will follow once they are caught. This is a clear instance of how ethnic tensions affect people's relations precisely gay relations. Even the progressive and rebellious ones are proposing to take safer sides. It showcases the dilemma that gay individuals go through in the face of ethnic riots. But Shivan and Mili find solace only through their love and affection.

Once Shivan desperately wanted to be together with Mili. Mili had reluctantly suggested a place where they could pay some money and be together. Mili calls it a 'whorehouse'. Mili is nervous about people seeing him as he fears discovery. However, they both share a loving time there. But what followed this event was a truly desperate one. His grandmother who spied on them using Chandralal knew about their visit there which culminated in a heated argument between the two and Shivan's coming out to his grandmother.

His grandmother thinks of Mili whose blood is impure and corrupted by a Burgher mother as a bad influence on Shivan. When Shivan insists that it is his nature, she continues to say Mili corrupted him and that her grandson cannot act like this. He even reveals his way of living in Canada. Their fierce argument led Shivan to open up his true feelings towards Aacho that he had never loved her as his mere obedience to her was the only option left before him for the well-being of him and his family. However, this encounter with Aacho boosted his confidence. He recognized the easiness he felt after coming out to his Aacho. When he became certain about his affair with Mili he decided to pursue his career even in Sri Lanka if Mili refuses to come to Canada only for the sake of being together with Mili.

In their next meeting at Sriyani's beach house, Shivan informed Mili about everything that happened the previous day. Though Shivan's tension lessened by sharing this Mili became alarmed about the situation. He became silent for some time still under the grasp of his internalized homophobia. Everyone's knowledge about their relationship and Sriyani's insistence along with the desire to be with Shivan finally led Mili to decide to go to Canada to pursue his studies. For the next two days, they were thoroughly planning their future life with much optimism.

But what followed the next day shattered everything. Mili was kidnapped by a group of people sent by Chandralal. None of Shivan's attempts to prevent it became futile. One of them even advised Shivan to talk to people whom he thinks are responsible for this that they are just obeying the rich. Shivan who was sure about his Aacho's influence on the matter decides to meet her at the earliest. He had waited for the bus to Columbo, trying to control his breathing as he knew exactly what would happen after reporting it to the police.

Finally, he succumbed to his Aacho and Chandralal just for the sake of releasing Mili. He acted obedient to rescue Mili. His grandmother agreed to release Mili and consoled him that no harm would be done towards Mili by Chandralal. Yet confused about her promise, Shivan went to meet Chandralal in person to get assurance from him about the matter. All their moments of love kept coming back to Shivan all this time. He was imagining their time in the apartment in Toronto together. But everything went beyond his expectations, and Mili was murdered. Mili was killed for being himself and for embracing his gay identity.

The death of Mili made Shivan realise that Sri Lankan rules and environments are against gay individuals. Sriyani made him understand how his foreignness

contradicted his perceptions about Sri Lanka. He “wanted poor old Sri Lanka to love and accept the person you became in Canada. But it cannot.” (Selvadurai, *HG* 240). However, Sriyani does not blame Shivan for Mili’s death. The only mistake he has made is being blind to their love and his lack of considering the horror of the world around him.

Shivan’s grief about his inability to do anything for Mili’s death is so high that he is trapped in an emotional strife. Both Sriyani and Shivan could not complain to the police as the Sri Lankan constitutional laws are against same-sex relations and Mili is a human rights worker. Sriyani decided to report Mili’s death as an accidental drowning, as they can not bring Mili back to life and the only option left is to “protect the innocent and vulnerable first” (Selvadurai, *HG* 240), Priyasena and Mili’s parents can not accept the fact that their son is a gay individual and the public acknowledgement of it would cause more grief to them along with his death. He packed his things out of his anger and frustration. Aacho’s attempt to converse with him made it all the worse.

Chandralal and Shivan’s grandmother thinks that everything came back to normal after Mili’s death. Chandralal even goes to the extent of thinking that, his harsh acts are necessary for people who do not know what is best for them. Mili’s murder is also one such thing that leads him to say, “everything is alright now, nah? Everything is back to normal” (Selvadurai, *HG* 246). But when Shivan tells that Mili whom he loved was killed, Chandralal becomes speechless.

Shivan left Aacho’s house and stayed in a hotel for a few days until he travelled back to Canada. He felt a terrible silence within him. He was going through a state where he was unable to understand his emotions. He felt alienated in Sri Lanka

and he told his grandmother that she made him hate his country and ruined his life in Sri Lanka.

Once he reaches Canada, he indulges in cleaning. He does it so extensively leaving nothing behind. He is utmost cautious about not leaving a single stain or crumb. He remarks that “It is a long work, removing all traces of food from a kitchen” (Selvadurai, *HG* 265). His extensive cleaning is symbolic of his deliberate attempt to erase his memories of Sri Lanka.

After a long period of time Shivan met Michael and develops a love relationship. Though Shivan could not escape the memories of Mili, he was happy with his life with Michael. Thus Michael is in distress when Shivan decides to return to Sri Lanka to bring Aacho to Canada. Shivan tried to find peace in drinking, whereas Michael cried through the phone, the reason unknown, mostly out of his anger at Shivan leaving Canada. Though it was only for three weeks, both of them knew the certainty of not meeting together again.

Renu and Hema seemed more welcoming and empathetic towards Shivan on his return from Sri Lanka. But Shivan was still caught in a world of stillness. He felt communicating with them was almost impossible. His earlier coming out to Hema and the heated arguments that followed had already deteriorated the bond between them. Hema’s rejection of his gayness had led to their estrangement and she was nervous about consoling him if he broke down.

Shivan who is remorseful about Mili’s death, finds no place peaceful in Canada. He longs to be back in Sri Lanka with Mili. He feels alienated from everything, with emptiness filling his mind. He blames himself for Mili’s death and thinks of alternative ways he could have taken to rescue Mili. Unlike Mili, Shivan has



not been haunted by internalized homophobia. But this very incident provoked the rise of internalized homophobia in him. He begins to question his desires and sexual identity while becoming conscious of the homophobic stance taken by people around him. His regret of being himself and pursuing his sexual instincts is indicative of society's way of instilling homophobia in queer lives. Though Shivan and Mili had a clear view of their life, others' interventions made the life they dreamt of impossible. And it led Shivan to blame himself for all the tragic events that happened in his life. Thus, even the most pleasant things don't bring him peace. All his happiness drained out in Sri Lanka with Mili's death.

Mili continues to influence Shivan as he wishes a man whom he came across Queen Street to be a replica of Mili. Shivan followed him until the point where he united with a woman and kissed her. He longs so hard for Mili to be in his life again.

Shivan met his other sexual partner Paul in an elevator. Paul was working hard to make a sum to spend a year with his real lover Yuri. Though they share physical intimacy, right after each sexual encounter Paul will speak about Yuri with much excitement. This made Shivan furious as he thought about the blissful life they could have lived if Mili had been alive. Thus, this relation with Paul all the more increased his sense of loss about Mili.

Hema feels bad about the rudeness she exhibited when Shivan revealed his sexual orientation. She believed that she had spoiled her children's lives forever, that "rice, once cooked, cannot revert to its former state" (Selvadurai, *HG* 284). Aacho still believes Mili brought misfortune into their life and that he has ruined her relationship with Shivan. She put her bad deeds on the head of bad karma and fate.

The healing ceremony conducted at the anthropology museum using drums and other instruments is symbolic of an act offered to Shivan for his cleansing. During the process participants are told to present an object symbolizing the heaviness they carry in their life that would mark the beginning of another phase of their life cleansing whatever bad is left in their life. When Shivan is asked to join, he refuses, indicating his inability to cleanse the haunting memories of Mili and his death.

Later one day while reading a Buddhist book, he was reminded of his Aacho's story of a hawk who dropped the meat when followed and attacked by other hawks even while it was starving and wounded, just to save itself from further suffering. This opened his inner eye to choose the right path for his future as he understood that he has to leave things behind for a new start, to prevent himself from being wounded by the memories of the past. Thus, he decides to leave Toronto for Vancouver for a new start and meets Michael after three years.

They had met at a party hosted by Bill, one of his colleagues, who had an eye on him. He attended the party in a vague interest to see Bill's young partner and to understand whether there was anything he had missed.

Michael and Shivan first talked to each other about the novel Michael was reading, *Clear Light of the Day*. Their conversation in the kitchen established some sort of bond between them. Later some days after the party Michael called him obtaining Shivan's number using his contacts at the university and decided to meet at Michael's parents' house for dinner. He also informed Shivan that his relationship with Bill ended after the party.

They made love in Michael's bedroom and soon after that, Shivan was caught up with an emptiness that he had been carrying since Mili's death. He felt that

Michael was alien to him. He became desperate all of a sudden and thought to leave immediately finding some excuse. But Mili had some power to make people comfortable as he was graceful in his relations which made him stay at Mili's place that night.

Michael's parents were progressive and their treatment of Shivan was a new experience for him. The confidence with which Michael introduced Shivan to his parents lessened his tension. Unlike Shivan, Michael had not experienced familial rejection and control over his sexual orientation. The cultural differences were present in Michael. His parents were genuinely happy about their relationship.

Michael told Shivan about Bill and the kind of relation they shared. It was not love and was only to satisfy his sexual needs. By saying this he indirectly pointed out the admiration and love he felt for Shivan.

Shivan collapsed again after seeing the newspaper report on Mili's death and his obituary. But Michael's presence helped him to recover. The condition of Sri Lanka and Hema's response when he revealed his gayness made him feel better. Yet he tried to hide the story of Mili from Michael. However, Michael's assurance about his happiness for having Shivan in his life gave him some peace of mind. He thus moved to live with Michael in his apartment. Unlike the other relations he had in Canada only for the sake of satisfying his sexual drives, Michael was different. They both shared a bond that went beyond physical intimacy. Though he still retained the memories of Mili with him, Michael's presence and affection helped him to prevent to some extent those tragic memories from haunting him.

Unknowingly he used to compare Michael with Mili when Mili's memories struck him and each time this happened, he got annoyed with Michael's presence.

Two years after his relationship with Michael, he once dreamt of meeting Mili in Canada and they talked as if after having a school fight. This becomes indicative of the guilt Shivan carried about Mili's death. Mili's last stare when they kidnapped him continued to haunt Shivan.

It was common between them to have quarrels that would resolve easily. But for Shivan, it was a warning about the impending end to their relationship once Michael comes to know about his past with Mili. Along with his guilt about Mili's death, his memories and dreams about her made him guilty at the thought of cheating or discarding his love for Michael. However, they shared a healthier relationship without any sort of toxicity and Michael was good enough not to intrigue much into Shivan's family relations and Sri Lanka.

Long years of estrangement between Shivan and his mother followed by the death of Mili and life in Canada finally helped Shivan's mother to accept his sexuality. Thus, she is keen to meet Michael as her son's partner. She feels bad about not meeting Michael earlier. But Hema's arrival doomed their relationship. Hema fuelled his guilt for not being frank about the past events and people in his life to Michael. Shivan is regretful about his very act of hiding things from Michael. He blames Hema for her attempts to ruin his life again in addition to the damages she had done to him earlier.

'Perethayas' in Aacho's stories bore meaning to him only now. For him, they are the secrets he has hidden from Michael, "They stand at crossroads or even outside the walls of their own homes, these silent perethayas. They are standing at their own gates, wanting to be let in." (Selvadurai, *HG* 335). His past life is haunting him to destroy his happy present with Michael.

Finally, Shivan reveals his past to Michael and it marks the end of their relationship. Michael is shocked on hearing Shivan's story and tells him that he now wishes that Shivan had not told him this story. He felt that all the love they have shared in these two years is a mirage. The silence that caught Shivan after Mili's death now starts to fill their relationship. As a result, Shivan and Michael speak rarely and sleep in different rooms. They stop having physical relations and find other ways to satisfy sexual drives.

A feeling of betrayal began to take hold of Michael. He assumes that he is cheated in his relationship as Shivan was dishonest about his past life. It led him to gradually distance himself from Shivan by making solo trips and by bringing a kitten between them and sleeping separately. But even after a furious fight, they share a love time together by melting down all their anger and anxiety in their love.

Shivan became a complete stranger for Michael. He tells Shivan that, "You brought your grandmother and your fucking lover into my life, onto my apartment. You've soiled it with these people (Selvadurai, *HG* 341).

However, their relationship was approaching an end. Shivan's frequent dreams about Mili and the confessions of it to Michael made things worse. He used to get annoyed by the simplest things he disliked about Michael and Michael assumed that it was due to Shivan's comparison of Mili with him. This makes him furious and leads to another fight followed by reconciliation. This cycle continued and grossly impacted their relationship.

Professor Oliver fuelled an imminent end to their already damaged relationship. Though Michael is not attracted to Oliver he lets Oliver kiss him and kisses him back too. Michael also revealed to Oliver his relationship with Shivan.

However this shattered Shivan. He was trying his best to bring back the happiness they once shared. But the thought of Michael jumping into another relationship and having physical intimacy with other man was unbearable for Shivan. On the other hand, Michael sensing his agony attempts to re-establish the bond between them by cooking Shivan's favourite dishes, coming early, turning down a student party and deciding not to attend the conference with Oliver. But none of his attempts reduce Shivan's anger and agony.

Everything is ruined by Michael's decision to celebrate Satomi's birthday party at their flat. Shivan expressed his contempt towards Satomi accusing her of aiding Michael to involve in adultery. Out of his anger and frustration, he attempts to swim in the chilling waters of English Bay. His fury is elevated as Michael shouts, "put your fucking clothes on and stop ruining my life" (Selvadurai, *HG* 359). However, Michael pulls off his shoes in an attempt to bring Shivan back. Shivan on the other hand, panicked about the loss of sensation in his legs returned to the shore to Michael. Michael helps him in dressing and they make love in their apartment. But again issues pop up disrupting the peaceful flow of their lives.

Shivan's decision to go back to Sri Lanka makes Michael more frustrated and angry. His knowledge about Shivan having another world, apart from him fuels his agony. Though Michael desperately wanted Shivan to stay in Canada, Shivan was sure about his decision. For Shivan, it was a relief from a relationship as its beauty had already been lost. He believed that his absence would bring peace of mind to Michael.

Shivan thus decides to give up his relationship with Michael to save him. He does not want Michael to get affected by the trauma he carries after Mili's death and

his memories. He knows for sure about his dull days awaiting in Sri Lanka and the roller coaster of memories that are ready to take a grip on him. But Shivan makes up his mind to accept whatever comes his way as according to him nothing can be as bad compared to what happened in his past. Towards the end, however, Shivan on whom internalized homophobia tightened its grip strongly, breaks the shackles of it confidently.

Selvadurai thus presents his protagonists as venturing through all agonies and troubles in their journey to embrace their sexuality and sexual orientation thus regaining their self-worth. The narrative offers a positive hope for an inclusive world. He emphasizes the importance of being inclusive and self-acknowledging while expecting society to be inclusive. The stories also provide an insight for the mainstream society to value and recognize the rights of gay individuals and to empathise with their struggles.

Thus the analysis of these stories can be made complete by reading them along with the book *Pink Therapy* which acts as a guide for therapists in dealing with lesbian and gay individuals' issues. It details elaborately on the concept of internalized homophobia. Davies and Neal explain their use of the word internalized homophobia, irrespective of the criticism that existed among academicians regarding it. Phobia was defined as a pathological strand imposed upon gay individuals that is rightly attributed to a set of social attitudes and prejudices around sexuality and sexual orientation.

Dominic Davies clearly distinguishes internalized homophobia and institutionalized homophobia. A gay or lesbian individual's internalizing of society's homophobic attitudes is called internalized homophobia, whereas the marginalization

and discrimination by various social structures towards homosexual individuals are meant by institutionalized homophobia, which could also be called heterosexism (42).

There are various reasons for homophobia. One among them is that it threatens the very ideals put forward by patriarchy including that of the male masculinized notions. Thus, homosexual individuals are often referred to by derogatory names, calling them unmanly and effeminate. Another reason is to feel superior by oppressing other people.

Different modes of homophobic prejudices are mentioned in the text *Pink Therapy*. The prejudices are exhibited through modes of “verbal rejection, discrimination and physical attack” (Davies 43). Arjie experiences verbal rejection from his family. They frequently used to address gayness as funny, often referring to him as a ‘funny boy’. In *Cinnamon Gardens* Richard had to suffer verbal rejection from Mudaliyar who threatened to charge him with the police in the name of sodomy. Sonia’s reference to Richard and Alli as “friends of Oscar” (Selvadurai, *CG* 111) and the teasing way in which she speaks is yet another instance. Amrth’s classmates’ way of teasing gayness and Uncle Lucky’s stern rejection of the architect’s gayness can be included under verbal rejection. The horror of verbal rejection can be seen the most in *Hungry Ghosts* through the character Hema, who yells at Shivan when he discloses his sexual orientation to her, she tells him that she would have strangled him at birth if she knew about his sexual orientation before. Her hatred shatters Shivan. Similarly Aacho’s aversion towards gay relations is showcased in her opinion of Mili as a bad influence on Shivan. Another instance is when a tenant asked Shivan to have sex with him instead of the rent he had to pay to Shivan’s grandmother. He had further insulted Shivan by calling him “ponnaya”. The trauma that verbal rejection and abuse cause to



gay individuals is so high, that it gets internalized into their psyche which culminates in developing internalized homophobia.

Arjie experiences major discrimination after his cousin Tanuja's arrival during the play "Bride-Brade". She insists on not involving Shivan in the game and refuses to attribute the role of the bride to him, as he is a male. Though it seems to be a minor one, this initiates the hindrances that came his way to do whatever he likes to do. When Shivan reaches Canada he goes through discrimination by the gay community itself. He had suffered discrimination there because of his race.

Physical attack as a mode of homophobic prejudice can be visibly located in *Hungry Ghosts* through the murder of Mili for being Shivan's gay partner. His murder and the following silence of Shivan and Aacho showcases the depth in which homophobia operates in society.

Herek had identified some consistent patterns in showcasing homophobia, that people exhibiting homophobia will be mostly older, religious and less educated people with no contact with homosexual individuals and their mode of residence and place being a great influence (Davies 44). Such people will be authoritative along with carrying of an orthodox approach towards gender roles. An instance of this is Aacho from *Hungry Ghosts* as he holds partial responsibility for Mili's murder in the novel.

Theologian Thinney proposes different ways of society's oppression of gay and lesbian individuals. Using the mode of silence is one way in which people remain silent about everything related to homosexuality, avoiding open debates, television and radio programmes about same-sex desires. Then through denial of culture in which all the contributions made by gay individuals are erased from history. Another

way is to avoid open discussions about gay individuals' lives and relationships. Even homosexual individuals themselves carry this fear which leads to another way of oppressing same-sex desires. Setting particular spaces away from the mainstream place for homosexual individuals is another way of oppressing them. Negative symbolism and stereotyping are other modes in which gay men are oppressed by portraying gay men often as hypersexual and paedophiles (Davies 45).

According to Davies the three major fields where homophobia is institutionalized are: "education, leisure and employment" (47). Schools are often realms of fear and insult for gay individuals. Calling names and ridiculing are often normalized in schools. Gay-friendly schools and classrooms can have a great impact on the lives of gay individuals by affirming their sexuality and sexual identity on a positive note. In *Funny Boy* and *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, schools are often a site of importance. Amrith in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, recognised his homosexuality and its obvious repercussions from school through the conversations and jokes made by his classmates. However, having a teacher who responds positively to gayness helped him to accept his sexuality positively. Through her positive stance, she could impose a positive image of gayness on Amrith, to make him understand his true nature and help him escape the dilemma in which he was immersed. Thus, schools and teachers play an important role in fighting against the oppressive stereotyping of mainstream society and imparting knowledge about sexual diversity among students irrespective of their gender and sexuality.

In the field of leisure, sports are an area where gay individuals are marginalized to a great extent due to the prevalent ideals of male masculinity. Less masculine and feminine men are often neglected irrespective of their interests and

abilities. In the field of employment, obvious discrimination against gay individuals is highly visible.

On the other hand, all the prejudices and aversions that society showcases towards homosexual individuals are internalized by gay individuals. Their psyche becomes filled with the negative attitudes of the society about being gay which will culminate in low self-esteem and self-hatred. This is called internalized homophobia.

Sohie suggests six effective strategies to deal with internalized homophobia and accept one's sexual orientation. The first one is "cognitive restructuring" (qtd. in Davies 56). where an individual restructures all the biases and negative attitudes into a positive one thereby boosting their self-confidence and lessening internalized homophobia. 'Bibliotherapy' can be used in this case which is the exploration of gay literature. Secondly, by "avoiding a negative identity" (qtd. in Davies 57), individuals prolong the process of coming out until they create at least a neutral stand towards their identity. this will help them to silently observe with an open mind and find possibilities for exploring their sexual orientation after coming out. The third strategy is "adopting an identity label" (qtd. in Davies 57) by which they can establish healthy relations by socializing with their community of people of the same interests. The fourth one is "self-disclosure" (qtd. in Davies 57), or coming out which is the final and the most significant stage in reducing one's internalized homophobia. Another strategy is "meeting other lesbian, gay and bisexual people" (qtd. in Davies 58) that will increase the extent of exploring the nature of gayness thereby leading them to shatter and overcome all stereotypes associated with same-sex desire. The final one is the "habituation to homosexuality" (qtd. in Davies 58) where everything occurs normal to gay individuals as their sexuality no longer a predicament or confused one, and reach a state to challenge internalized homophobia.

An instance of internalized homophobia is the attempt to be perfect in every roles. It can be a perfect son, perfect father or a perfect husband. Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* is an example of it. He tries to overcome the denial and rejection from his father Mudaliyar who discovers his homosexuality by trying to be a dutiful son who obeys his father blindly. This paves the way for the loss of his own identity.

The different ways of internalized homophobia are studied by the Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective. Firstly, through the individual's "fear of discovery" (qtd. in Davies 59) which is an obvious example of internalized homophobia where gay men fear rejection and denial from family, friends and society. The second one is the "discomfort with obvious lesbians and gays" (qtd. in Davies 59), where the openness of other gay individuals scares those who are closeted, for the reason being the discovery of their sexual orientation by others. Thirdly, "rejection and denigration of all heterosexuals" (qtd. in Davies 62), in which all the aggression and repulsion shown towards homosexual individuals are reversed towards heterosexual individuals who form part of the mainstream society. another one is "feeling superior to heterosexuals" (qtd. in Davies 62), another way of the previous example. Then the "belief that lesbian and gay men are not different from heterosexuals" (qtd. in Davies 62), is the denial of differentness. Finally, "short-term relationships" (qtd. in Davies 63), to avoid the risks of committing to a lover and the social pressures it creates. Thereby involving only short-term and secret relationships.

According to Margolies et al, internalized homophobia consists of two fears: erotophobia and Xenophobia (Davies 64). Erotophobia is the "fear of one's sexuality (Davies 64) and Xenophobia can be defined as "discomfort with strangeness" (Davies 64). Xenophobia arises from the denial and rejection from family, exclusively of parents and friends. Balendran could be termed as suffering from xenophobia which is

visible at many points in the novel. Erotophobia is present in all protagonists in the beginning as part of internalized homophobia which faded over time.

The four ways of dealing with homophobia suggested by Carmen de Monteflores are assimilation, confrontation, ghettoization and specialization. In the first mode, gay individuals are assimilated into the dominant group and they exhibit themselves as heterosexual individuals for easy survival. But here the feelings of regret, guilt, and self-doubt will be the outcome. Another way is confrontation which is a form of coming out where gay men confront themselves against the wrong representation of gay individuals. Finding a group of gay men and socializing with them is a way to deal with homophobia. Another way is to consider themselves as special, developing a positive stand about their sexuality (Davies 56).

However, the feelings of shame and guilt are often developed within gay individuals due to the lack of knowledge about varied sexualities and sexual orientations. Sexual education from the school level and introducing queer-friendly literature to students can help the society to be inclusive. It would help individuals to understand their sexual orientation and embrace it confidently without carrying any shame. Thus, Selvadurai's fiction will always be relevant as it can survive all time for its elaborate and intrinsic unfolding of the lives of gay individuals in greater depth.



## Chapter Three

### **Ethnic Identity and Conflicts: Aspects and Dimensions**

Ethnicity, on a positive note, denotes the diversity within a society. But while it creates a sense of belonging, it also fosters a sense of alienation from another group. Ethnicity could be reflected in one's linguistic factors, food habits, physical traits, thoughts and skills acquired traditionally. But the significance of all these in an era of migration is uncertain and disputable where people's interaction levels are highly advanced and sophisticated. The intermingling with other groups brings about mixed ethnicities. Thus, sticking to the purest forms of ethnicity is impractical.

The dogma of one's ethnicity as superior to others is a toxic state of mind. Political and state interventions enhance this precise notion of supremacy that can have myriad disadvantages on a personal and social level. Often this may bring forth deleterious consequences in the social life of people. Rather, the awareness of the fact that being born to a particular ethnic or racial group, or a particular caste and social class can not be related to greatness is quintessential in leading a contented and peaceful life.

Yet, the concept of preserving one's cultural values is preferable in many ways. Developing a deep knowledge about one's roots, the historical changes that occurred, and the cultural values it holds can all shed light on a better understanding of our culture.

The problem arises when a society's population of each ethnic group is not uniformly proportioned as there will be an existence of a majority and minority divide. The attempt to impose one group's cultural values, language and traditions

into the minority ethnic group culminates in hostilities and insecurities among them that will pave the way for long-term animosities among different ethnic groups.

The impact of animosity between groups is reflected on the quality of individuals' personal, familial and social lives. Instances were visible in Selvadurai's works including Radha's despondency after the revelation of her relationship with Anil who is a Sinhalese and Arjie's added stress over Shehan's Sinhalese identity along with his gayness are examples of hatred. Mili's foreign ancestry is perceived by Arjie's grandmother as possessing a tainted influence on Arjie because of her ardent belief in Sinhalese ethnicity and culture. Mili was killed not just for being gay but also because of the fact that he was a human rights activist. Mudaliyar and political leaders opposed universal franchise as it would extend voting rights to low-class people.

Therefore, a proper balance between embracing the cultural values of a particular ethnic group and keeping an open, welcoming, and respectful attitude towards other ethnic groups is essential for leading a peaceful life. The concept of syncretism plays a major role here, as it is the juxtaposition of divergent strands of sentiments and philosophies. Selvadurai's rendering of ethnic issues in the works follows the very concept. His mixed ethnicity prompts him to conduct such an approach and manner of telling the stories.

The distinction between the terms ethnicity and ethnic group elucidates the plight of individuals who unwillingly fall victim to ethnic riots and conflicts. The objective attributes of an ethnic group are independent of any personal inclination. The ethnic group being a "social group based on ancestry, culture, and national origin" (Yang 40) defines its attributes much earlier irrespective of personal interests. During times of ethnic conflicts, even those who are not expressing any association



with the ethnic group, but are born into a particular ethnic group are dragged into it unwillingly.

According to the Primordialist school of thought, Philip Q Yang says, “Ethnicity is a deeply rooted, primal bond to one’s ancestral bloodline” (42). The argument sounds plausible when examining the relationship between Radha Aunty and Anil when he asks her that whether will she allow her children to marry a Sinhalese as she answers ‘no’, by emphasizing, that although her principles would allow her to do so. Here, the underlying affinity of her unconscious roots to her ethnic identity surfaces.

The ghastliness of the ethnic terrorization that she has encountered turned her tongue-tied and apathetic towards her relationship with Anil who is a Sinhalese. Her silence can be interpreted in myriad ways. The atrocity she is confronted by the Sinhalese mob that may have created an indirect disdain towards Anil. It could have made her ponder about her grandfather who was being killed by Sinhalese. She may have comprehended the unfeasibility of her peaceful relationship with a Sinhalese amidst such ethnic tensions around her. It could have intimidated her irrespective of her boldness and courage. Selvadurai leaves space for interpretation for the readers.

According to the Constructionist school of thought, Ethnicity is constructed based on social conditions, as opposed to the primordialist analysis of ethnicity which is fixed on ancestral roots. Since ethnicity is socially constructed rather than being evolved naturally, ethnic identity is perceived as capable of changing and retaining fluid characteristics from a constructionist point of view. Thus, William Yancey et.al “viewed ethnicity as an “emergent phenomenon” created by structural conditions” (Yang 44). Another historian, Jonathan Sarna’s “theory of ethnicization” proposed

two conditions, 'ascription' and 'adversity' for the formation of ethnicity. (Yang 45) Former including the allotting of individuals to a particular group by those who don't belong to the group. While the latter can be present in various forms such as favouritism, intolerance, stigmatization, hatred, antagonism and animosity. Thus, constructionist school centres on the creative aspect of ethnicity.

The third one, the Instrumentalist school of thought, as its name indicates, stresses the utilization of ethnicity as a tool or instrument for material benefits, the benefits procuring from all realms of one's life, social, political, territorial, and even religious terrains. Thus, it is seen as a choice by individuals to accept or regard an ethnic identity by forecasting the rewards and the loss it offers to them. However, choosing ethnicity is not something someone can undertake uninhibitedly as it has to satisfy some ancestral conditions. Apart from the materialistic benefits, some people opt for a particular ethnicity for other reasons as well.

Jonathan Sarna's "theory of ethnicization" is of utmost importance in explaining the ethnic conflicts of Sri Lanka. The two factors that he put forward as the reason for ethnic group and identity development are 'adversity' and 'ascription' (Yang 45). By adversity, he meant any kind of discrimination, prejudice, hostility and hardship. The policies promoted by the Sri Lankan government in favor of Sinhalese created a state of adversity for Tamil minorities that gave rise to organizations such as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Making Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka had a greater impact in all fields especially in the education and government job sector which created unrest among the Tamil Minorities. Along with that changing the name of the country from Ceylon to Sri Lanka which has of Buddhist origins was considered by Tamils as a slap on their pride and increased their sense of marginalization.

According to many historians Ceylon's independence from the United Kingdom in 1948 also influenced the Sri Lankan Civil War. Thereafter, the Sinhala and Tamil divide became stronger as the Sinhalese government started taking partial stances by declaring Sinhala as the official language of the nation. Thus disenfranchises Tamil plantation workers thus changing the nation's name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka, which came from Sinhalese origin, etc. In essence, everything that is part of Sinhalese culture was promoted along with Tamil culture being marginalized. Nevertheless, both Sinhalese and Tamils were harmed enormously during the period of conflicts, riots and civil war. A large minority population migrated and exiled to different countries as refugees lost everything they had as migrants.

Shyam Selvadurai portrays such scenarios of migration through his works *Funny Boy* and *Hungry Ghosts* and the ethnic, class, and caste biases through the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*.

The first instance of ethnic and racial difference in *Funny Boy* is developed through a conversation between the protagonist Arjie Chelvaratnam and his mother regarding the climax of the movie, *The King and I*. Arjie wants to know that whether the English governess will marry the king or not to which mother answers no, by saying that in earlier times people will not marry outside their race. The innocence and curiosity of a child pushes Arjie to ask about the possibility of their marriage in the current situation which is all the more complicated as his mother answers that the situation in Sri Lanka is even worse at the time of their living where ongoing animosity and hatred are present in the name of ethnicity. Thus, in a harsh tone as if to stop the conversation, she says that "Because most people marry their own kind"

(Selvadurai, *FB* 54). Towards the end, it is revealed that this very sentence foreshadows everything that is about to happen in the novel.

The whole of the ethnic differences and tensions of Sri Lanka in the 1980's is unravelled to the readers from the innocence of a child and his constant engagements through conversations with others and himself. The hostility and hatred that people carry are revealed through the relationship of Radha and Anil. Radha, after her studies in England returns to Sri Lanka, and is engaged to a man named Ranjan. During her days in Sri Lanka, she had joined a drama club where she happened to meet Anil, a Sinhalese. Though earlier she had no attraction towards him she fell in love with him gradually.

Anil's act of dropping Radha at her home in his car fueled Ammachi's anger towards all Sinhalese. She comments about the impropriety of Sinhalese by saying that only Sinhalese will "offer an unmarried girl a lift" (Selvadurai, *FB* 58). Ammachi who sticks to the conservative ideologies is concerned about Nagendra's knowing about Radha roaming around with a Sinhalese boy.

After the conversation, the narrator discusses the thoughts of a child who does not know the existing ethnic tensions. The child thinks of his friends at school, his Sinhala class and his parents' Sinhala friends and the relationship they share. Thus the restrictions imposed upon Radha to stay away from a Sinhalese friend becomes incomprehensible to Arjie. Until this very point, he had not thought anything about their ethnicity, but being involved in an adult group made him think about it. Thus Selvadurai portrays the way tensions enter into the world of children through the unconscious acts done by their families.

He then comes across the term 'racist' when Radha refers to Janaki about Ammachi. Though he could not understand the meaning of the word, he could sense that something was not right with the word. Then he gets a glimpse of the past events including his great grandfather who was brutally wounded and killed by Sinhalese that reveals the reason behind Ammachi's anger towards everyone who belongs to the Sinhalese community. The way Janaki reminded the corpse that "it was as if someone had taken the lid of a tin can and cut pieces out of him" (Selvadurai, *FB* 59) startled Arjie.

Unable to comprehend the meaning of the word 'racist' and the story behind Janaki's description, he approaches his father to unravel the unknown tales. When his father explained that his grandfather was killed for being a Tamil, Arjie could not make sense of it, and he questions by asking that why nobody was killing them for being Tamil. He was not satisfied by his father's reasoning as if it was a matter of the past, and the introduction of a single law culminated in the riots. It is highly perceptible that the whole narration progresses through the innocent perspective of a child.

However he begins to be attentive to people's conversations thereafter which unveiled to him that ethnic riots are not a thing of the past and they still existed in various forms and degrees. The hostility and hatred that people carried in their manners and language were enough to reveal it to even an innocent child.

Through the adult world, Arjie perceived his knowledge regarding the Tamil-Sinhala conflicts, Tamil tigers, and their insistence on a separate Tamil state. Arjie was now able to understand the quarrel between his father and grandmother. He was able to assume the reason for her opposition to Arjie being admitted in a Sinhalese school

as she considers it to be an act of betraying the Tamils. But his father's practical concern regarding the significance of learning the Sinhala language as "the real language of the future" (Selvadurai, *FB* 61) results in Arjie joining a Sinhalese school. He now ruminates over the mildest form of hatred that existed in the schools, even during their activities like cricket due to the unhealthy competition. Through all these Arjie could well perceive the intensity of the underlying tensions that persisted during the time.

He could fathom the magnitude of these ethnic differences during the conversation between Radha Aunty and Anil's father. Radha apologizes for Ammachi's act of warning Anil's father regarding Anil and Radha's friendship. The hostile attitude showcased through Anil's father's words irritates Anil and his mother. His father made clear without any hesitation about his reluctance of Anil marrying a Tamil woman. He said that, "High-country Sinhalese, we are. Last thing we also want is for our son to marry a non-Sinhalese" (Selvadurai, *FB* 66). He ended the conversation with a warning to Radha that "Be careful. We Sinhalese are losing patience with you Tamils and your arrogance" (Selvadurai, *FB* 66). The whole of the conversation was witnessed by Arjie who is a boy of nine years old. Though he is not mature enough to comprehend the escalating tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese, he could discern the severity of it to some extent.

It gets revealed all the more with Radha's frankness in admitting to Anil about her unreadiness to marry a Sinhalese, though she does not carry anti-Sinhalese prejudice. She says that she will allow her child to marry a non-Sinhalese, but her unreadiness to wed herself to a Sinhalese man suggests Radha's fear of society and her lack of courage to withstand the following issues despite her ideologies and principles. This was made clear when Radha broke into tears after seeing Mala Aunty

and Kantha Aunty at the restaurant while she was sitting with Anil. The amount of fear that it created in Radha was enough to convey the intensity of the ethnic hatred that existed in her family. Even having a casual conversation, taking a lift from them, and eating at a restaurant was enough to get bullied. Even a well-educated woman, that too from outside of Sri Lanka can not withstand the future consequences following it. Radha Aunty's behaviour caused confusion in Arjie to whom Radha Aunty was the epitome of freedom, liberation, inclusiveness, and openness.

The novel depicts how marriage, divorce, and affairs act as restrictive forces of patriarchy in the Sri Lankan society. Along with the ethnic hatred that most of her family members carry, her concern is also around her status as an engaged woman. She thus says to Anil that it was wrong for them to sit together as she is "practically married" (Selvadurai, *FB* 73). Although the truth is that she was not even properly engaged to Rajan both the families were initially happy with the proposal. The rigidity of the familial constraints and family's influence on the young adults prohibits any sort of freedom that they should truly possess at least regarding their personal life and choices. The novel portrays the interference of family in all matters of the individuals.

Thus, even when Anil is optimistic about marrying Radha and developing a romantic relationship, she is scared of every aspect of it including her own family, Anil's father, the community and the whole society frightens her despite her boldness. At the same time, she also wishes to have Anil as her partner which is revealed to him through her silence.

However, the impossibility of their relationship in such a hostile world is explained to her by Mala Aunty, who believes that individuals are nothing without their families. Mala attempts to negate Radha's opinion that "If two people love each

other, the rest is unimportant” (Selvadurai, *FB* 78) Mala explains the situation in Sri Lanka and Tamil Tigers’ insistence for a separate state and the consequent troubles that people in mixed marriages will have to go through if the separation takes place.

Aunt Doris who married a man by opposing her family also warns Radha about her relationship with Anil. Though she had a good relationship and a husband who was loving and kind, she felt lonely when he died. After her marriage with Paskaran, her family migrated to England without informing her and not providing their address in England. She was not even aware about her mother’s death. Her father forbade her mother and sister from keeping any contact with Doris. Finally, after his death her sisters contacted her, but years of non-communication affected their relationship tremendously. Although her sisters invited Doris to come and stay with them, Doris never wanted to leave Sri Lanka, which is her home. She thought that she was too old to start her life all over again there.

Thus, her story of loneliness forewarns Radha about her impending future if she marries Anil against her family’s consent. The thought of not seeing Radha Aunty for a lifetime saddens Arjie. However Radha made up her mind to live with Anil and planned to elope with him once she returned from Jaffna. Their love seemed to blur all the boundaries set up by ethnic differences.

But everything turned upside down with the train journey that Radha had from Jaffna to Colombo. She was attacked by a group of people, as ethnic troubles were going on in Jaffna. All the Tamils on the train were attacked by the Sinhala mob. The tense situation was aggravated more by Anil’s inquiry about the matter to Radha’s family members. Everyone was so angry towards him as she was attacked by the Sinhala people.



However this very incident marked the rise of a child's fear and anxiety on the ethnic conflicts that happened around him. Arjie, who had not surmised the terror of it until this very point, began to ruminate over the past incident he heard and understood from the adult world regarding early ethnic riots and their aftereffects. He worries that whether they all have to endure the same fate as his great-grandfather.

Radha reached home in a traumatic state. The bruise on her head and swollen cheeks were nothing in comparison with the mental shock that it had created. She became silent thereafter. Two men assaulted her using a stick and belt publicly on a train creating trauma in her. She refused to talk with anyone.

However when Anil arrived to meet her she wants to talk but hears others threatening and questioning him by asking, "Haven't you people done enough" (Selvadurai, *FB* 91) She stops behind the door crying. The traumatic experience took back all the courage and boldness she had endured all through her life. Her mental strength was shattered to its maximum with the incident. The door between Radha and Anil metaphorically suggests ethnic differences that act as barriers and hindrances between people to separate them. It, therefore, acts as a tool of the patriarchy.

Radha's character changed tremendously after experiencing the horror of the attack. The violence that she had to experience made her rude towards everyone and everything around her. Her nights became sleep-deprived and she wandered in the middle of the night in the house looking outside. Arjie was hurt more than anyone by this change for whom Radha was the only solace and company. It was Arjie who discerned the change first, the newfound seriousness and harshness on her face.

The change ultimately led to her break up with Anil. The haunting memory of the attack manifested all the more strongly when Anil pushed Radha to the ground as

part of their drama act. She got angry and on the same day, their relationship came to an end. Radha at this point recognizes the meaning behind Mala's advice and Arjie too realizes that love comics are far away from the real world, Arjie says, "I had believed in them; believed that if two people loved each other everything was possible. Now I knew that was not so." (Selvadurai, *FB* 100).

This realization was further reinforced by Nalini and Daryl's relationship. Although initially Arjie could understand the friendship between them, later on he discerns the depth of their relationship and how the ethnic differences separated Nalini and Daryl. Thus, the novel offers an in-depth analysis of how ethnic conflicts affect relationships.

Daryl belonged to the Burgher community. Most of the Burgher people left Sri Lanka when Sinhala was made the official language of the country as they knew only English. They were of Dutch ancestry. Arjie's comment that "If they had married Sri Lankans, they could have been real Sri Lankans, no?" (Selvadurai, *FB* 116) made Daryl sadder. The look Daryl and Nalini shared after explaining the rigidity of familial constraints in matters related to ethnic difference and marriage revealed to readers the relationship that they both shared.

Daryl came to Sri Lanka again to study the torture the Sri Lankan government did to oppress people and their opinions that go against the government. However, Hema and Daryl's opinions vary regarding Tamil Tigers. Though being a Tamil, Hema opposes their activities whereas Daryl says that he knows well the reason why young men join the group.

Nalini thinks of the government as a good one. She even supports the Prevention of Terrorism Act which is "a new law that allowed the police and the army

to arrest anybody they thought might be a terrorist without something called a warrant” (Selvadurai, *FB* 110). Daryl understands the law as “a tool for state terrorism” (Selvadurai, *FB* 110). Hema fails to understand even its worst implications.

But Daryl was so keen on these issues that led him to indulge in matters related to ethnic conflicts. Thus, he leaves for Jaffna even by risking his own life by saying that “People are being tortured and killed even as we sit in all this opulence” (Selvadurai, *FB* 117). Though Daryl is not sure about his return, his commitment to Sri Lanka and his humanity led him to leave his love behind. This is an instance where ethnic issues culminate in breaking people’s love affairs that stand as a hindrance. Their final conversation revealed to Arjie the sort of relationship that existed between Daryl and his mother. It shudders him. He thinks of the collapse of a familiar family and the revealing of the father’s extramarital affair with a neighbour that culminated in his elopement with her. Arjie remembers how his classmate and his mother were constantly teased by others for the same reason. However his fear never became a reality. Daryl did not return from Jaffna as he was killed.

Daryl went to Jaffna to collect evidence of police torture and disappearances as he is working as a journalist in Australia along with his concern for minority struggles. Nalini’s revelation of suspicion regarding his missing leads police to arrest Daryl’s servant in the name of ransacking. All of Nalini’s attempts to rescue him had failed.

A.S.P. Weerasinghe employs different strategies to normalize Daryl’s death. Firstly, he arrests Daryl’s servant by blaming him for robbing certain things from his room. Secondly, he threatens Nalini indirectly by informing her about his friendship with her husband and thereby attempts to silence her regarding Daryl’s death. He may

have understood the sort of relationship that existed between Nalini and Daryl which he now uses to silence Nalini. Thus, there was nothing left for them to act while hearing about finding Daryl's dead body.

Arjie wonders at the odd sensation he feels. The dread and shock of the incident and the reality of it had not entered into his reality. Thus, Arjie says that "I was aware that it was a significant thing, a momentous event in my life even, but, like a newspaper report on an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, it seemed something that happened outside my reality, my world" (Selvadurai, *FB* 136).

Nalini after her initial shock finally ends up in the decision to do something about Daryl's murder as she was sure that he was not drowned to death. The horrible state of his dead body haunts her as she could recognize Daryl's body by seeing his wallet only. Now the whole of the matters Daryl informed Nalini earlier seemed true to her which led her to say, "Of course they have witnesses who saw him go swimming. They have witnesses for everything these days" (Selvadurai, *FB* 137). She was well assured that Daryl was murdered and whoever did that threw his body into the sea and arranged witnesses for that.

Right after the incident, the readers are made to feel that Daryl is speaking through Nalini for she now conceives the reality of the ruling government completely. She now repeats what Daryl has said and even fills whatever he has left to speak. She now questions the violation of the democracy that occurs in the country and finds it impossible to seek help from anyone as those who are bound to serve people themselves are acting as offenders. She wonders at her stupidity in believing in this government earlier and her arguments with Daryl by supporting the present government as better than the previous one.

However Neliya's response to Nalini was a cold one regarding Nalini's attempts to seek justice for Daryl. Though she likes Daryl, Neliya is concerned about Nalini's relationship with Daryl as she has a family now to think about. Thus, she has warned Nalini about resuming her relationship with Daryl. His death had caused her pain, but she thinks more practically as she knows that none of their attempts would bring justice to Daryl or bring him back to life. On the other hand, in such a world, Nalini's attempts will only cause harm to her family.

However, she then meets Q.C. Appadurai, her family friend who practiced as a civil rights lawyer in her attempt to find justice for Daryl. But the response she received was not what she had expected. He seemed to be scared about the ruling government and politicians who are much more crooked than those of his times that led him to say that he would no longer be a civil rights lawyer in the current scenario. He says her to follow the three monkeys' concept of being silent about everything and informs her to check whether her family is under government surveillance by looking for a ticking sound while calling or receiving somebody's call to check whether their phone is being tapped. Appadurai's suspicion was right that they could hear the sound while using the phone.

Nalini was still not ready to step back from her endeavour. As a final attempt, she drives to the village of Somaratne, the servant boy who helped Daryl. This incident showcased the plight of poor people in the country in all its horrible state. Somaratne's mother who was burning with anger tells her that she had two sons, "The first was killed by the army during the 1971 insurrection. Now my second son comes home with his right arm paralyzed. Do you want to paralyze his other arm, too, or make him lose an eye?" (Selvadurai, *FB* 148). Their anger towards them was so high

that they even threw stones at a child. They somehow escaped from there but the fright of the incident led Arjie to shout at Nalini blaming her for her selfishness.

The incident finally altered her mind that led her to be silent about her suspicions regarding Daryl's death to his colleague. Arjie could now recognize the impact of his yelling words that fills him with terrible sadness. The memory of Daryl began to hit Arjie when he saw the books Daryl had offered him. When he opened the book, he came across the chapter "Pleasant Meadows" which presented a just world. He states that "The world the characters lived in, where good was rewarded and evil punished, seemed suddenly false to me" (Selvadurai, *FB* 153). The world he lives in has become incomprehensible to him. He wonders at the way everything is getting back to normal. But this was all left for them in such a scrutinized world.

The novel explains the role of ethnic riots in causing pain and suffering to people. The novel discusses the story of Radha Aunty who lost her love simply because her lover was a Sinhalese man. The humiliation that she faced on the train altered her mind to end their relationship though she loved him hard. Secondly the novel portrays Daryl and how his loss was way more intense. Selvadurai explains the power of ethnic differences to separate people thus causing suffering and agony in people's lives is so strong.

Another significant character through whom ethnicity is explained is Jegan Parameswaran, son of Chelvaratnam's childhood friend. As part of his involvement as a relief worker for the Gandhian movement, Jegan's mother who is concerned about his safety wanted him to move from there. Members of the Gandhian movement were often assumed to be in league with the Tigers. In a Letter to George Park, MP from

Lindsay Stewart, Refugee Coordinator, Amnesty International British Section in 1984 states that

The Sri Lankan government suspected the Movement of harbouring Tamil militants and quotes the Sri Lanka researcher at AI's International Secretariat as claiming that members of the Gandhian Movement had been subject to continual harassment and ill-treatment three years before the date of the letter (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada)

The leader of the Gandhian movement was Dr. Rajasunderam, a medical practitioner who started the movement in Vavuniya. "The object of Gandhian was to rehabilitate victims of the 1977 violence in the North-East" (Hoole).

Though Jegan is his friend's son, Chelvaratnam is confused about helping him because of his involvement with the Gandhian movement. He remembers the news reports of police arresting Gandhian workers. Chelvaratnam is less concerned about everything that is going on around him and sticks to a safer side in terms of his personal and professional life. Thus his decision to dig deeper into Jegan's background is indicative of the caution that people have to endure even when dealing with close and kin people. However, the moment Chelvaratnam saw Jegan, his exact resemblance with Parameswaran made him remember Parameswaran. Chelvaratnam made up his mind to keep him with them. He even forbade Nalini from inquiring about the Gandhian people's connection with Tamil tigers.

However, a glimpse of Jegan's temperament was showcased through his courageous response to the government act of posting pictures of a lamp on every corner of the country. When a man started pasting the posters on the walls of

Chelvaratnam's home, he began to oppose it which was supported by Jegan finally ending up with Jegan hitting him and tearing off the poster. The Sinhalese government attempts to avoid elections so that they can remain in power. People are expected to put a tick on the lamp sign, indicative of their interest for the present government to continue in power, or else put a tick on the pot sign in the poster to display their disinterest in the same.

Most of the people were infuriated about this government act. Hema, who understood the crookedness of the government officials and policemen through her own life reacts by saying, "Is this what they call democracy?" (Selvadurai, *FB* 167). This is an instance of the fascist attitudes a ruling government displays which led Hema and others to question the government's hypocritical emphasis on democracy. Even the posters are considered as a government property and pasting it on private walls is considered as the right of the government without taking into account the public opinion especially those of the minority voices.

The opinions of their neighbours, Perera Aunty and Mrs Bandara reflect the dislike they all hold for the government's fascist attitude. Perera Aunty appreciates Jegan for his brave act and Mrs Bandara explains another incident of the same. The way this government man assaulted a woman when she protested. All these shed light on how a fascist government silences the voices of its people by whatever means possible. However, Chelvaratnam advises Jegan about the significance of discreetness in a world of chaos, amidst such ethnic tensions.

Another similar incident happened at Jegan's workplace, at Chelvaratnam's hotel, where Jegan was forbidden to correct the other Sinhalese staff. He was told to inform his suggestions to their Sinhalese manager who will pass it on to other staff as



his concerns. Chelvaratnam's caution not to inflate any sort of conflicts between his staff regarding the Tamil-Sinhala tensions spreading all over the country led him to make such an order to his manager. He had already discerned the resentment many of the Sinhala staff have in positioning Jegan in the highest rank. Irrespective of his abilities, they think of his influence on Chelvaratnam as being a Tamilian. This made Chelvaratnam careful to avoid any conflicts between Jegan and other Sinhalese staff.

The way Chelvaratnam forewarns Jegan in many scenarios is indicative of the precaution and carefulness people are bound to keep amidst such a tense time. The constant fear of attack, conflicts, and torture scares people in all matters irrespective of their wealth and familial status. Being a minority ethnic group in a country of prevailing ethnic tensions is the scariest thing, and being a Sinhalese is also not far better where Tamil tigers are violently reacting to every incident of the government's fascist acts.

The information passed down to Jegan regarding the Banduaratne Mudalali, his anti-Tamil attitude, and the way he had murdered Tamils and destroyed their properties using his chaps made him silent. Keeping a Sinhalese manager and some Sinhalese staff helped Chelvaratnam protect his hotel from aggressors during the riots. The novel presents the plight of minorities to live a life of constant fear and instability. Chelvaratnam says:

As a Tamil, you have to learn how to play the game. Play it right and you can do well for yourself. The trick is not to make yourself conspicuous. Go around quietly, make your money, and don't step on anyone's toes." (Selvadurai, *FB* 173).

Another incident in which Arjie is amused regarding his father is knowing about Chelvaratnam's early love affair with an English girl during his studies in England. She was a staff at the university cafeteria, belonging to a working-class background. The seriousness which he held about their relationship subsided once he reached Sri Lanka. Upon reaching there, he began to ruminate over the class and racial differences that existed between them. He thinks, "low class was low class whether it was English or Sri Lankan" (Selvadurai, *FB* 164). The impossibility of inter-racial-ethnic relations for someone who was brought up amidst the ethnic tensions of Sri Lanka is underlined more evidently through this episode.

Jegan only reveals to Arjie his involvement with the Tigers. He was into it in his initial involvement with the Gandhian movement. Later the torture of one of his closest friends and his following migration to Canada as a refugee led Jegan into joining Tigers. But he could not stick to their fascist attitudes, the murder of a social worker when he had expressed his opinion added more to Jegan's disagreement with the Tigers. Apart from that he realized the threat Tigers create in their life and the meaninglessness of being in it. Thus, he says,

On the other hand, what is the alternative? We cannot live like this under constant threat from Sinhalese, always second-class citizens in our own country. As my father used to say, 'It's small choices of rotten apples'. Here you can be killed by the Sinhalese and there you can be killed by the police or the Tigers (Selvadurai, *HG* 176).

Selvadurai provides glimpses of facts related to Tamil tigers and the way they operate. He also mentions briefly the Tigers training camp in South India.

The novel develops in such a way that all characters are aware of the intensity of ethnic tensions and fascist attitudes of the government and Tigers through their own experiences. But it is through Arjie that the whole of the ethnic differences and tensions are revealed. He is the axis around which everyone's lives rotate. All these characters are connected and deeply attached to him in one or another way. Thus, through him everyone's feelings and emotions over the loss of people in their life are understandable.

Radha Aunty to whom he is very attached and the blooming of her affair with Anil was well perceived by Arjie, which made him fathom the depth of their sadness in losing each other, irrespective of their intense love for each other. He has witnessed the developing stage of their love affair and has often played a significant role in it. The changes that occurred to Radha after the attack she had to face during the train journey affected Arjie the most, for whom Radha was the only consolation or solace. She was the only one in their family who stood with him knowing about his true self, the only solace and his blissful company during the most difficult days of his life. But seeing Radha Aunty in such a depressed state saddens him. Her engagement with Rajan Nagendra hurts him more than anyone else. Because only he knows what she had lost seeing straight through her eyes as part of this ethnic difference.

Secondly, Arjie witnesses the loss ethnic riots caused in people's lives through his mother. The two phases of Nalini's loss of Daryl are presented in the novel. Daryl is a Burgher, an ethnic group of Sri Lanka. Sir Richard Ottley, the Chief Justice of Ceylon defined the term Burger as

The name Burgher belongs to the descendants of the Dutch, Portuguese and other Europeans born in Ceylon, and the right to distinction must

not be decided by the Country from which their father or paternal ancestor came. So whatever the number of generations through which the family has passed in this Island, if the male ancestors were Dutch, Portuguese and or other Europeans, whoever may have been the female parents, if the parents were married, the offspring would be Burgher. If the parents were not married, the country of the mother would decide the question (qtd. in Masakkara 705).

Nalini and Daryl were in love with each other. But due to their ethnic differences, their families separated them. Nalini was forced to marry Chelvaratnam, and Daryl migrated to another country and remained unmarried. She was sent to another home to separate them. Burghers were not considered as Sri Lankan by the major ethnic groups.

The second is when Daryl came to Sri Lanka when he was working as a journalist in England. He was immersed in studying police tortures and the Prevention of Terrorism Act while Chelvaratnam was away on a business trip. Though her sister Neliya warns Nalini about their relationship, she continues to meet him, which gives new hope and happiness in her life that she was lacking. She had moved to a temporary dwelling with Arjie for a brief period where Daryl was a regular visitor.

He brought Arjie books which his father forbade him to read. According to his father those were books not meant for boys of Arjie's age to read. But Daryl had not succumbed to any such narrow-mindedness. His open and flexible nature attracted Arjie more to him, to the point in which he compares Daryl with his father and how life would be if Chelva was substituted by Daryl.

The way Daryl looked after him when he was not well increased Arjie's love for Daryl. Those were phases of his happy days without anyone to set boundaries in his life.

However, Daryl's murder and his inevitable separation from Nalini is the second phase of her loss caused by ethnic riots. Arjie lost someone to whom he can exhibit his true self. The ease with which people can be erased from life is portrayed very clearly in the novels.

The only instance in which Arjie is not involved in witnessing separation is that of Jegan and his friend. Following the torture by police and government Jegan's friend who has worked in the Gandhian movement had migrated to Canada. Though Arjie had not even seen his friend, he could empathize with Jegan in his loss of somebody when Jegan loved him so much. The earlier two incidents made him fathom the depth of pain and suffering that people undergo while facing separation for matters not involved between them. Thus, it is through people's affairs that Selvadurai portrays the negative effects of ethnic tensions and its contributions to people's suffering.

However Jegan's earlier involvement with Tigers ends up creating new issues in his life though he no longer wants to be part of it. He was accused of planning the assassination of a Tamil Minister in the government at the Ministry of Sports ground. In reality, it was the usual jogging place for Arjie and Jegan. But Jegan accidentally met two of his friends there who plotted this assassination. Talking with them led to his arrest. Although he was relieved later by the police unaccused, the news spread quickly especially through newspapers with the title, "KEY SUSPECT IN ASSASSINATION PLOT DISCOVERED" (Selvadurai, *FB* 183).

It was not just Jegan who was affected but Chelvaratnam and his family and business too as it was included in the paper that, “The suspect, Jegan Parameswaran, resided with a well-known Tamil hotelier” (Selvadurai, *FB* 183).

The day the newspaper report came out was challenging for Chelva and his family. Most of the Sinhala staff kept silent as a way of resentment. He even received a hate note from his table, put down there perhaps by one of his Sinhala staff. The receptionist Mrs. Wickramasinghe had to listen to filthy phone calls that led her broke into tears. Things were not different at his home as well. The phone rang almost continuously one after the other.

Jegan who was relieved the next day, without laying any charges. He acted normal in front of everyone when he reached home. But the humiliation he had faced, spending one night in the jail had shattered him. But Arjie was the only one who saw him crying.

He was kept overnight in jail without any significant evidence of plotting the assassination. Nalini who experienced the unjust system upon which the government and police operate, yells at Chelva when he justifies the police act as routine stuff. She asks, “How can it be routine to keep someone in jail overnight?” (Selvadurai, *FB* 181).

The answer to this is the ‘Prevention of Terrorism Act’ which provides police the right to arrest anybody at any time whom they suspect. Nalini earlier thought of it as a positive one, she even argued with Daryl regarding it. But now it has revealed to Nalini the truth behind Daryl’s words.

Though Chelvaratnam attempted to remove Jegan from the office for a few days, he refused it and joined the office the next day. Just as Chelva expected an issue

popped up when Jegan scolded a peon for his carelessness, the secretarial staff and even Chelva himself had to take up the peon's side to avoid further conflicts. This made Jegan frustrated and angry all the more.

The frustration and pain the minority group underwent during the period of ethnic tensions are well portrayed in the novel. Nalini, who has praised the government earlier at the beginning of the novel, thinks about the good intentions and outcomes of the Tigers' acts and their need for a separate state. The caution Tamils have to take even while speaking their language upsets Nalini. Being a Sinhalese and belonging to a majority ethnic group is seen as less difficult.

Nalini has already reached the point of boredom with her concern for her children. Thus, she asks, "But seriously, what do we have to offer our children when they grow up? I don't want them to live as we do always having to watch what they say and do" (Selvadurai, *FB* 190).

This was fuelled more by the Banduratne Mudalali's sons' attempt to provoke them, especially Jegan by calling him 'Tiger', and their act of throwing alcohol bottles at them. Though somehow, they escaped from there, she came to know about what had happened during the 1981 riots, which was not revealed to Nalini until this point by Chelva. His explanation of Banduratne Mudalali and their sons' cruel acts of killing Tamils and their longing for a Tamil-free town made her horrified.

The fact that they were being supported by a cabinet minister added more to her anguish. All this led her to think of emigration. She like her husband knew well about the way those who migrated are living in European countries. But she thinks of it as far better than living a life of insecurities and uncertainties.

Discerning the reality of Sri Lanka amidst the ethnic tensions she says, “It’s not a question of wanting or not wanting to go. We have to think about the children” (Selvadurai, *FB* 196). Being a mother, her concern is all around her children and she realizes well that migration is not their choice but the only option left before them to live a peaceful life.

The hatred in the outside world has started affecting Sonali and Diggy as well. Sonali’s wish to be a Sinhalese or a foreigner reflects the terrible plight of individuals belonging to the minority ethnic group. She longs to escape the world of caution, constant fear and surveillance. All these discriminations made Diggy more connected to his own ethnic identity that led him to say confidently that he is proud to be a Tamil.

There are numerous situations in which ethnic hatred is showcased in the novel. One such instance is the writing on the window of their hotel, “Death to all Tamil Pariahs” (Selvadurai, *FB* 197) in the Sinhalese language. It was written by one of his staff same as the way the hate note was placed on Chelva’s office table. Someone opened Jegan’s suitcase and searched for something. Jegan’s clothes were spread over the bed.

Despite Chelvaratnam, his partner Sena and guest relations officer Miss De Silva’s attempts guests started checking out. The incident forewarns Chelva and others about the gradual collapse of their business. Even the staff were scared to wipe the windows.

This very incident contributed to Jegan’s understanding of his inevitable separation from Chelva’s family and business. Thus he says to Nalini that “Anyway,



it's only a matter of time before Uncle will have to do the inevitable" (Selvadurai, *FB* 201).

Irrespective of all the caution taken by Chelva circumstances did not allow them to keep Jegan with them. Chelva regrets his broken promise to his best friend Parameswaran. Though Jegan's presence, his earlier bonds with Tigers and his highest position in the hotel all have contributed negatively to his business. Chelva still does not want Jegan to be fired from their company. But he is not the single owner and running the business in partnership, no option was left for him. Jegan assumed it much earlier. This is a clear instance of how people are denied to keep their promises and relations in tense Sri Lanka. Although Sena and Chelva offer Jegan a good-paying job in the Middle East, he refuses it and goes back to Jaffna.

The fascism that operates in the country is revealed all the more significantly with their denial of voting rights. When Chelva and his family went to the polling booth they were not granted the chance to vote. The criminals supported by the government threatened the voting officials using guns placed false ballots into the boxes, and left soon. The election result was expected, the government will rule for the next six years. This incident again pops up in Nalini's mind with the option of migration. But Chelva as before was not ready to leave his country.

The ethnic tension in the country had its reflections in the schools between students themselves and between teachers and everyone was included. Arjie had witnessed a fight between two students Salgado who was a Sinhalese and Chelia who was a Tamil. Chelia was the class leader of the 9th-grade Tamil class. Fights often occurred between the two of them.

Soyza explains the situation to him and Arjie could discern it as the Tamil-Sinhala thing based on his earlier ethnic encounters and issues in life. The hatred and violence in the adult world have entered schools as well and there are enough people and situations to fuel it too.

Lokubandara, the vice-principal supports the antisocial activities of Salgado and other Sinhala students. Thereby Lokubandara contributes greatly to the Tamil-Sinhala divide in the school.

Lokubandara wanted to give a Buddhist priest's name to the school and transform Queen Victoria Academy into a Buddhist one. He tells that "Since all Buddhists are Sinhalese, that means the school would be a Sinhala school, and there would be no place for Tamils in it" (Selvadurai, *FB* 220).

An obstruction for Lokubandra in his attempt was the Principal, Black Tie. Though he is a Buddhist, he wants to keep the school as it is, that is open to all students belonging to all races and religions.

The difficulty of understanding the hatred that people keep in their minds is shown evidently through the character of Lokubandara. His benign attitude and pleasant manner will not let anyone understand the severity of the hatred that he keeps inside him. Arjie could not believe that he was the catalyst of the fight that happened between Salgado and Chelia in the toilet.

Mr Sunderalingam, the English teacher whose explanation of Black Tie's final attempt to keep the school open to all revealed another face of Black Tie. He had punished Arjie for not reciting the poem correctly and his desperation made sense to Arjie when Mr Sunderalingam explained his attempt to pursue the attention and admiration of the chief guest who would be a cabinet minister within a short period.

He was a student of Black Tie and had won the All-Island Poetry Recital contest for reciting the poem “The Best School of All” which Arjie is told to recite in the prize-giving function.

Black Tie represents people who want to keep the country free from all ethnic conflicts and differences. Irrespective of Sinhala mobs attacking Tamil, he represents the virtue and goodness that most of the Sinhalese have in their heart.

Through this Selvadurai is pointing out that the aggressive mob does not represent the whole of the Sinhala community in the country. Rather the mob constitutes a small percentage of the Sinhala community in the country, led by crooked politicians and government officials.

Finally, the chapter title “RIOT JOURNAL: AN EPILOGUE” presents the horror of ethnic riots to its fullest. The day 25<sup>th</sup> July 1983 began with a phone call from Mala informing about the burning of Tamil houses near the Kanattha Cemetery. This was done against the killing of thirteen soldiers by Tigers. Though Chelva and others tried to believe it was only a going fight between people, it was not so. The family received more information with the arrival of Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty.

Though they had not said much to the kids, Arjie could sense that something was wrong. The story develops through the innocent eyes of a child who is completely unaware of the matters around him and evolves around his growth as someone who grasps everything. Selvadurai has gone through all these emotions of Arjie and presented them meaningfully to the readers.

To escape the trouble, they have decided to spend some days at Sena Uncle’s home. Nalini plans everything to escape the riots like the way Chelva was cautious to

avoid conflicts in his business. Chelva who does not want to leave his country and home behind seems a little hesitant about these plans.

Though Nalini appears more practical in times of danger she too is sensitive about leaving everything behind. Thus she takes her family albums because she believes only those pictures will remain to make them remember their most beautiful days of life.

The conflicts got worse everywhere and even the radio news has not mentioned anything about the trouble. No curfew was declared which suggests the influence of the government and police on initiating the troubles. Chelva still thinks of the government as having no involvement in the matter to which Nalini asks, "If not, why aren't they declaring curfew, and why aren't the police and army stopping the mobs?" (Selvadurai, *FB* 289). This was underscored even more with the mobs having electoral lists in their hands to locate Tamil houses to destroy them which is indicative of the government's involvement in the riots. Phones were all dead by 12.30 P.M.

However to make people blind government declared a curfew and told that "Anyone caught on the road without a curfew pass will be shot on sight" (Selvadurai, *FB* 290). Contrary to their expectation that the trouble soon would end, the riots became more stronger.

The clerk at Chelva's office informed more about the horror of the situation and the irresponsibility of the police. Before his eyes, petrol was stolen from Sena's van and mobs used it to burn a car with a family in it. The way police stood unresponsively and cheered the mobs even joined them in all these atrocities reaffirmed the fear Nalini had in her mind.

The trauma of the story hit the family so intensively, that each one of them tried different coping mechanisms to soothe them and not to engage in thinking about the family inside the car.

However, the only hope left for them was Perera's home. The only escape plan was to hide in Perera's storeroom. Though Nalini was sure about the mobs attacking their house, she consoled them with a "big if" by decreasing the possibility of doing it.

But deep down, they all were aware of the inevitability of it. Finally, the mob came and somehow they escaped to Perera's house. Through the high window of Perera's storeroom, they all witnessed the burning down of their home. They could discern each damage that happened to their home by the sounds. Nalini could understand their front door was damaged from the crashing and shattering of glass. However, the destructive sounds seemed to be coming from different sides making them unable to locate what was exactly happening. Then there was smoke and a golden light indicative of the home being set on fire as they state that "the light even came into the store room, illuminating our upturned faces" (Selvadurai, *FB* 296). The depiction of a family experiencing the terror of burning their house, shattering it into a mere heap of ashes is disturbing. The trauma of it made Arjie numb, even while seeing his destroyed house:

I observed all this with not a trace of remorse, not a touch of sorrow for the loss and destruction around me. Even now I feel no sorrow. I try to remind myself that the house is destroyed, that we will never live in it again, but my heart refuses to understand this" (Selvadurai, *FB* 298).

But Chithra Aunty began to cry seeing the devastation, Nalini's act of comforting is perceived as a little ironic for Arjie. But some moments later he could discern the cause, "Chithra Aunty was free to cry. We couldn't, for if we started, we could never stop" (Selvadurai, *FB* 298).

The pain of leaving one's own home not willingly is painful. The love, sympathy and compassion their neighbours showed creates a sense of uneasiness in Arjie, "It was odd to see them standing at their gates and waving at us as we drove away" (Selvadurai, *FB* 299). He felt it strange that the Sinhala mob destroyed everything they had and the Sinhala neighbours offered them consolation, raw provisions and things. The love and hatred they received from the same community was incomprehensible to Arjie, which made him unaware of his feelings.

But the news about the destruction of their grandparents' house pushed him to the verge of crying. A rush of memories came to him about his childhood. His strange acts make him confused and he says that "I couldn't cry for my own house, but it was easy to grieve for my grandparent's house" (Selvadurai, *FB* 299).

No trouble has subsided yet. The constant fear and trepidation that they had to endure was continuing. Sena was threatened with the phone for hiding Chelva's family that led them to create another escape plan to Sena's mother's house.

People visiting along with bringing depressing news felt so irritating to Arjie, who was cheered only by the arrival of Shehan. However, while talking with him, for the first time in his life, he thought of Shehan's Sinhalese identity about the differences and varying privileges in the world they both live in. but it has not impacted in any way his feelings for Shehan. But the presence of it was there, like a thin translucent screen between them.

Though the time has seen to be the best for claiming refugee status, Chelva seemed reluctant to leave the country. Irrespective of all the tragic incidents that happened, he still wanted to be in his own country. He never wanted to cut down his roots. Along with that the thought of his assets in Sri Lanka confused him more which he earned and took care of with utmost hard work and caution.

But with the attack on his hotel, there was nothing left for Chelva to oppose his family's wish to migrate. It shattered him to the core. This incident proved more clearly that they do not belong to Sri Lanka anymore and is reflected in the words of Arjie when he says, "I don't feel home in Sri Lanka, any loner, will never feel safe again" (Selvadurai, *FB* 304). Chelva reaches a point of blaming himself for not foreseeing the impending disaster and neglecting Nalini's warnings.

On the third day after the destruction of their house Nalini and Arjie began to come to terms with it. Though Arjie is not at all nostalgic about the house and the times spent there, the lack of simple luxuries and peace he enjoyed at home irritates him. But for Nalini, the loss was terrible. It was a home and a garden that she nurtured with utmost love and care that turned into mere ashes. The reality of it struck her only days after but the profundity of it was so intense and unexplainable.

Everyone was shattered once again by the news of Appachi and Ammachi being burnt in their car in the street. It struck Chelva more hardly than anyone else. He was forbidden even to go and see what happened. The thought that an agitating crowd can do senseless things stopped him. The sight of no one crying during the funeral denotes the numbness and shock it created in everyone. Losing everything that once belonged to them, their people, home, and assets has become a matter that created numbness in them.

Though Arjie had earlier thought of migration to Canada as the better option, as the time approached, he began to get tense over his life in Canada as a poor refugee. He had lived a life of luxury in Sri Lanka. The sight of a beggar woman created fear in him. They were allowed to keep only five hundred pounds each, which scared him the most. To begin a life in a strange country, without enough money scares him along with his father's absence. Chelva stays back in Sri Lanka to settle things.

The turmoil that Arjie underwent at the age of seventeen showcases the impact of ethnic differences and riots on young adults. The narrative discusses way it destroys and negates the happy living conditions and pushes them to leave their own country.

In the same way, ethnic riots and differences separated Radha and Anil, Nalini and Daryl, and Jegan and his friend, Arjie was separated from Shehan despite their unwillingness due to their circumstances. The pain of parting showed its impact when they made love for the first time.

While returning after seeing Shehan, he made his last visit to his destroyed house. This made him cry for the very first time for his home. He says:

I sat on the verandah steps and wept for the loss of my home, for the loss of everything that I held to be precious. I tried to muffle the sound of my weeping, but my voice cried out loudly as if it were the only weapon I had against those who had destroyed my life" (Selvadurai, *FB* 311).

When the novel ends, the rain starts as he bicycles back to Sena's house away from his home.



The second novel *Hungry Ghosts* presents the terror and trepidation caused by ethnic conflicts on a very personal level. The trauma and resentment that people undergo as part of ethnic riots are intrinsically portrayed in the novel. The novel also depicts ethnic conflicts such as human rights violations, physical attacks, discrimination, torture, disappearances and exploitation of minorities. The story of *Hungry Ghosts* also develops predominantly through a gay individual, Shivan Rassiah. All incidents and characters are connected to Shivan.

The novel begins by presenting the authoritative figure, Shivan's grandmother, Daya, and her forcing influence on him. On his thirteenth birthday, she takes him to her properties as a way of gifting him an involvement and understanding of her business including renting land and houses and buying new ones. Shivan himself says "She was showing me the future mapped out for me" (Selvadurai, *HG* 4). However, the majority exploiting the poor and the minorities is revealed clearly through her dealings with the tenants by evicting them from her properties for much less money than they deserve by exploiting.

The impossibility of poor people approaching courts for their basic rights is revealed through the conversation between Daya and Sunil, their family lawyer. The privilege Daya holds is implied when she says to Sunil, "The courts and law are for bloody fools who want to pay out their fortunes to that band of blood-sucking leeches known as lawyers" (Selvadurai, *HG* 8). The power she holds to have a group of people behind her to work according to her wishes has much to do with Daya's majority identity, wealth, and the influence it offers. Thus, Selvadurai portrays her as an insensitive and arrogant woman who is least concerned about others' feelings and emotions.

Living in a tense Sri Lanka with emerging ethnic conflicts between Sinhalese and Tamils, Daya held hatred towards the minority Tamils that led her to cut down her relationship with Hema, her daughter when she eloped with a Tamil man. Both of them had not attempted to restore contact with each other. Hema knew very well the animosity she carried toward Tamils. Thus, she says to her children that Daya hates her when they enquired about their grandmother. She made clear that they were stunned by her words by explaining, “Because you are half Tamil. Your grandmother did not want me to marry your father because he was Tamil. And now that you are half Tamil, she hates you” (Selvadurai, *HG* 20).

Then it was comprehensible to Renu and Shivan as they were well aware of the growing animosity between these ethnic groups. Their father himself has faced discrimination on account of it many times at his workplace. Even though they have heard it many times he is being called the term ‘Tamil dog’ by his fellow workers and waiters who are Sinhalese. This is a sheer display of the degree to which hatred was spread across the country. People have reached a state of expressing themselves without any shame, compunction, or hesitation. Calling someone derogatory terms even in front of his children was considered normal.

Though his death has not impacted his children, the people around him would have contributed greatly to his heart attack. The hatred and resentment that he had received from his workplace and his own family made him weak. Hema’s accusation over his weakness to continue in a job for longer periods often ended up in quarrels between them. Though he had worked hard, the conflicts had a terrible effect on his career as a minority Tamil, with the lack of opportunity and provisions given to Tamil majorities.

The situations around them created a desire to be a Sinhala in Renu which she hopes to attain after marrying a Sinhala man, through which she believes she can erase her Tamil identity forever. Then her foreseeing of her future as being rich and her brother having left no options to be a Sinhalese ending up like a beggar man has great significance regarding the influence of ethnic tensions on children and young adults. It showcases the depth of the Tamil-Sinhala divide in the country, where the minority will only encounter a shattered, helpless future before them without education, money, power, jobs and any other options to lead a peaceful and secure life.

Daya regards her daughter who brought disgrace to the family by marrying a Tamil as the punishment that she had received for the bad karma of her previous life. She says to Hema, “Look at where your mistakes have brought your children. Look at them! Tamil, poor and undereducated! You’re a disgraceful mother. A failure” (Selvadurai, *HG* 31). Here she uses one ethnic group to identify with ‘poor’ and ‘undereducated’. This points out the insult minority groups have to endure in a country where they are constantly marginalized and forced to leave the country by indirect means.

Being born to a Tamil ethnic group is perceived as an unlucky thing by the majority of Sinhalese. Daya even uses derogatory words and gestures to Renu, her grandchild such as ‘vareng’ and ‘oomba’, “the “you” used for the lowest classes” (Slevadurai, *HG* 36).

The novel offers a non-linear narrative as the events and incidents are not described in chronological order. Ethnic riots are first mentioned explicitly in the novel when Shivan is about to travel back to Sri Lanka from Canada where his family

is now settled. The fear of Renu and Hema for letting Shivan visit Sri Lanka at this point showcases the severity of ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. Even though they have migrated, Hema is truly concerned about the pathetic fate of Sri Lanka and the people living there. She understands the depressive state that Sri Lanka is going through at the time of Shivan's visit to his grandmother. The raging animosities between Sinhala majorities and Tamil minorities were made all the more intense with the Tigers' attack on two Sri Lankan gunboats known as SLNS Sooraya and SLNS Ranasuru which led to the civil war. Everyone who wanted to restore peace in Sri Lanka had great hope in the new president, Chandrika Kumaratunga. Her husband was killed by Sinhala extremists for his plans to give the Tamil minority some sort of assurance for their life in Sri Lanka. Even Tigers longed for her to be in power and canvassed for her. However, when Tigers broke the cease-fire, she had to adopt military forces against Tigers which turned the situation back to how it was earlier.

Though she wanted to restore peace in Sri Lanka the circumstances led her to use military forces. Shivan ruminates it as "The true bleakness, for me, was seeing a leader with an enlightened vision trapped in a vortex of hatred that was so all-consuming she had no choice but to participate in it" (Selvadurai, *HG* 14). The whole of the story is filled with Buddhist tales told by Daya to Shivan which he now adopts as the role of karma in people's lives. Thus they are left with no hope of peace for Sri Lanka.

An instance of ethnic groups shattering people's lives can be seen through the life of a Tamil couple, the Thurarajahs who are now tenants of Daya. They both were Professors at highly acclaimed universities who lost their jobs and homes during the civil riots of 1997. From a maths Professor at Southern University, he has now become a science teacher at an international school. His experience and knowledge in

the specialized field have all become useless. Mrs. Thurarajah is now a homemaker. The loss of her job and home shattered her intensely which is portrayed clearly when Shivan says, “There was often a vacant look in her eyes as if she were lost deep in herself” (Selvadurai, *HG* 39).

Though Daya showed some sort of respect towards the education she never misses a chance to ridicule Tamils and always used to connect their misfortunes to their bad karma. Although Days says she is not a Tamil hater, the readers are presented with a clear-cut image of the aversion that she carries through her gestures and words. She even goes to the extent of saying that “Thurarajah got what was coming to them” (Selvadurai, *HG*). She assumes them as bad and cruel teachers as their students burned their houses.

A precise picture of Tamil people during the 1958 riots and the majority ruling Sri Lanka is portrayed when Hema reveals her decision to get married to a man who belongs to the Tamil ethnic group. Daya exclaims and asks her then:

Are you blind to what is going on in our country? Have you forgotten the 1958 riots, how Tamil people lost their homes and businesses? How Tamil women were raped, the gold earrings ripped from their ears? By marrying this man, you will become one of those women, mistakes for Tamil because of your surname (Selvadurai, *HG* 53).

However, not all who belong to the Sinhala community hold grudge and hatred towards Tamils. Most of the people longed for peace in the country. Mili is one such example. Even at the age of seventeen he had made plans to contribute his education for the welfare of the country. He has already started the journey as a volunteer for the women’s organization, ‘Kantha’. It was headed by Sriyani

Karunaratne the History Professor at the University of Colombo for the women working in garment factories in the free trade zone. Though it was not expected of Mili to participate in such activities which were only practised by “unpopular, sanctimonious, weak, often religious boys in our school” (Selvadurai, *HG* 59). Mili’s desire to bring a difference to the world he belongs and transform Sri Lanka into a better place led to his involvement with the organization. He also plans to learn about international development in America and to use his education for the welfare of the country. Thus he says:

Unlike a lot of buggers who are planning to get the hell out of this country and never return, I want to come back and put something into Sri Lanka. I want to make things better for people who are poor and suffering here. I love Sri Lanka, and I’m not going to desert it”  
(Selvadurai, *HG* 59).

Selvadurai portrays Shivan’s growing awareness of ethnic tensions in the novel precisely, from his early memories of his father being ridiculed calling names like ‘Tamil dog’, the memories of 1977 riots and his grandmother’s hatred towards them for being half Tamil and to his present experiences of seeing Tamil houses burnt to ashes before his eyes. From his childhood onwards, Shivan and Renu were aware of all these around them like all other children in the country.

Through Shivan, Selvadurai narrates briefly the way that ethnic conflicts have operated in the country. The 1977 riots and the resulting loss of Tamil lives and houses added more strength to Tamil Tigers’ movement for their need for an independent Eelam. The violent measures they used for it led the government to pass

the Prevention of Terrorism Act. This was a huge blow to even Tamils who were not part of the Tiger movement because the very act:

“allowed them to make arrests without warrants, hold a person indefinitely without laying a charge, use confessions made under duress as admissible evidence and dispose of bodies without an inquest” (Selvadurai, *HG* 63).

This gave police power to arrest anyone and torture them according to their wish and even disappearances of individuals were not allowed to question. Thus, a series of conflicts kept on happening in the country all these years.

However, these recurrent series of fights have created a sort of numbness in many people. Shivan remarks, “How lightly all this registered on my consciousness. I don’t even remember much talk about these incidents” (Selvadurai, *HG* 63). All he remembers is the talk around inflation, where prices for everything increased but with no hike in salaries. He was only thirteen years old when the 1977 riots occurred.

Later when he was seventeen a major conflict broke out after the Tamil Tiger’s attack followed by the murder of soldiers, attacking their homes, shops, and whatever they owned. In retaliation Jaffna train was burnt by Tigers which was repaid by railway authorities by cancelling trains to Jaffna. Jaffna was the Tamil capital and the blockage of train transportation had a great effect in that it cut off the food supply altogether.

The conflict reached its peak after the murder of thirteen soldiers by Tamil Tigers. After the funeral, the mob started attacking furiously Tamil houses and killing Tamil people. Chandralal informs Daya about it along with stating the government’s role in supporting the riots. The mob carries electoral lists with them to identify Tamil

houses. The plight of innocent civilians who have not partaken in any of the atrocities is portrayed very clearly in the novel when Chandralal says, “These members of government say they are sick of the Tigers and wanted to teach Tamils a lesson” (Selvadurai, *HG* 64). The innocent Tamil people who do not even support the activities of Tigers are being attacked even by the government which is bound to offer a secure and peaceful life to all its citizens impartially.

However Renu and Shivan who are half Tamils were saved as Daya’s house is registered as a Sinhala one. For further security she arranges two guards who are even scared to go out and stand near the gate fearing the neighbours who may inform the mob of their ethnic identity. The power of ethnic conflicts to break people’s trust in each other is also showcased here. They also witness the burning of Tamil houses and the destruction of their properties. Shivan ruminates:

Once, a woman screamed, a gargled sound so chilling it haunts me to this day. The air was rancid with smoke and we walked around with handkerchiefs pressed to our noses, coughing and gagging when it was at its worst. In the evening, bits of ash floated into my grandmother’s garden, settling on her flowers (Selvadurai, *HG* 65).

Selvadurai portrays the reality of Sri Lanka after the riots. Though it seemed everything went back to normal, it was not so. There was a transparent sheet of fear around them always. Even loud noises like a car backfiring gave shudders to people. Even if they tried to forget the riots, the living remains of it were present everywhere such as burnt Tamil shops and shattered homes. Irrespective of their attempt to avoid seeing things, somehow it came before them, Shivan says that:



birds feathering their nests with crisped book pages, squirrels carrying cupboard knobs and buttons to bury in our flower beds, or an occasional bone whose provenance we did not want to guess. We made sure to be home before dark; Colombo became a ghost city after sunset (Selvadurai, *HG* 66).

Shivan's half-Tamil identity had forbidden him to look at other Tamil boys in his school. He was scared seeing his fear in their eyes. He also had felt the terror, fright, and shudder that all Tamils have experienced during the mob attack.

Mili headed the charitable activities happening at school after the riots such as supplying uniforms, pens, books, and pencils to the Tamil students who were affected by the riots. His charitable activities reduced the number of his admirers about which Mili was least concerned. Through Mili's character, Selvadurai portrays the innocent Sinhalese individuals who do not justify any of the government actions against the Tamils. Thus, Mili represented the Sinhalese people who longed for a secure state of their country. Mili considered Tamil migration to other countries as a loss for the country. He says, "What a brain drain. The country will lose so many of our doctors, lawyers, and engineers, not to mention school teachers. We damn Sinhalese deserve this" (Selvadurai, *HG* 67).

Schools also reminded them of the terror of the riots. Many Tamil students had lost their homes. Charitable activities were led by Mili by collecting uniforms and other study materials from those who were unaffected by the riots. One of their masters was killed in the riots along with his family. Money was raised to conduct his funeral and to help other teachers who had lost their homes.

Here, the injustice going on in the country is reflected. How easily and momentarily some have lost everything as their worlds turned upside down within a fraction of a second whereas everything stayed the same for some. It happened in the lives of both teachers and students.

Like most of the Tamils at that time, migration seemed to be the only option left for them to escape from violent Sri Lanka, where they would have to encounter threats of any degree at any point in time. Shivan opts for the same way to escape from the shackles of his grandmother, the ethnic conflicts and the fearful life they had in Sri Lanka. He takes all the initiative and suggests the idea to Hema. After the initial hesitation, she agrees but Renu is reluctant to leave her studies at the University. But the situation in Sri Lanka made it easy for Hema. Thus, she convinces Renu by explaining “Sri Lanka is finished. It’s time to get out. If so much rioting was caused by the death of thirteen soldiers, what is going to happen when twenty are killed?” (Selvadurai, *HG* 69). She adds “And many more will be killed. This riot has only made the Tigers more powerful, more determined to get what they want. There is going to be a lot more violence” (Selvadurai, *HG* 69).

Although the whole of the procedures for immigration went smoothly, a sense of uneasiness that build inside Shivan reached its peak after Daya and Hema’s fight. Daya who by then had become so attached to Shivan found it utterly difficult to leave him. Thus, she says by hugging him, “I am that Naked Perethi. Am I to have no happiness in this life? Is everything I love to be taken from me?” (Selvadurai, *HG* 73). He somehow ran away from her to his bedroom and began to cry, confused about what made him cry when everything happened exactly how he had wished. But the readers are presented with the answer about his love for Daya though he had hated her

for many of her acts. The mixed emotions he has for his grandmother are revealed here.

He then felt terrible anguish before his migration when Mili told him, “So you’re leaving our beloved island” (Selvadurai, *HG* 75). Deep down he had the longing to be in Sri Lanka which made him angry towards Mili. Thus Shivan retorts that Sinhalese will be left with no Tamils here to kill. Though he has not explicitly mentioned it, by Sinhalese he meant Mili’s Sinhalese identity. Shivan thus gave voice to all those who have migrated to other countries as part of ethnic riots by saying, “If we are abandoning Sri Lanka, it’s because Sri Lanka abandoned us first” (Selvadurai, *HG* 75).

Despite his migration and life in Canada, he had to constantly hear about it through the letters of Aacho, his grandmother. She kept on writing about the conflicts, the killing of soldiers, the increasing crime prices for goods and so on.

Other than migration many had left Sri Lanka for other countries as refugees. Along with attacks from the Sinhalese mob, police and government authorities Tamils in Jaffna were under the threat of conscription by the Tamil Tigers. They too were forced to leave the country and their family used everything they had to send them away from Sri Lanka. Shivan saw them often at Bridlewood Mall, though he has not made any connections with them. He and his family had observed them as “The young men spoke no English and some of them had never been outside their village. The boy’s forced hilarity and sliding sheepish eyes suggested the heavy burden on their thin shoulders” (Selvadurai, *HG* 109). Hema often felt grateful seeing them, that she had not met up with such a fate of living without her children. Here Selvadurai stresses how the life of Shivan was better in Canada than many other Tamils who

reached there as refugees. So even among Tamils who left Sri Lanka, a privilege divide exists.

His decision to return to Sri Lanka scares both Renu and Hema as the news they received about Sri Lanka at that time was not a pleasant one. Though Shivan tried to escape the negativity produced by this news, Renu's constant engagement and conversations with her friends and the *Sunday Times* brought all the news to Shivan. The major threat Sri Lanka was facing at that time was Indian intervention and the Marxist group JVP, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna also known as the Government of the Night or the Little Government.

Selvadurai explains briefly about the intervention of India to establish peace in the country. The deployment of Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka and the following Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord signed in Colombo on 29 July 1987 was expected to bring an end to the Sri Lankan Civil War. It was signed between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene.

Things ended up differently as:

However, within three months the Tigers had broken the truce, killing five Indian para-commandos by strapping burning tires around their necks. In reality, the Indian Army launched a month-long campaign to win control of the north and their ruthlessness turned the Tamils against them (Selvadurai, *HG* 138-139).

More severe than that were the activities of the JVP. They have used the current situations such as the unemployment issues in the country and the increasing expenses to strengthen their grip over Sinhalese people and the country. JVP had also tried to increase hatred towards Tamils and Indians in the Sinhalese community.

Soon the JVP was leading attacks on security force camps, staging daring robberies, declaring strikes no one dared to disobey. They banned women from wearing Indian saris, shops from selling Indian goods and even Sri Lankan businessmen from importing Indian pharmaceuticals. Their power was so universally acknowledged that they were known as the Government of the Night or the Little Government (Selvadurai, *HG* 139).

During their attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister and President, accidentally a minister was killed. Another instance that shows the dangerous side of JVP was the killing of Vijaya Kumaratunga, an actor turned politician for his sympathy towards Tamils.

In short, Shivan was about to visit Sri Lanka amidst this tense period that scared Hema. For them, like most of the Tamils who left Sri Lanka, migration was the only mode to escape all the terror and violence that swallowed Sri Lanka.

Despite her struggles as a single parent in a new community, starting from scratch and encountering racial discrimination at the workplace, and her random longing to be in Sri Lanka, Hema never considers returning to Sri Lanka. The trauma of ethnic differences she had endured even from her childhood was enough for her to stick to her decision to remain in Canada for the rest of her life. Even the thought of Shivan reaching Sri Lanka amidst these violent times shudders her. Thus, she says:

Shivan, they are murdering people all the time in the south. When they call for a work stoppage no one dares to go out. Between them and the Tigers, not to mention the Indians, you will have to deal with curfews

and blackouts and bombs and God only knows what else (Selvadurai, *HG* 139).

Selvadurai portrays the inability and helplessness of police who even want to stop and put an end to the ongoing tension. Vijay Kumaratunga's wife Chandrika Kumaratunga came into power by giving hope to Tamils. Even Tigers themselves canvassed for her as they had hope and expectation for her. But when Tigers attacked Sri Lankan Navy gunboats, she also had to resort to a military attack against them, calling it, a "war of peace". Hema seems to be stunned by Chandrika Kumaratunga's retaliation methods which Hema never expected from her.

But Shivan has now matured enough to understand that "Her hands are tied. All actions are compromised, tainted, in Sri Lanka" (Selvadurai, *HG* 147).

At many points in the novel, the women's organization Kantha is mentioned by which Selvadurai may be intending Kantha Handa or the Voice of Women that was formed in 1978. "*Kantha Handa* (Voice of Women) is one of the oldest women's groups in the island, and its journal (also called *Voice of Women*) has been coming out in Sinhala, English and Tamil on a regular basis now for over four years" (Abeysekera). But gradually it also came to focus on human rights activities as well. The way Sriyani, the Professor thinks of mothers as capable of changing the world throws light upon the organization's gathering of Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim women. Most of them shared the same fate of grief over their children, either tortured or killed. Thus, Sriyani thinks that only these mothers can invent a solution for the ongoing animosity around them by opposing it, beginning with their own families first.

The pathetic condition of Sri Lanka and the plight of people living there are precisely explained in the novel through the conversation between Mili and Shivan. It was not just a single force that brought misery into people's lives. Multiple involvements from different corners both within and outside of the country were affecting Sri Lanka and its people. The Special Task Force, Tigers, JVP and Indian troops were all equally responsible for the human rights violations happening in the country. How ethnic conflicts can shatter human rights, by all means, is portrayed here through the activities of these groups. The employing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act against Tamil men to take them into custody and hold them without laying charges was misused by the police in a million ways, "The victims were frequently stripped and beaten, chilli powder rubbed into their eyes and genitals, their bodies burned with hot rods or cigarettes and subjected to electrical shock" (Selvadurai, *HG* 157).

Indian troops and Tigers also contributed to torture and executions. Indian troops' onslaught on Jaffna Teaching Hospital caused the mass murder of over seventy doctors, nurses, and patients. Tigers on the other hand attacked and killed Sinhalese in large numbers. JVP, by spreading fear and hatred in the country. The frequent strikes against all other forces in the country, and brutal murder of people when they refuse to partake in the strikes or expressed different opinions is evident in the novels. In response, the government had formed a paramilitary force named Green Tigers for killing JVP activists and whomever they suspected to be involved with JVP. The bodies were even thrown to the streets to forewarn others.

It all seemed strange to Shivan at that point in time. He says, "What Mili was saying seemed so removed from the normality all about us, he could have been talking about another country" (Selvadurai, *HG* 158). When Shivan left Sri Lanka for

the first time, things were not this much worse. Now everything is more complicated in the country with external influences and emerging hostile groups within the country itself. Selvadurai leaves us with the question of whom to blame for all these sufferings showered upon innocent people of Sri Lanka.

The further horror of the riots is presented through the burnt and destroyed houses on the streets. Once he reached Sri Lanka, His Aacho took him with her to show him her new property. As they passed through Wellawatte, the most attacked Tamil area during the riots they saw the shattered houses and the graffiti on its destroyed walls. The graffiti named “Tamil Pariahs”, “Tamil dogs”, “Rape a woman for Lanka” were all enough to encounter the hatred that has spread across the country.

On seeing Shivan’s uneasiness at this, Aacho had tried to console him by saying that those were all matters of the past and they would not be repeated in the future. But the reason with which she justifies it says about the contempt and hatred that she had carried within her against Tamils. In spite of all the damage that happened to the Tamils in the country, she believed that Sinhalese are the ones who have suffered the most. Indeed, innocent Sinhalese lives were also lost in the riots. But Daya’s explanation shows her ethnic intolerance. She says that “Look who has affected the most. The Sinhalese. As people are saying, the Sinhalese have eaten themselves” (Selvadurai, *HG* 159). She believes that by emigrating to other countries like Australia and Canada Tamil were offered great opportunities, like free foreign education and abundance of money whereas Sinhalese are trapped amidst all these ethnic tensions and suffering its aftereffects being in Sri Lanka and even denied to get good university education because of the frequent hartals going on in the country. She fears, “Those Tamils will end up doctors and lawyers making dollars, not useless rupees” (Selvadurai, *HG* 160).



The very next act in the novel contradicts whatever Daya has said. Her new venture of building a block of flats in a property she had bought from a Tamil family who has emigrated to Australia showcases the real plight of Tamils in the country. The way they have escaped the country leaving whatever they had in their homeland evidences even the denial of their basic rights to live in their homes filled with long years of memories. Here the family can be well identified with that of Arjie in *Funny Boy*.

Seeing the house created a sense of melancholy in him. When he entered the house, “the family had left nothing, not a broom or an old toy, but in the back garden three girls had crudely carved their names in the trunk of a mango tree, *Ratna, Mala, Sundari*” (Selvadurai, *HG* 161). His melancholy was further increased by seeing his mother and sister’s rooms once he returned to Daya’s home.

The members of Kantha were keen to know about the Jaffna Tamil Community in Toronto which is quite big considering the number of members. Here Selvadurai mentions very briefly regarding the talk that donations were provided to Tigers from different parts of the world by those who have migrated, either out of their own will or in the fear of Tigers attacking their families in Jaffna through their conversation. When Shivan answers that he is half-Sinhalese and from Colombo, having no involvement with the group disappoints them.

Another instance of ethnic differences serving as hindrances in people’s affairs can be seen in the relationship between Sri and Ranjini, whose family strongly opposes it as Sri is a Tamil. She was thus unwillingly betrothed to a cousin of her. Though Ranjini is a strong-willed woman in their organization and actively participates in human rights activities she is still incapable of going against her

family's decisions and secretly continues her relationship with Sri. She had not acquired enough willpower to stand up for herself against her parents' wishes.

The inevitability of their betrayal started hitting Mili and Shivan as things were getting worse in Sri Lanka. Mili who is well aware of all the human rights violations occurring in the country foresees the impossibility of their life together in the country. Apart from that he knew that riots may break out at any point in time and he thinks that it would be more severe than the 1983 riots. All three groups, Tigers, Government, and JVP are following violent measures to succeed over others. Thus, "The bodies on the sides of the roads, floating down rivers, keep increasing" (Selvadurai, *HG* 177).

To add more to their sorrow, gay relations were considered a crime in Sri Lanka during the time, which made it even the thought of living together only a dream.

Shivan felt that his Tamil identity only remained in his name. He says, "I speak Sinhalese, I eat Sinhala food, I live in a Sinhalese house. If I change my name, I will be Sinhalese" (Selvadurai, *HG* 179).

Through Shivan, Selvadurai is depicting the triviality of all ethnic differences. He points out how unimportant all these are to human existence and indirectly strikes on the significance of humanity and the need to let go of all ethnic intolerance for the peace of people and their country.

Chandralal's story reveals another face of him. The class difference that existed in the Sri Lankan society was shown through the humiliation that he and his father had faced as often children too were dragged into it unintentionally. The word 'oomba', an offensive word to insult people was used to refer to Chandralal's father

and even the children of the family called the same though they were unaware of its meaning and implications. None of the elders even tried to stop them from calling the name. Chandralal was often teased by calling him, “moon face” for his “pockmarked skin” which he understood later in life.

Calling names like ‘oomba’ was normalized in Sri Lankan society at a particular point in time when class differences existed strongly. The pain he had experienced can be understood when he says, “They didn’t mean anything bad, baba, it was just the way they spoke. That’s how we were to him. Little better than animals” (Selvadurai, *HG* 186).

The past life restored fire in him to achieve a life where everyone respected him and his family. But in that journey, he had forgotten everything about keeping values in one’s life. All he wanted to gain was reputation and money, as he swore earlier that his children would never encounter any humiliations that he had to suffer. “And no Cinnamon Gardens person would ever humiliate my girls” (Selvadurai, *HG* 186).

Chandralal is indebted to Daya for her belief in him, her acts helped him to conquer all his dreams. Chandralal remembers her as the only one who treated him well, “like a proper human being” (Selvadurai, *HG* 186). He believed that he owed all his good fortunes to Daya and the kindness that she had showered upon him.

But to achieve his dreams, he had succumbed to all the evils in the world. He first exploited the poor Tamils who had to leave the country to escape the riots. Shivan’s grandmother joined with him in this attempt. She was the one who bought that house for a cheap price as she knew well that the family would not bargain in such a situation.

How riots benefitted certain Sinhalese people by exploiting the poor Tamils is well said through this incident. They pretended to save them by offering “Protection from the mob for a cheap price on the house” (Selvadurai, *HG* 195).

Shivan knew about all these through Sunil Maama who insisted that he should never question Daya, as Sunil fears losing her biggest client. As everything has experienced drastic changes including the rules and country, Sunil seemed less confident about his career which he thinks is not a gentleman’s profession anymore. A similar instance can be seen in *Funny Boy*, when the advocate says that he will no longer work as a civil lawyer under this government.

Here Selvadurai draws the cycle in which everyone is trapped knowingly or unknowingly. Sunil though aware of all these has no option left to his livelihood and continues with Daya. Shivan on the other hand is completely unaware of the cruelty Chandralal and Daya were committing all these years.

Mili’s father, Tudor Jayasinghe is another figure in the novel who exploits the poor and the marginalized. He lives with a mistress leaving his wife and son and is involved in exploiting the female workers of his garment factories. Mili, his son, stands in strong opposition to him through the association, Kantha. Tudor Jayasinghe considers all of Mili’s activities as nonsense and wants him to either join his firm or study abroad, both of which Mili disagrees to do.

The horror of all that was going on around them finally struck them with the murder of Ranjini. Her dead body was found on the beach first by a fisherman. Police concluded that Ranjini was raped and murdered by her lover Sri out of jealousy on knowing about her betrothal to her cousin. Sri was immediately arrested and proven to be the murderer. The workers of Kantha, including Mili could understand the obvious

implication it had put forward. It was an indirect warning for all the human rights activists to stop being involved in it or else face death as their foreseen future in the country. The incident scared Shivan which made him ask Mili to stop his work and association with Kantha.

The police and the government knew well the best way to feed the traditional and orthodoxical society of Sri Lanka. It was evidenced clearly by the way they manipulated the whole story of Ranjini's murder.

The fruition of their attempt is made visible through the conversation that happened at Shivan's home upon seeing the newspaper report. Aacho blames Ranjini's disregarding of her family that culminated in her death. She even goes to the extent of calling her a 'vesi', which means prostitute for keeping an affair with a man after her betrothal to her cousin. The way Aacho places the whole of the blame on Ranjini and considers her death as the punishment that she had received for her loss of virtue shows that how easily the murder of a human being can be manipulated by the police.

Shivan had now become angry thinking about the injustice done to Ranjini and Sri. All his fury which he carried inside burst out when Miss Balasuriya, one of their tenants insulted him by calling names like a vulture, a hooligan and a slum landlord. When he told her to vacate their property, she reminded him of the law that existed regarding the tenants' rights. Shivan hysterically answered her that no such law existed in this country. He questions her education for her inability to recognize the dictatorship sort of governance that prevails in Sri Lanka during the time that he names the 'banana republic'.

However, the outside world seemed all normal and he understands that none of these people were affected by Ranjini's death that impacted his world tremendously. Finally, he reveals to Aacho the real cause of Ranjini's murder and Shivan's relationship with the group. Mili's involvement in the organization scares her thus she pleads him to avoid further association with the team. After their conversations, Aacho advises him to break his friendship with Mili. She considers the human rights activities inside the country that criticize their government as naïve and foolish. In her opinion, the government is suffering attacks from different sides.

However like Mili's parents, Shivan too had longed for Mili to stop his human rights activities and pursue his university education in Canada. But Mili does not want to succumb to the government. He thinks it cowardly to give up his work. Their talk finally culminates in a quarrel. Mili disliked Shivan's involvement in Aacho's business as he knew what exactly she was doing was exploiting the Tamils and poor people. Thus, out of disgust, Mili says to Shivan, "The Cinnamon Gardens tone you use with waiters, even your driver, it's disgusting. The way you flash your money around, paying for things, buttering up my mother with your car" (Selvadurai, HG 109). Mili's implication is clear that unlike Shivan assisting his grandmother's work, he is not ready to join his father's business. He sheds light on the plight of women in the garment factories to whom even basic transportation was denied and the late-night travelling often ended up with these women being harassed by men. He thus stresses his unwillingness to partake in exploitation activities. They parted that day in extreme anger.

But the very next day when they met at a gathering Sriyani conducted at her house for the workers of Kantha Mili and Shivan understood the significance of each other in their life. The death of Ranjini had a terrible effect on Mili and his repressing

of emotions finally culminated in crying by saying, “The whole world has gone mad. There is nothing to believe in anymore” (Selvadurai, *HG* 212). The only solace Shivan could provide him was offering his love for him thus consoling him by asking him to believe in their love for each other. He implies, that even when the whole world shatters down, “There is us” (Selvadurai, *HG* 212).

The words made sense to Mili later. He seemed more relieved and agreed with Shivan that their love could bring him back to happiness. He had finally changed his decision to stay in Sri Lanka and agreed to go with Shivan to Canada to pursue his education. However, by now his mother had changed her mind about not creating hindrances in Mili’s human rights activities despite her concern for him because she could perceive finally his love for the country.

However, through Mili Shivan learns more about Chandralal and Tudor Jayasinghe’s relationship with the government. A different face of Chandralal is revealed to Shivan, who is often referred to as the Kotahena Mudalali. He had strong ties with the government. He had always simply arranged everything that the government and the leaders needed. “If the prime minister requires a crowd at one of his political gatherings, this Mudalali provides it” (Selvadurai, *HG* 213). It made sense to Shivan that how easily Chandralal could arrange chaps before their house during riots to protect them and how the mob attacked other homes leaving their street though Shivan and Renu were half Tamils. Similarly Tudor Jayasinghe bribes the politicians to keep all sorts of unions away to exploit his workers to his benefit. The workers of Kantha thus could not even approach the workers of his garment factories.

But the impossibility of living in Sri Lanka hit them strongly with Sriyani’s warning to be careful about their relationship as same-sex desires are deemed as a

punishable offence in the country. The government will use such laws immediately if the persons involved are in any way pose a threat to the government. In their case, Mili has become a nuisance to the government with his involvement in the human right activities of Kantha. Thus, the threat they possess in the country as a gay couple forces Mili to leave the country temporarily.

Daya still thinks of her exploitation of the Tamil family and Chandralal's generous act to save the family from mob attacks. Though she had bought the house for a cheaper price, it is nothing compared to their life and pride that was saved. She believes the family would be grateful for her good deeds and their peaceful, richer life in Australia. She assumes that by getting a good foreign education their children will be at the top of the list of brides in matrimonial site. Shivan knowing from Mili about all the bad deeds and exploitation that she and Chandralal had done so far, demands her to give the balance money back to the family which she denies altogether. Shivan does not stop criticizing their evilness to the point of saying "No matter how many bana maduwas you build, do you think you'll even be reborn as a human being?" (Selvadurai, *HG* 218). He further states that they both will be reborn either as worms or insects.

Sriyani had earlier known about the threat that each member of their organization would have to encounter as that of Ranjini if they stayed in Sri Lanka during this turbulent period. Attacks and atrocities can be expected both from the government and JVP. Thus, though being a strong-willed woman, she advises the members to find ways to leave the country for a short period to sharpen themselves for the long-term goal of saving Sri Lanka from all the conflicts. She even thinks of leaving the country and taking up a fellowship at a University in England. Sriyani's



insistence and the revealing of their relationship led Mili to think about migration more strongly.

However, everything turned upside down during their stay at Sriyani's beach house. He had left a note to his Aacho while leaving the house. On the third day of their stay there, the helper Priyasena did not come which created some sort of fear in Shivan.

His suspicion proved to be true. A man fooled him by saying Priyasena sent him and asked him to open the gate but a few seconds later Shivan could feel the tip of a knife near his stomach. Soon a group of men appeared from different sides. All of them were hiding behind trees carrying sticks and short axes.

None of Shivan's attempts succeeded in overthrowing them. When they told Shivan that they came not to hurt him, it was made clear they aimed at Mili. They did not hear any of Shivan's pleading and even saying the name of Chandralal who sent them had not moved them in any way.

The condition of the world where people are willing to do anything for money and power is revealed when they say "We're just poor people following the instructions of the rich, you understand?" (Selvadurai, HG 231). These men sometimes are left with no option but to obey those who have money and power.

One of them even warns Shivan not to make complaints to the police as gay relations are banned in Sri Lanka. They will only be punished further. The only way that was left before him was to plead to those who were behind these plans. The image of Shivan standing in between helplessly while they dragged Mili out of the house and the fright in Mili's eyes portrays the terror and horror that had engulfed Sri

Lanka. It also leads readers to experience and imagine the same fears and horror that all the people had experienced.

All his attempts to bring back Mili, being nice and obedient to Aacho and Chandralal had not bore fruit. Mili was killed. But there was nothing that he could do even after his death. He was denied justice even in his death like that of Ranjini. Knowing the rules of the country Sriyani decided to “Protect the innocent and vulnerable first” (Selvadurai, *HG* 240). She undoubtedly meant Shivan, whose life would be shattered into a whole mess if his relationship with Mili got exposed. Mili’s parents cannot handle the truth about his homosexuality according to Sriyani.

Sriyani was sure about the next step they had to take including informing the police that Mili had an accidental drowning during his late-night swim. She wanted to erase Shivan from this picture thus she states that Mili was alone in the bungalow. She sarcastically comments, “Yes, our state is a well-oiled one when it comes to these obfuscations. We received it well-oiled already from the British” (Selvadurai, *HG* 240).

She never judged or blamed Shivan for Mili’s death though they have not listened to her warning. She knew well that his love for Mili pushed him to negate her warnings. Sriyani could well assume that all this would end up because she knows Sri Lanka in all its depth which has changed tremendously all these years after Shivan’s migration, a change he could not perceive well. He misunderstood that Sri Lanka would accept them, but it happened otherwise.

Shivan feels that Sri Lanka had betrayed him for the second time. He had to flee to another country to escape the hatred that spread across the country. Again his love was snatched away from him.

Mili's death was reported in the newspaper, owned by the government itself indicates how manipulative those who hold money and power can be. Even a well-executed murder like that of Mili was made into an accidental drowning with enough pieces of evidence such as fishermen's statements regarding strong currents that night. Though they have mentioned Mili's academic and non-academic achievements in schools, none of his activities at Kantha were mentioned, to avoid even a single glimpse of suspicion in the public.

When Shivan finally decides to leave the country, Aacho prevents him from going, by saying that "everything is all right now, everything has returned to normal" (Selvadurai, *HG* 245). The statement was bitterly received by Shivan as for him nothing would be the same from here onwards. He knows that the memories of Mili and its trauma will haunt him forever, both in Sri Lanka and in Canada.

The incident had completely shattered Shivan and Daya's relationship. He blames her for all the damage that she had done to him by playing a major role in killing Mili. It was her actions that made him hate Sri Lanka. He believes that he can no longer stay in the country because he says that "Everything is ruined now, everything is ruined for me here" (Selvadurai, *HG* 250).

Mili was his only solace in Sri Lanka and it was their love that held him close to the country. If not for this love, he would not have stayed in Sri Lanka for such a long duration. Now, with his murder and with Aacho's involvement he had lost all connection with the land and he feels as if he is a stranger in the country.

The memories of Mili kept haunting him even when he reached Canada. He was torn between two worlds and was unable to decide where exactly he belonged. He felt himself responsible for everything that had happened to Mili. He often

wandered without a destination in mind to divert his thoughts. Even the most pleasant things going on around him did not make him happy. He kept within himself all his remorse and sadness. Summer had made the streets of Canada more lively and happier. But he could not enjoy anything of that sort. He felt as if happiness was deprived from his life forever.

Though Shivan did not find fault in him in the murder of Mili, he pondered over several things to blame himself. In reality, it was the ethnic tensions and differences that had paved the way for Mili's murder. The ethnic riots and those who have exploited the current scenario had killed Mili. Shivan had only loved Mili and longed for their happy life together.

However, through Mili's death, Selvadurai portrays the fact that families are held together in times of sadness. The way Renu and Hema had cared for Shivan after his return, and their kindness had indicated the love that they had for each other. Similarly, Tudor Jayasinghe who was living with his mistress leaving his wife and son behind, finally came back to his wife, "their common loss has brought them together" (Selvadurai, *HG* 273). Irrespective of all the hatred that was going around, the Sri Lankan families had kept strong ties and intense love for each other.

The influence of Mili on Shivan was always there. He had wished that a man whom he later came across the street to be a replica of Mili. His sense of loss over Mili finds ways to return his memories seeking all possible and impossible ways to bring back Mili and his memories in any way.

However, the news about Sriyani's arrival to Canada accepting the invitation by the University of Toronto and Amnesty International to deliver a lecture on Sri Lanlas's current situation had made Shivan nervous. He was hesitant to meet her.

However he attended the lecture and on seeing her again a desire popped up in him to go back to Sri Lanka. He says “I watched her draw near to my row and felt a swell of longing for the smell and humid heat of Sri Lanka, for Mili, for the life I’d had there” (Selvadurai, *HG* 276). But after listening to her speech, he no longer wished to return to Sri Lanka. For a long time, Shivan avoided news regarding Sri Lankan issues despite various incidents.

One of the incidents happened at Jaffna University Helidrop, through which IPKF tried to disarm Tigers. But it failed leading to the massacre of Indian troops. This almost put an end to India’s involvement in Sri Lanka’s ethnic issues.

JVP too had created issues by calling country-wide curfews and attacking those who were not ready to participate. Apart from that they had tried to shut out all voices that were raised against them including those of academicians, human rights workers, journalists, and artists.

The government was also active in introducing new laws in the country which suited their intentions and used them to murder people who stood as obstacles in their way. They had also continuously threatened the human rights activists and imposed unnecessary censorship over the press.

Selvadurai’s desire for peace in the country can be understood from the way he opens up about the Tigers, government and the JVP through the words of Sriyani. The Tamil priest after her talk at the University had insisted Sriyani to call the Tigers as freedom fighters and not terrorists. Sriyani then defined terrorism according to the United Nations Charter by which she stuck to her opinion of Tigers as terrorists. Their acts of violence against the civilians and conscription using child soldiers were according to the definition of terrorism.

For saying against the government and supporting JVP at some point, she was called a 'traitor'. Sriyani expressed her disagreement with the JVP activists and said that she had only emphasized their grievances and was not in support of the atrocities they have committed so far. She believed that the government can be criticized on this account, because "Government tyranny was not the way to fight insurgent tyranny" (Selvadurai, *HG* 277).

She had also not stopped her human rights activities as she visited the university to raise funds to buy sewing machines for the women of Sri Lanka who were affected the most during these turbulent times as self-employment had become mandatory to survive.

The condition of Sri Lanka had worsened each day, and the gradual ascension of it is well explained as the novel progresses. Hema had heard from a taxi driver the activities done by JVP to make the lives of the poor a hell. The work stoppage at the refinery led to the scarcity of fuel and even poor people were not getting kerosene for cooking. He says they were aiming to raise a revolt against the ruling class by the poor.

The growing animosity between the police and JVP is told in the novel, when the policeman says to Hema, "These dogs are ruining our country. They are punishing and killing our families because we are in the security forces. But for every one of us or kin that die, we will take away twenty of them" (Selvadurai, *HG* 288-289).

The way all these are affecting the poor people of Sri Lanka is drawn through the conversation between Rosalind and Hema. Rosalind's grandnephew who was a bright student at the University now serves as a gardener at Daya's house. Rosalind

explains the reason that three University students, suspected to be JVP activists were arrested, tortured, and killed

The security men, along with the minister's son had taken the students to an estate, cut off their genitals, broken their hands and feet, then burnt them. A postmortem revealed that nails had been driven into their heads while they were still alive (Selvadurai, *HG* 291).

The horror of the incident led Rosalind to think that his life was more valuable than education. Thus by creating fear, even the basic right of education is denied to the poor people of Sri Lanka

Shivan had fallen in love with a man named Michael in Vancouver, with whom he starts his new life in an apartment. However his past life has not freed its clutches from Shivan. Daya survived a stroke that had led Hema to decide to bring her to Toronto. She had wanted Shivan to bring her to Canada and to reconcile with her as she believes he has enough time to heal from his trauma of Mili's murder. But Shivan is not ready to forgive her until Aacho takes responsibility for her bad deeds.

Until this point, Shivan had not revealed to Michael his relationship with Mili and the cruel way in which it affected him in his past life. But after finding Michael, he was living a happy and peaceful life except for some memories of Mili popping up frequently. But now the arrival of Hema and Renu had irritated him to the point in which he is scared of the threat that they will possess in his relationship with Michael. He believes that she came there to ruin his life. Thus he asks, "Haven't you done enough damage to my life?" (Selvadurai, *HG* 330). However finally he melts at the thought of his grandmother's sadness.

But his decision to return to Sri Lanka had posed a threat to the relationship between Michael and Shivan. Michael does not want him to go back to Sri Lanka and tells him to move on thus leaving his past life behind. Knowledge about the concealment of his early life and relationship with Mili that had already created some resentment in Michael. It elevates more with Shivan's decision to meet his Aacho. He even makes the condition that if Aacho will not forgive Shivan he should not return to Michael anymore and he says that "I don't want you coming back a wreck and burdening me anymore" (Selvadurai, *HG* 346). But Shivan had already made up his mind to go there.

To know more about the current situation in Sri Lanka he had read *Daily News* from which he gained more information regarding the new government under Chandrika Kumaratunga, the widow of Vijay Kumaratunga. He also learns on how the ceasefire accord was under threat with the lack of faith on both sides, of the Government and the Tigers.

He had also learned about the deterioration of JVP that was suppressed by the government. However in the attempts to destroy JVP around forty thousand people were killed. By now IPKF had to leave its influence on Sri Lanka, with the union of the government and Tigers to wipe them out of their country. As his previous travel to Sri Lanka had impacted his life, this time he travels to Sri Lanka amidst a tense period.

The thought of returning to Sri Lanka had begun to hit Shivan more strongly with the memories of Mili. He ruminates over different paths that he should have taken to rescue Mili and worries over whether he can cope with Aacho if she denies her culpability in Mili's death.



Shivan knew well that his return to Sri Lanka would cause an end to his relationship with Michael. His regret over not opening up to Michael and his fear over its impact on him is so intense that he decides to leave Michael, for his good. He now believes himself to be a naked Perethi who does not deserve any happiness and does not want to have Michael encounter the same fate through his relationship with Shivan. Thus, he thinks:

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 (Selvadurai, *HG* 370).

He leaves Canada by abandoning all the peace and happiness that he had currently enjoyed. Upon reaching Sri Lanka he will have to indulge in a world that retains constant threat and fear through torture, disappearing Tamils, suicide bombers, and so on. His eager search for the name of Sriyani as a human rights worker in the newspapers as the new government offered more freedom for the activists to express their viewpoints finds no result. Instead the name of Chandralal was often seen in the papers. He had diplomatic stands but in reality, supported the war of peace. These thoughts confused Shivan about his decision. His inner voice told him to turn back, he realized that an escape from destiny was impossible.

The social and political conditions play a major role in the identity development of individuals. The children brought up amidst violence and traumatic atmosphere develop several issues during their process of identity development. According to David Becker

They experience chronic fear, which means that the normal mechanism which supports human beings to react and protect themselves against threats becomes a permanent psychological feature of personhood, persisting long after the threats may have disappeared and actually weakening self-protection (565).

It also impacts their relationships in myriad ways. “One tries to develop friendships, feel close to others, and develop some trust, but one also expects that everything can be destroyed at any time” (Becker 565). It happens with Shivan in the novel. Though there were other reasons, his experiences of ethnic conflicts and ethnic intolerance in his own family affected him deeply. The trauma he experienced with the murder of Mili, his partner in Sri Lanka haunted him for years and he remained hesitant to be involved in any relationship. He began a relationship with Michael four years after Mili’s death. But the memories of Mili often came back to him and he could not love Michael the way he loved Mili. He had also developed trust issues in their relationship.

Thus, the story of Shivan showcases how his early life in tense Sri Lanka is still haunting him. Hence, Selvadurai portrays that the trauma such as ethnic conflicts and riots created in people are so hard to overcome. It will haunt them forever, and the memories of it will never fade.

*Cinnamon Gardens* depicts people’s familial, social, cultural and political lives in the 1920s Sri Lanka. It focuses on the caste, class and ethnic differences that existed in the country alongside the colonial influences after independence. The two major protagonists in the novel are Balendran and Annalukshmi whose narratives progress in a parallel manner. However Selvadurai has displayed each character with

profound relevance thus contributing considerably to the political tense atmosphere and class differences in Sri Lankan society during the course of the novel.

*Cinnamon Gardens*, a suburb of Colombo was a cinnamon estate that was meticulously safeguarded by the colonizers for their benefit. Mudaliyar Navaratnam's house was one of the finest mansions there. Before colonialism, a Mudaliyar was considered as a representative of the king but under the colonial regime they were bound to be loyal to the British empire because they were appointed by the governor. They belonged to the Legislative Assembly and were directed to carry out colonial policies.

Accordingly the house was always filled with the long queue of petitioners to acquire favours from Mudaliyar for their various problems. The class difference is portrayed in the novel through how they awaited there to speak to him. The wealthiest and high-profile ones were seated on large reclining chairs whilst the poor ones stood on the and under the trees for long hours.

The ethnic tensions that pervaded the Sri Lankan soil had marked its beginnings from the arrival of the Donoughmore Commission. Many of Mudaliyar's colleagues during his service in the Legislative Council had already joined the Ceylon National Congress to oppose self-rule. On the day of Mudaliyar's birthday, they were invited along with members of the Ceylon National Congress and Queen's House. Consequently, it was a gathering of people with conflicting perceptions and politics.

The first glimpse of the ethnic divide in the novel is visible through Mudaliyar's decision to support the Ceylon Tamil Association. Although Mudaliyar is obliged to abide by the norms of the British governor and does not have any permission to support the local associations, he explicitly appreciates the Ceylon

Tamil Association. His interest in joining them had sprung out of the apprehension about the minority groups in Sri Lanka during the arrival of the Donoughmore Commission. One of the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission is to enable self-government in the new constitution. With Sinhalese being the majority population of the country, he grasps the future of Sri Lanka becoming a Sinhala Raj which will horrendously jeopardize Tamils. Thus, he assumes that the Ceylon Tamil Association will unite all Tamils which is a requisite act to which he is willing to contribute independently.

Navaratnam's colonized psyche propels him to presume that "Besides, self-government would be fatal to this country economically" (Selvadurai, *CG* 30). According to him Sri Lankans have advanced much to incorporate self-government. Besides that, he denounces the concept of a universal franchise, which scares him as it will grant voting rights to everyone including those who belong to the lower classes and castes, including his servants. The upper and middle classes' concern over the lower class accessing equal rights with them is derived from the frustration of their diminishing power over them.

He assumes Lord Donoughmore who is leading the commission to be a nobleman while he is anxious regarding the Labourite, Dr. Drummond Shiels who according to Navaratnam is endeavouring to impose European principles into the land of Sri Lanka. He then proposes to influence Dr. Drummond's adviser, Mr. Richard Howland who was once Balendran's partner during his studies in England. He intends to accomplish it by utilizing Balendran's earlier affair with Richard.

All of Mudaliyar's anticipations to manipulate the mind of Dr. Shiels through Richard were shattered with Richard's revelation of his position, which is not

what Mudaliyar has perceived as Dr. Shiels' Assistant. The disclosure that Richard does not possess any influence on Dr. Shiels had disheartened him terribly. He was his last resort in thwarting the Donoughmore Commission's recommendations of self-rule and universal franchise. Richard turned furious knowing the intention of Balendran to influence him for the sake of his father. It disrupted his fondness for Balendran all again.

The social and political condition of Sri Lanka during the time is divulged through the discussions between Balendran and F.C. Wijewardena, through a bitter argument between two men belonging to Ceylon National Congress and Ceylon Tamil Association and through Mudaliyar's critique on universal franchise. F.C. considers every measure implemented before the arrival of the Donoughmore Commission as a 'gold rush' as he thinks that people all across the country are endeavouring to claim their land. He is anxious regarding the division of country and people into diverse clusters as he was incognizant about it until it occurred, "Up-country Sinhalese versus low-country Sinhalese, Karava caste versus Gogiyama caste, Moors, Malayas, Christian Tamils, Hindu Tamils, Buddhists, and so on and so on" (Selvadurai, *CG* 68). He apprehends and elucidates the concern Ceylon National Congress had according to him that sectionalization would only steer people to appreciate only their race, caste and ethnicity and is detached from the national sentiment.

Balendran however, advocates the system of administration that had functioned smoothly for the country, before British rule, where everyone ascertained their involvement in the affairs of the country. But F.C. only trusts in the parliamentary system and criticizes the Ceylon Tamil Association for their demand for a separate state. He believes this will obliterate the unity of the country by splintering

it into scattered parts. But Balendran who has scrutinized the state of affairs unambiguously enounces that “It already is in thousand pieces” (Selvadurai, *CG* 69).

Eventually, through the verbal fight between two ardent followers of the Ceylon National Congress and the Ceylon Tamil Association, the situation had become apparently clear. The Donoughmore Commission had purported to propose territorial representation in place of communal representation that had developed discontentment among Tamils, the minority population in Sri Lanka. The Ceylon National Congress had endorsed this by saying, “Communal representation simply forces people to think in terms of their race and not as a nation” (Selvadurai, *CG* 70). He even crossed the boundaries to state, “Give us a British Raj any day to a Sinhala Raj” (Selvadurai, *CG* 70). Though the arguments were grounded on two political parties, implicitly indicative of the Sinhala- Tamil thing, with this statement the Sinhala- Tamil divide came into the front.

Sriyani’s remark that people should not think in terms of differences and coexist with unity as they all belong to the same country had exposed what happened in 1921. With the enactment of little franchise in 1921, the Tamil community who enjoyed the majority status until the point, was overturned into a minority based on the population rate.

This unleashed tensions among the communities which were never acknowledged by the Sinhalese members of the Ceylon National Congress. The Sinhalese even rejected Tamils’ request for a special reserved seat. Balendran speculates that if it was permitted at that time, such insecurities may not have amplified in the life of the Tamil community. They may have even adjoined the

Congress if it turned out otherwise. Here, Selvadurai explicates what devises Tamils in Sri Lanka to agitate against territorial representations.

Mudaliyar's intervention to ease the grave situation shortly came up with the much controversial discourse of granting the universal franchise to the country. From the ethnic differences, it instantly went up to the existing class and caste differences in Sri Lankan society. Mudaliyar unabashedly articulates his disagreement about universal franchise, that is granting vote of rights to all the adults in the country which will allow people from lower classes and castes to have a voice in choosing the ruling party. Mudaliyar cannot digress from the situation of getting his servants and laborers this authority that he presumes will eventuate in mob rule. The contempt he carried toward them is unveiled when he postulates, "Illiterate beings to whom the sophistication of politics is as incomprehensible as advance mathematics to a child" (Selvadurai, *CG* 70).

Most of the assembled guests representing the upper and middle class society of Sri Lanka are apprehensive about labour union member A.E. Goonesinha. He had already mobilized a protest insisting on universal franchise. Their aversion for Goonesinha was not because of his engagement with the Labour Union, but for the caste he appertains to. The manner in which lower caste people were accustomed to using the back entrances instead of front entrances was considered idealistic by these men, who had ruminated about that time as "good old days". Acknowledging them equally and even quick handclasps enrages these men bearing caste prejudices.

More about Donoughmore Commission is revealed through Richard Howland who was designated to investigate further on the topic. He discovers it complicated to extract conclusions by analyzing distinctive viewpoints of diverse groups in Ceylon.

Balendran concurs with him by stating that designing a constitution for Ceylon is arduous as “It is a complex society with humorous horizontal and vertical divisions” (Selvadurai, *CG* 108).

Donoughmore Commission was associated with the women's enfranchisement. Annalukshmi could accurately foresee the future of poor people including the labourers, fishermen and farmers for whom self-rule will not suffice in acquiring the freedom they deserve. She perceives that it would be just a matter of exchanging the regime, under which they will continue to suffer. However, the concept of female voting elevates her spirits despite its limited franchise.

An avert criticism of the National Ceylon Congress was expounded by Shivan regarding its deputation before the commission in which they demanded self-rule but dismissed universal franchise and communal representation. He borrowed Dr. Shields' remark on Congress to allude to their apathy for the people of Ceylon. He questions how their party can represent the voice of the Ceylonese people if they are indifferent towards the poor people and the minority sections of their country. Through the recommendations of the commission, the British even seemed to be empathetic toward the lives of these people. Through their demand for the limited franchise, Congress presumably restricts power to those rich and high-born people, thereby abandoning the poor in the same pathetic conditions that they had endured all these years. Thus, for Balendran the British and the Congress are just two sides of the same coin. The poor people are not going to benefit in any way even if their demands are approved by the commission.

A.E. Goonesinha and the Labour Union's views opposing the Ceylon National Congress were perceivable to Balendran. They were incredibly supportive of a



universal franchise that is not limited to the affluent and well-educated women of Sri Lanka. They insisted emphatically on the indispensability of voting rights to working women as they were conscious that, “unlike the more fortunate women, she faced the stern realities of life. She had to earn her livelihood” (Selvadurai, *CG* 183).

Nonetheless, the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission were found inadequate. The recommendation for self-rule was disapproved. Communal representation was supplanted by territorial representation, thus discarding the seats allocated for the minorities in the council. The only satisfying aspect of the commission’s recommendation was a universal franchise that could demolish the semi-feudal system of Ceylon.

The caste divide is observable through the deteriorated relationship between Mudaliyar and his elder son, Arulanandan who loved a lower cast woman, Pakkiam who was the servant in their family. Mudaliyar’s gesture of resisting their relationship finally culminated in Arulanandan stabbing Mudaliyar and their subsequent banishment to India. All this happened on the day of Mudaliyar’s birthday. Inevitably, it turned out to be a haunting memory for Mudaliyar as each of his following birthdays had the unsettling regrets of a crime constantly stalking somebody.

Though the family has instantaneously lost all communications with Arulanandan, Nalamma, his mother had truly endeavoured to retrieve the connections. Nalamma does not retain any sort of caste biases and ardently longs to see her grandsons. She even knows Seelan’s age accurately and tenderly envisages his physique and mannerisms with compassion. She expresses all these to Balendran, who often dispassionately responds by reminding their obligation to obey Mudaliyar.

Anguished at their frigidity, she proclaims that “Men don’t understand. The cord may be cut at birth, but the attachment remains” (Selvadurai, *CG* 34).

Nalamma is portrayed in direct contrast to Mudaliyar. Although being a Hindu and an ardent believer in Hindu deities, she is respectful of all religions and faiths. She had believed in the existence of divine power everywhere and in every religion. Thus, she was never reluctant to attend Catholic churches and saints or visit a Buddhist shrine alongside her worship of Lord Ganesh.

While enclosed in a society where caste disparities had a major role, Balendran had frequently contemplated Arul and Pakkiam’s relationship, and whether the differences will be impacting their life or not. They both hailed from different backgrounds, Arul led a luxurious life being born to a rich family, a landowner’s son, educated in European culture whereas Pakkiam belonged to a proletarian family of a low caste called Koviari and was uneducated. He ponders over what caused them to fall for each other.

To Mudaliyar Arulanandan and his son “were irrevocably lost to him, his son by his marriage, his grandson by the blood he carried in him” (Selvadurai, *CG* 237). Such was the profundity of ethnic and caste intolerance Mudaliyar had inside him. However, his son’s impending death seemed to melt Mudaliyar to some degree. His concern was about Arulanandan receiving a proper funeral ritual that corresponds to his heritage and that does not dishonour his family prestige. He worries about his oldest son being buried like a nameless pauper as “it would be a shame on him, an insult to the family name. Silk, as his father used to say, remained silk even though it was torn. His son was still of their blood and should be given a funeral that was worthy of his lineage” (Selvadurai, *CG* 237).

The existence of the caste system in Sri Lanka and its employment on different occasions, especially during funeral is explicated in the novel. Mudaliyar speculates that Arul will not be receiving an appropriate funeral in India because the specific caste who partakes in the leading funeral rites are not present in India. He thinks that “In India, there would be no Koviars to bathe the body and accompany it to the cremation grounds, no Parayars to beat their drums, no Pallars to cut the firewood and make the funeral pyre” (Selvadurai, *CG* 237). Therefore, he demands that Balendran should retrieve his body back to perform his funeral appropriately in Jaffna. He even urges him to persuade and threaten them by reminding them about their allowance that will be withheld if they refuse.

The caste differences are deeply inscribed in Mudaliyar. According to him, “One’s birth, one’s caste was tangible, as if these differences were manifest in the blood in one’s veins, one’s ligaments, the very smell of one’s sweat” (Selvadurai, *CG* 241). He even claims a story to tell about him. He had vomited all of a sudden after sipping from an untouchable’s cup mistakenly. He regards it as his pure body’s mechanism that had functioned all at once as if rejecting poison. Thus, for such a person, his eldest son marrying a lower-caste woman was unbearable. He had thus compelled Pakkiam to return to her village, which eventuated in Arul stabbing his father.

Mudaliyar’s hypocrisy is revealed through the way he exploits Pakkiam’s mother sexually and emotionally. After Pakkiam’s father’s death, her mother was forced into such a relationship to raise a child. Pakkiam undoubtedly comprehends that her mother disliked him but is unsure about Mudaliyar’s sentiments toward her. She explains that “A man would come to say that my mother was wanted at the big house. I thought she had work there. I only understood, once my mother had died and

I was brought to Brighton from Jaffna” (Selvadurai, *CG* 278). Balendran began to loathe his father for exploiting Pakkiam’s mother by taking advantage of her miserable life. Mudaliyar’s conviction that the impoverished people lack a feeling of shame and integrity that his wife, niece and other women who belong to the upper class possess. That had prompted him to exploit her predicament. Even after committing all these heinous acts, Arul was accused. Arul, unlike his father had loved a woman sincerely. He could have acted exactly as Mudaliyar, but he married her then challenging all existing caste prejudices.

Arul’s son, Seelan’s words reflect the dejection he had over his return from London where he was accepted. He believes that he deserves better. He often ponders over the sort of life he would have if he were in Ceylon. Though Seelan could not lead an opulent life in England during his study days as Lukshman, his return to adversity and impoverishment disheartened him.

Arul is presented in the novel in direct contrast to Mudaliyar. He never succumbed to the dictates of his father. He despised Mudaliyar’s intolerance for those who belonged to the low caste. Though all this deprived him of the luxurious life that he had lived in Ceylon and turned him poor, he managed to facilitate a good education for Seelan to become a doctor. He was affluent in terms of his relations. Balendran had witnessed the friendships that he had nourished even during a short period on the day of his funeral from the number of people who attended the funeral.

Mudaliyar and Balendran had a squabble over Arul’s cremation in India. Balendran for the time being has realized his father’s hypocrisy and antipathy towards Seelan. He asks him, “Did you really think I could ask my nephew to let his father be

cremated by people he doesn't know, people who have rejected him because of his birth?" (Selvadurai, *CG* 302).

Remorse had accumulated in Balendran for his impassivity in reacquainting with his brother and nephew. He had turned resilient about bringing Seelan to Ceylon. Balendran is well aware of the pride and fondness that Mudaliyar had for Lukshman, Balendran and Sonia's son. He had mattered a lot to Mudaliyar as Lukshman is "the continuance of his lineage, the aristocratic blood of his family" (Selvadurai, *CG* 316). But Seelan is not perceived so by Mudaliyar because he perceives that his mixed blood assuredly subordinates his position. Although Balendra sensed Mudaliyar's aversion towards Seelan he had resolved to bring Seelan to Ceylon and to support him in pursuing his dreams as that of Lukshman.

On the contrary, Seelan is perplexed to reveal his own identity as he surmises people holding religious, ethnic and caste hatred in their minds may scorn him. Thus he conceals his true identity and disguises himself as Dr. Govind to Annalukshmi. When Balendran insists that he should be honest about his own identity and that the past is past, Seelan says, it's Balendran's overestimation of people that leads him to say so. The depth in which all the hatred around caste is internalized within Seelan is visible when he says he will not permit her future daughter to have an alliance with a low-caste man which upsets Balendran and Sonia.

Mudaliyar's hatred towards low-caste people persists even after Arul's death. He had conceived Seelan's love for Annaluskhmi as deceitful and thus he informs Louisa about their meetings and his endeavours to ensnare her into a relationship. He even assassinated Seelan's character by saying, "He has all the cunning and deceit one expects of that class" (Selvadurai, *CG* 356).

The religious disparities present in Sri Lankan society and its strengthening hold on people are revealed through the failed marriage of Murgasu and Louisa, Annalukshmi's parents. They had married against the wishes of their family as Murgasu was a Hindu, who later converted into a Christian following a fight with his father and Louisa, a Christian. However, they were living happily with his wife and children, until his sister, Parvathi came to their lives after their father's death. Being guilt-ridden for not being able to attend his father's final funeral rites, and for not being able to accomplish a son's duties, Murgasu reverted to Hinduism that paved the way for all conflicts and failure of their married life. Though Louisa can still remember the true passion and love they shared she knew well that nothing can make them return to their happy days.

Here, Louisa's strong religious beliefs and biases against other religions are presented. She was the daughter of a preacher and had a strong aversion towards Hinduism. She could not help to live with a Hindu anymore which ended up in their separation to a great extent. Now after long years, Murgasu has come up with a plan to marry Annalukshmi with Muttiah, Parvathy's son. She takes it as an insult to herself as if Murgasu is dragging her into the street and spitting on her. Through this act, Louisa believes that "her husband was conveying to the world that their marriage held no meaning for him, that he was her husband in name only" (Selvadurai, *CG* 42). She is also scared about the nun-like life that Annalukshmi will have to encounter at Muttiah's house.

After coming back to Hinduism, Murgasu had tremendously changed. He had become someone who could not even pardon his daughter for entering the hall of their house where men of their own family were gathered. From there onwards she was often criticized, scolded and often even beaten by him. At this point, Louisa decided

to leave him by saying that “I will not let our unhappiness affect the girls”

(Selvadurai, *CG* 218).

The novel portrays the way some people holding power could manipulate things and create conflicts among people by using ethnic and religious differences. A small disagreement occurred between Sinhala Buddhists and Muslims related to the restrictions regarding music and parades before their place of worship. It was later rumoured that the Muslims killed and hanged a Buddhist monk .

The village headman who made use of the situation had sent his chaps to attack the only shop in the village that was owned by the only Muslim family in the village. He had aimed to start his shop there. However, the conflict that followed later was misinterpreted by the British. They had entered the village and shot people.

Nancy had lost her parents as part of this. One night her parents were dragged out of their house by a planter’s servants and shot to death. She could escape only because her mother had hidden Nancy inside a wooden chest. The villager who could escape from the planter rescued her in the next morning.

It was then that Miss Lawton had adopted her out of her sympathy. The planter who had killed her parents somehow knew Miss Lawton and asked her to adopt Nancy out of repentance. The religious intolerance of Miss Lawton is brought about again when Nancy expresses her feelings for Mr. Jayaweera and her longing to live her life with him. Miss Lawton is shocked by her lack of discretion to have an affair with a man of such a lower rank. She spits out her religious intolerance by saying, “I didn’t bring you up a good Christian to have you give yourself to this” (Selvadurai, *CG* 327).

Thus, whatever has contributed to the tragic part of Nancy and Annalukshmi's life is connected to the ethnic, religious and class intolerance that rules Sri Lanka during the period of the novel.

Inter-ethnic and inter-caste marriages are considered a taboo in caste-biased and ethnic intolerant societies. Selvadurai presents such a world of biases and prejudices through the novel *Cinnamon Gardens*. The novel draws upon several instances of prejudices through the characters Pakkiam, her mother and the union member who belongs to the so-called lower caste in Sri Lankan society. Arulanadan's son Seelan encounters prejudices owing to his mixed ethnicity. By marrying Pakkiam Arulanadan had to leave his home and was denied to have access to Mudaliyar's properties. Thereupon they lived in extreme poverty. Seelan too experiences it unlike Balendran's son who leads a luxurious life. Though both Arul and Balendran are Mudaliyar's sons they live in extremely different conditions. Balendran and his family enjoyed all the luxuries of life whereas Arulanadan and his family led a poverty-stricken life. Their life conditions are altered by the severity of the caste and ethnic system that existed in Sri Lanka during the period of the novel.

Thus the role that religious, ethnic, class and caste differences play in Sri Lankan society is well portrayed through these characters and their relations. The ease with which people can completely shut their people from their lives due to their unacceptance to be inclusive is proved to be the cause of the tragic lives that many have to endure in the novels. Arulanandan, Pakkiam and Seelan had to live a poor life, despite being Mudaliyar's eldest son whereas Blendran enjoys all the luxuries of life. The three daughters of Louisa and Murgasu had lost all of their parental love and care owing to these very differences and prejudices.



The ethnic intolerance individuals carry is again brought about through Philomena Barnett's conversation with Sonia and Annalukshmi regarding Women enfranchisement. Against Philomena's praising of Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Annalukshmi had expressed her support for Mrs. George E. De Silva's opinion of Ponnambalam Ramanathan as selfish and narrow-minded. She states that in her opinion, "such men were swine and that women were the pearls and that good pearls cannot be crushed that easily. Even by men" (Selvadurai, *CG* 118). When it goes beyond her understanding, Philomena resorts to criticizing the woman for her marriage with a 'low caste Sinhalese man' who was a member of the Labour Union, despite her belonging to a 'good burgher family'. She thus says to Louisa how Agnes Nell has become degraded with her involvement with this man and how she was "Talking just like a real Mattakkuliya fishwife" (Selvadurai, *CG* 119).

Another instance of Philomena's intolerance for people belonging to a low caste and class is brought about when the Macintosh boy whose family came up with a proposal for Annaluskhmi had eloped with an older and rich divorced woman. Philomena says that he had eloped with "A low-class parvenu" (Selvadurai, *CG* 177). She adds, "He was now living in sin with this woman" (Selvadurai, *CG* 177). The sin she mentioned here has much to do with a high-class man marrying someone below his rank.

Selvadurai portrays in the novels how schools, teachers and educational institutions served to preserve ethnic, racial, and caste purities that govern Sri Lanka greatly. The religious intolerance is visible through Miss Lawton's insistence to admit only Christian girls in her school. The admissions are denied to even the brighter students because of their belongingness to other religions.

Another instance of this strict adherence to ethnic and caste intolerance in the educational arena can be seen through Mrs. Van Der Hoot's attitudes and acts when she is running the Van Der Hoot School for Ladies, where Kumudini is studying. Her son, Dicky's colleagues at General Hospital had often visited the school and as the school was progressing, she had allowed them to mingle with the girls in the school with the hope that their presence will increase the popularity of the school. But her ethnic and racial sensitivities were displayed in the way she had paired them, "Karava Sinhalese with Karava Sinhalese, Goyigamas with Goyigamas, Burghers with Burgers, Tamils with Tamils, and so on" (Selvadurai, *CG* 144). So, Kumudini is paired with a Tamil doctor named Ronald Nesiah.

Annalukshmi's act of applying for a job at a Hindu school in Jaffna had created a turbulent atmosphere in her home that was fuelled more by Philomena's religious intolerance. She had laid it on the head of Nancy as influencing Annalukshmi in her bad deeds. She had criticized Nancy for living with a low-caste man and thereby committed herself to a sinful life. Philomena views the foreigners' attempts to support low castes as if raising a snake, which will spit poison in the end despite all the attempts to love it, as it is created like that, "It is in its very nature to do so" (Selvadurai, *CG* 382). However Annalukshmi is sure about her decisions for life.

The wicked reflection of social stratification in Sri Lankan society can be seen in the train journey of Annalukshmi and Mr Jayaweera. They had sat on their booked seats and the compartment was full. In between a rich man had entered the compartment and demanded Mr. Jayaweera's seat which he had mistaken to be his. Later, even after examining their tickets and finding that the seats belonged to them, he asks Jayaweera to find a place in the second class. The man had already assumed Jayaweera's class from his clothes.

The way other Tamil women and those who belonged to upper-class society blamed Annalukshmi for supporting Jayaweers indicated the class intolerance that each one of them represents. The man has even addressed Jayaweera as “your man” to Annalukshmi, “as if he were a gardener or labourer” (Selvadurai, *CG* 197). He even goes to the extent of enquiring about the sort of relationship that existed between them. All these unnecessary talks finally led Jayaweera to rise from his seat in distraught.

Through characters Annalukshmi, Balendran and Sonia, Selvadurai stresses the need of the youth to overcome all the stigma and prejudices around caste, class and ethnicity that pervaded Sri Lanka during the time. The novel presents the 1920s Sri Lanka, the changes and tensions surrounding the Donoughmore Commission and its recommendations for the new constitution that came into existence from 1931 to 1947. Unlike his other novels, *Funny Boy* and *Hungry Ghosts* which present ethnic conflicts and riots in their extremity, this book offers elaborated explanations of the Donoughmore Commission and its influence on creating all these tensions.

The removal of communal representation gave rise to the minority Tamils’ resentment and insecurities about their existence in the country. Thus paved the way for future ethnic riots and then to civil war which are presented in the other two novels. Through his works, Selvadurai portrayed a gradual ascension of Sri Lanka’s ethnic issues and tensions. The tales unfold the whole of Sri Lanka’s history without prioritizing anyone.



## Chapter Four

### Intersectional Identities

“We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts” (Crenshaw). Kimberly Crenshaw spoke these words during the New York Women's Foundation's "Celebrating Women" breakfast in New York City when she was asked about her view on the present relevance of intersectionality today. The idea of intersectionality was developed by Crenshaw in 1989 to explain the multiple marginalization that African women had experienced in their lives.

Intersectionality incorporates interlinkages between various social categories and factors while facilitating and analyzing the overlapping identities of individuals based on their belonging to diverse social and cultural conditions. Thus intersectional theory investigates the way in which power operates in society through various identity-constructing scenarios. (Atewologun 2).

The two important terms that are related to the power operating within a society are “systems of power” and “systematic oppression”. Systems of power can be defined as the set of written and non-written rules and conditions used to control social institutions like employment, education, and health care. When such systems and institutions adopt discriminatory methods, it is called systematic oppression (Ramos and Brassel 3).

“In the social sciences, an intersection denotes the crossing, juxtaposition, or meeting point, of two or more social categories and axes, or systems of power, dominance, or oppression” (Atewologun 2). Intersectionality analyzes an individual’s

personal and public interactions that are made possible through social constructs.

Thus, it draws attention to individual privileges and non-privileges as part of their socially and culturally constructed identities.

In *Hungry Ghosts* this intersection majorly happens in the three characters of Shivan, Hema, and Renu. In the case of Shivan, the intersection occurs through the intermingling of his racial, ethnic and sexual identities. The intersection happens in Hema and Renu through their gender, ethnic and racial identities.

According to Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge intersectionality “as an analytic lens highlights the multiple nature of individual identities and how varying combinations of class, gender, race, sexuality and citizenship categories differentially position each individual” (8).

The significance of Intersectionality is made clear with the question “It takes a multitude of the oppressed to make their voices heard and felt. But what about the voices that do not fit into one single category of oppression? Will social progress let them slip through the cracks? (Delegado and Stefancic 64).

A lot of times, people think of intersectionality as only gender and race intersecting. They forget about things like sexuality, ability, age, immigration status—all these different identities that can interplay and are subject to systems of power that privilege certain people over others (Ramos)

Thus intersectionality helps to analyze the way in which various social institutions oppress individuals on a multiple basis. Factors like gender, patriarchy, race, ethnicity, sexuality, sexual orientation, class, caste and refugee status contribute to the oppressing and marginalizing of individuals in different ways. The scale of

intensity of this marginalization reaches its peak through the intermingling and overlapping of these social constructs. Thus, the theory of intersectionality offers an in-depth examination of the numerous subjugations and prejudices that individuals have to encounter as a part of their constructed identities through the intersection of the various social and cultural constituents.

Another significant aspect of intersectionality is that of pointing out the differences that sprouted from homogenous groups. The experiences of individuals are not the same even within minority social groups. For instance, a feminist group may have women who do not experience the same life conditions. The predicaments of black women are different from that of white women. There may be women with varied sexual orientations. Class differences may exist within the same group. Thus it is difficult to define one's identity based on a single social category.

Another instance of it is in the way the queer individuals of colour face the anti-queer prejudices and the intensity of atrocities against them. Compared to white queer individuals, black and Asian individuals had to undergo more severe violence for being queer (Atewologun 3). The concept of racial purity had a tremendous influence in facilitating these attacks and even contributing to one's internalized homophobia. Thus De Vries says that "structural barriers are differentially permeable based on their interconnecting social positions" (Atewologun 3). In short, intersectionality sheds light upon the intricate experiences of individuals including their involvement with different aspects of social and cultural conditions.

Here the concept of "multiple consciousnesses" drawn by Richard Delegado and Jean Stefancic in the Critical Race Theory is significant. "The notion of multiple consciousness, which holds that most of us experience the world in different ways on

different occasions, because of who we are” (63). The concept is relevant as “if we pay attention to the multiplicity of social life, perhaps our institutions and arrangements will better address the problems that plague us” (Delegado and Stefancic 63).

Thus according to Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge intersectionality “as an analytic lens highlights the multiple nature of individual identities and how varying combinations of class, gender, race, sexuality, and citizenship categories differentially position each individual” (8).

Else Quest Hyde provides three assumptions regarding intersectionality. According to her an individual’s identity is characterized by their involvement with various social categories and the experiences that people receive from one category and can be influenced by other categories as well. Secondly, since power hierarchy operates within all social categories, power becomes an integral part of intersectional theory. The final assumption is that all social categories offer personal and contextual phases which would make the experiences fluid and dynamic (Atewologun 4).

Thus intersectional thinking is “a cohesive set of theoretical concepts, method of analysis, and belief system” (Atewologun 4). The significance of Intersectionality is made clear with the question “It takes a multitude of the oppressed to make their voices heard and felt. But what about the voices that do not fit into one single category of oppression? Will social progress let them slip through the cracks? (Delegado and Stefancic 64).

The concept of intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberley Crenshaw. She had attempted to draw attention to the position of African women based on the two factors of gender, and race. (Atewologun 5).



Browne and Misra's analysis of the US Labour Market based on the intersecting identities had revealed the pathetic condition of immigrant women workers who often had to work hard for extremely low wages. Along with their migrant status, the general assumption of women not being the prime earners in the family led to this discrimination (Atewologun 6)

One of the significant methods of intersectional studies used in the thesis is the thematic analysis of the texts while stressing the historical and cultural factors that come in to play during the course of the novels. The intersectional theory has also helped to examine the social, historical and culturally constructed power and inequalities in society that had paved the way for all sorts of discrimination and marginalization. Thus, intersectional reading and analysis provides a greater way of giving voice to the socially marginalized individuals on various levels.

The thesis makes use of the intersectional theory to analyze the various forms of marginalization that individuals had to face through the various systems of oppression. It becomes more relevant while investigating the discrimination and atrocities that are faced by the queer individuals. Analysis of the marginalization that queer individuals encounter cannot be done only based on their sexuality or gender. The trauma and prejudices that a gay man of colour faced need to be fully analyzed through the lens of race, class and his social position apart from his sexuality. Thus, the intersectional approach offers a wider understanding of the social prejudices that work against queer individuals.

Doug Meyer in his article "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-queer Violence" analyses the queer individuals' life experiences regarding anti-queer violence they

have encountered using the intersectional framework to understand the varying depth, modes and dimensions of the violence faced by them. She explains on how homogenizing the individual experiences who come under the same group can neglect their differences based on their race, class, ethnicity, gender, and so on. Thus, intersectional theory helps us to shed light upon the underprivileged and marginalized individuals within the same homogenized group.

The multiple discrimination that the queer individuals of colour had to undergo is largely associated with other institutional power structures such as race, class, ethnicity and gender. According to Meyer, they may encounter racism and homophobia in their communities of colour along with internalized homophobia, institutionalized homophobia and racism. Apart from that westernizing homosexuality further makes it worse for the queer individuals of color to experience marginalization from their communities. (Meyer 852). Thus, Collins points out that LGBT people of colour have to “confront pressures to hide their sexuality or gender identity - pressures that white LGBT people do not face because of their racial identity” (Meyer 853).

Chong-suk Han in his article “Being an Oriental, I Could Never Be Completely a Man: Gay Asian Men and the Intersection of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class” investigates the stereotyping of Asian men especially gay men through the imposed femininity. In the text, the author provides various contemporary scenarios where this stereotyping has become prominent., Chong-Suk-Han uses Critical Race Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze existing narratives on Asian men. This attribution of femininity and weakness to Asian men had drastically affected the lives of gay men.

The absence of Asian gay men in gay media had stressed the prominence of white supremacy in the Western gay community. This had often led Asian gay men to play submissive roles in their relationships. Often young gay men have let themselves be chosen by older gay men in their fifties or sixties because “in a contemporary gay culture where masculinity is valued over femininity, aggressive is favored over submissive, and white is favored over colour” (Han 90). Thus Chong Suk Han says that “gay Asian men have less power in negotiating with their white partners who are perceived by Asian men as being more desirable than other men. Predictably, gay Asian men come to see each other as competitors rather than potential allies” (Han 91).

This often leads to low self-esteem in gay men who would then look for white men to accept them as their partners. Thus they sacrificed their concepts regarding a partner in an attempt to get accepted by the Western mainstream gay community. Thus Shivan says that he had attracted only the old and ugly gay men though he was a young adult during the time. It was purely his racial identity that denied him a partner of his own choice. Even the relationships that he had encountered were merely for sexual satisfaction and there wasn't a single element of love in it.

Kent Chuang in his article “Using chopsticks to eat” explains his own experience of being a gay man in the mainstream white gay community:

I believed that I was trapped in a circle of old men and leeches in their forties, fifties, and sometimes older, unfit or fat, unattractive bordering on repulsive. "The only reason they want us is because they can't get a white boy," one Asian friend told me... I concluded that us ugly Asians couldn't get a white boy so we settled for financial and emotional

security with old rice queens. Asians sacrificed youth for security, and rice queens sacrificed color for youth (qtd. in Han 92).

Thus the lack of self-esteem created in gay men through media and popular tales rooted in racial differences led Asian gay men to desperately seek white gay individuals as their partners instead of tightening their bond with each other. They often neglected themselves in their struggle to find white partners. Often this ended up as young Asian gay men having relationships with much older men who were unable to find white young gay men as their partners. The old men also thought that they can not handle white young gay men's masculinity at their old age. However, gay Asian men had always let themselves be chosen even by the old men who were often unattractive to their spirit of youth. Thus, Poon identifies it in his article "Inter-racial same-sex abuse: The vulnerability of Gay men of Asian descent in relationships with Caucasian men" that "white men who were seeking Asian men tended to be between 39-58 while Asian men seeking white men tended to be between 18-38" (qtd. in Han 92).

Gay Asian men were competing among themselves to get a white gay partner. Their lack of self-esteem and pride led them to such situations where they began to neglect their own culture thereby dismissing their racial identity. This very lack of confidence made them avoid partners from their race. As a result Asian gay men often ended up welcoming all proposals from white gay men irrespective of their age, income and behaviour even dismissing their concepts of partners.

This often led gay men of colour to always remain submissive to their white partners. This submissiveness was reflected in general routine matters as well as in their sexual acts. Often they avoided using condoms fearing their white partner's

disinterest. The dilemma that gay men of colour faced because of the masculinizing and feminizing of Asian gay men reached its peak when they were prevented to use safety measures. Thus journalist Alethea Yip quotes Dredge Kan's words in her article "Until There's a Cure: APAs step up the fight against HIV and AIDS" that:

One of the things that came out [of the focus group] was that Asian men said they don't use condoms with white men. . . They fear rejection and they look up to a white gay-male ideal. They feel intimidation from white partners and they are unable to convince their white partners to use condoms... It's power dynamics (qtd. in Han 93).

The imposed notions about the masculinity of white men had created a sense of superiority in them which led them to look at Asian gay men often with an inferior lens. This added fuel to the distress and trauma of gay Asian males. This made men of colour submissive, apologetic and undemanding in their relations. The white supremacy created by colonialism thus continued to exist in the mainstream gay communities.

Hence it was always a matter of confusion for people when Asian gay men had white gay men as their partners. Even the internalized racism in Asian gay men caused by all these had led them to be jealous of such relations.

The most complex and intricate experiences of a gay individual are portrayed in great depth in *Hungry Ghosts* that could only be analyzed using intersectional analysis. In *Hungry Ghosts* Shivan was the one who took the initiative to migrate to Canada and convinced his mother for the same. For him, the rising ethnic tensions were not the mere cause. He always had a desire to explore his sexual freedom and be true to himself and the people around him. After having read about Canada, he knew

that he could attain sexual freedom once he reached there. Shivan was conscious of the narrow-mindedness of the Sri Lankan society during the period of the novel especially in matters like sexuality, sexual orientation and sexual liberty. Amidst such a tense world, where everyone was striving to live peacefully with equal rights, the prospect of “coming out” seemed an unnecessary and insignificant act. Thus Shivan had held high expectations about his life in Canada.

However, things happened not as he expected once he reached there and tried to connect with the gay community in Toronto. The very first instance of Canadian preference for people’s appearances was brought about in the novel by his friend Ronald. Shivan received Ronald’s contact number from a pamphlet while he was searching for some books in a used bookstore. The pamphlet was meant for gay individuals who were struggling to embrace their sexual orientation and looking for help from someone. After their meeting, during a casual talk, Ronald exhibited his dislike for Canadian people while mentioning their preference for people’s outer appearances. He said that, “I hate how unnatural and artificial and snobbish people are. And how it’s always about outer appearances. Canadians are so uptight physically; we never touch and embrace in the casual way people do in other cultures” (Selvadurai, *HG* 99).

While he spoke Shivan could discern the pain that Ronald had experienced in his past from his eyes. His guessing over Ronald’s worse experiences of being marginalized or ridiculed in the country proved true when Shivan experienced it all by himself. Ronald had even warned Shivan to be involved in sex only with a man he truly loves and can trust in the context of AIDS.

Ronald also had a bad opinion regarding the gay community of Toronto. According to him people there wanted only sex and not real relations. His aversion was so intense that he even hated that place itself. Ronald said that “You can’t go to buy a damn carton of milk or do your laundry without some queen trying to pick you up” (Selvadurai, *HG* 101). He had almost similar opinions about his fellow volunteers and those who called him after seeing the pamphlets. He had even resorted to the night shift to avoid such calls. There was always a tone of hurt present in his voice whenever he talked about all these although he had not shared any of his previous bitter experiences.

Howsoever, the picture that Ronald had presented to Shivan about the life of gay individuals in Toronto was not as pleasant as he had thought. Ronald goes to the extent of saying, “You will fall prey to those vultures and make your life a piece of trash” (Selvadurai, *HG* 103). Ronald tells Shivan not to go there at any point in his life. All their conversation had foreshadowed what is waiting for Shivan in Canada.

However following his break up with Ronald Shivan had decided to visit the gay bars of Toronto to get involved with similar-minded friends from the gay community. He came to know about gay bars in Isabella Street from the gay newspaper ‘Xtra’. While he was in the queue to enter the dance floor, a sense of loneliness had hit Shivan for the first time. There everyone came either as a group or as a couple. Though Shivan had offered a friendly and welcoming smile, none of them responded or even gave him back a friendly smile. One among them showed Shivan to his friends by whispering something and they all giggled. This demeanour had increased his feeling of alienation.

Shivan stood in the dance bar for a long time. After some time a seemingly older man approached him. He had grey hairs and was probably in his fifties. Shivan did not find anything attractive about him. However since Shivan was longing for someone's attention, he got involved in sex with the old man in his apartment. Until this point Shivan was marginalized and alienated from the mainstream on account of his sexual orientation and ethnicity. When he reached Canada, his gay and ethnic identity had intersected with his racial identity thus leading to his alienation from the mainstream gay community of Toronto. Selvadurai thus offers a wide canvas of how intersecting identities had culminated in the triple marginalization of Shivan.

The story does not merely end there. Through his experiences thereafter, Shivan gradually realized the truth behind Ronald's words including the superiority that white men have in the gay community and the rigid beauty perceptions. It reciprocates what Chong Suk Han has analyzed in his article "Being an Oriental, I Could Never Be Completely a Man: Gay Asian Men and the Intersection of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class" that how the stereotyping of Asian men often made their life miserable. The imposed femininity of Asian men and the masculine attributes of White men gave white gay men an upper hand in the mainstream gay community of Toronto.

Thus Shivan says, "I was generally not considered good-looking because of the colour of my skin. In the meat market of 1980s gay bars, I was not prime steak. I did not, however, lack attention. I attracted the old and the ugly" (Selvadurai, *HG* 106). However Shivan's sense of loneliness and need for sexual fulfilment leads him to accept anyone who is interested in him. The relations that he had were merely to satiate his sexual urges and most of them did not even extend beyond a single night. Whatever Ronald had warned Shivan about the gay community was proved. From the



similar experiences that Shivan encountered the readers are led to assume that all non-white gay individuals might have gone through all these.

Selvadurai reflects on the condition of Asian gay men in the 1980's Sri Lanka. Apart from Shivan's racial identity along with his gay and ethnic identities, the intersection of his migrant identity had also contributed to his suffering and alienation. Shivan thus realizes:

My foreignness was my appeal, and these white men ascribed both a submissiveness and feral sexuality to me, one man begging to put on a loincloth and turban that he had in his closet" (Selvadurai, *HG* 106).

The colonial attributes and the popular tales in the gay media offered supremacy for white masculinity. The feminine traits that were attributed to Asian gay men along with the white masculine supremacy led to the degradation of Asian gay men causing them to remain submissive to their white partners. It all happened during a time in which masculinity was considered superior to femininity, where men and women were not considered equal. However this feminization of Asian men led the gay men to act in submissive roles in their relationships. Along with that the colonial tale of non- Westerners as the Orient, other and uncivilized worked among the gay community. This is reflected in the way that the white man had asked Shivan to wear a loincloth and turban thus attributing feral sexuality to him.

However there were non-white gay individuals whom Shivan had ignored even when they showed interest in him because of his fear of AIDS and other similar contagious diseases. This could also be analyzed in the context of white supremacy within the gay community. Often Asian gay men had to remain submissive to their white gay partners. Thus they had often ended up not using safety measures like

condoms during sexual intercourse due to the anxiety about the dislike of their partners. This had often created fear among non-white gay men about themselves.

However for Shivan, it was far beyond it. When an Indian or Sri Lankan had approached Shivan to open up about their issues or to create a friendship, he often rejected it. Thus Shivan says:

I always kept these conversations short and moved on, not wanting to see in their haunted faces a reflection of my condition. We did not belong in the gay world because of our skin colour, yet spurned by our own people, we had no choice but to linger on its fringes” (Selvadurai, *HG* 107).

Gradually Shivan stopped visiting gay bars and joined a “coming-out” group where the sort of relations that were present in gay bars were forbidden. Dating was not allowed. It was more of a group for people to connect emotionally, sharing their lives and experiences. But despite getting relaxed and having good relationships, Shivan felt more lonely by sharing his life. He felt that no one had understood what he had gone through in his life in Sri Lanka. Along with that as in the gay bars a hierarchy was present in the coming out group as well. Everyone admired a blonde boy who had an affair with a black man in the group and the news about their relationship created a sort of jealousy in Shivan. He remarks:

The black man had slipped through the tight fence into the world of the charmed, the happy. I did not know how he had done it. I did not know what he had that I lacked, and I felt anguished at my ignorance” (Selvadurai, *HG* 107).

This made Shivan all the more frustrated as he began to search for what was wrong with him that prevented him to have a happy relationship. Through the incident Selvadurai again reflects on how all this stereotyping was working out in the mainstream gay scenario. The stereotyping had often attributed masculinity to white men, femininity to Asian men and hyper-masculinity to black men. Here the blond man's preference for the black man from Trinidad had showcased his desire to have a more masculine man, which again seemed to be a hard blow on Asian gay men. Selvadurai's intricate narration of Shivan's experiences and feelings as a gay Asian man in the mainstream white gay community of Toronto clearly portrays on how the intersection of his racial identity with his ethnic and gay identity had tripled the marginalization that he had been experiencing. It also sheds light upon the plight of gay Asian individuals in Canada during the time portrayed in the novel.

Shivan had experienced alienation and hatred regarding his ethnicity in a two-dimensional way. His father was a Tamil and his mother a Sinhalese. They had married against their families. Thus he had to face marginalization for being a minority Tamil in Sri Lanka since his father was a Tamilian. On the other hand when he reached his mother's house after his father's death he was insulted and alienated for his mixed blood. When ethnic tensions had erupted through his grandmother's house was registered as a Sinhalese house, they had to remain under constant threat with the fear that whether their neighbors would betray them for being Tamil. Renu too goes through the same predicament as she faces this alienation even more than Shivan because of Daya, their grandmother who disliked her.

Renu experiences racial discrimination in Canada concerning her feminist identity. Once among her peer group in Canada, she was indirectly ridiculed for Sri Lankan women wearing saree on all occasions. They portrayed this act as a

patriarchal tool that was imposed on women to make them weak. One of them said, “It’s just that my former girlfriend, who is South Asian, always said it was a symbol of oppression. All those yards of material wrapped around a woman’s body are intended to keep her from moving very fast. Like bound feet in China” (Selvadurai, *HG* 114).

They criticized the Sri Lankan women who wear sarees in the workspace, “that women worked in construction wearing saris, that doctors performed surgery in saris” (Selvadurai, *HG* 115). Irrespective of someone’s freedom to wear clothes of their own choice, they blindly passed comments indirectly criticizing Renu for not being able to recognize the invisible patriarchal restrictions that were imposed upon women through sarees.

Renu was hurt the most when they did not even give her a chance to speak as if her opinion was irrelevant. “Renu knew then that some judgement had been passed against her” (Selvadurai, *HG* 115). Though all of her Canadian friends seemed so cordial and friendly initially, as time had passed, she understood the way she was alienated and how they considered her inferior based on her race. Thus, when she reached Canada, two new identities including that of immigrant and racial identity intersected with her already existing gender and ethnic identity thus increasing her alienation and marginalization in the new place.

Hema also faces marginalization in Canada that is reflected in the jobs that she had to undertake to survive in Canada irrespective of her educational qualifications and previous experiences in her homeland. None of them had helped her to secure a good job in Canada during the initial days. This was related with her immigrant and racial identity. In Sri Lanka she worked at the newspaper as the editor which was a

much more exciting job whereas here she ended up doing jobs that include stuffing “envelops, photocopied, collated, filed, typed lists and letters” (Selvadurai, *HG* 121).

These jobs never helped her to be financially stable and she began to get depressed,

as she sat in lunch rooms listening to permanent workers discuss office politics, as she shambled around malls on her breaks, gazing at all the things in the window displays she could not afford to buy, the realization grew clearer until she finally understood that she had repeated her own history. She had tried to escape her mother and ended up in a worse place (Selvadurai, *HG* 121).

The discrimination that she had faced at her workplace made her furious even at home. She was always humiliated by a woman half her age at the office who was probably her boss. “A woman who thinks Third World people live in trees, but whose grammar and spelling are appalling? You should hear the way she talks to me as if I am a halfwit.” (Selvadurai, *HG* 128). Hema seems to be deeply hurt by the way that Canada had treated her.

Hema poured out all the frustration that she had received from her workplace at home in the form of anger. Shivan and Renu were also affected by it. She had reached a point where she no longer could not control her anger. She could not relax even after work. Thus, when she reached home after work, “she was filled with bilious vitality and tore around the kitchen, banging pots and pans, throwing spices into sizzling oil, not caring where they splattered, yelling at my sister and me if we dared to come in” (Selvadurai, *HG* 129).

The home had become a horrible place for Renu and Shivan as they often had their food in fear of their mother’s outburst of anger at any point, if they rejected or

wasted the food. The dishes she made out of anger were not always palatable. However they had never dared to reject it or they could understand what she was going through. Renu's affair with Okara who is engaged to another woman increased her anger more.

The identities she possesses including that of gender, ethnicity and race had contributed to the discrimination she had faced in Canada. The intersecting of these identities added more misery to her life which touched its peak when she landed in Canada. Thus, she says, "I wonder what these people must have felt, dying in this country. If I die in this godforsaken country, please don't scatter my ashes here. That would be unbearable" (Selvadurai, *HG* 125).

It was not just from gay bars that Shivan had faced discrimination but also from many of the high-paying jobs that were meant for white men. This added to his feeling of otherness. Renu too had faced it at many points in her life but she became bold enough to talk and fight against it. She says "There is so much work to be done in this racist, parochial country, Shivan" she remarks that. "Things have to change. These bloody whites must be forced to take their heels off our throats" (Selvadurai, *HG* 134). But Hema who has reached middle age on the other hand had often succumbed to these racial discriminations without having the courage to respond.

In short the initial years in Canada was terrible for Shivan, Renu and Hema. Nothing had happened as they expected. The weight of their already existing marginalizing identities was doubled with the intersection of new ones. Thus, their lives can only be fully analyzed considering the intersecting identities. The complex experiences of human beings can only be examined in full depth by analyzing the identities that constitute them.

Selvadurai's debut novel can also be examined using the intersectional theory. However, as in *Hungry Ghosts*, *Funny Boy* does not offer discrimination based on race as the novel ends with Arjie and his family's final decision for migration and their last days in Sri Lanka. None of their experiences on reaching there have been mentioned. Arjie had experienced alienation and discrimination in his homeland based on his sexuality, ethnicity and age.

Arjie Chelvaratnam was ridiculed by his cousins and family members for his feminine interests. The story begins when Arjie is seven years old, and cousins of his age are well aware of the way the boys and girls ought to behave even during their carefree playtimes. The novel has described intrinsically the division of play spaces according to gender roles that had been explained in detail in the first chapter. This division and children's awareness of these gender disparities entered their innocent worlds through the interference of elders.

This showcases how a child's identity can be influenced by the elders around them to whom they look forward to answer all their queries. What happens, in reality, is the fact that they inject their own beliefs and manipulated notions into the children's heads. In the novel, Arjie is ridiculed and harassed mostly by the elder family members, with his mother and father being no exception. Thus, the blame for all the humiliation that Arjie had faced in his childhood goes to the elders in the family.

The elders conceive his identity as a child to be weak and expect a sort of submissiveness on his part for not presenting his true self before others. Thus, Arjie's evolving gay identity and his identity as a minor citizen or child had contributed to the discrimination and humiliation that he faced in the initial years of his life. As the novel progressed, he was marginalized based on his ethnicity. Thus, in *Funny Boy*, the

intersection of Arjie's identity as a child with his gay and ethnic identities leads to his triple marginalization in the novel.

Thereby the analysis of the major characters and the challenges they encounter in their lives can well be analyzed by incorporating the theory of intersectionality as "Intersectionality as an analytic tool examines how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing. Race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, nation, religion, and age are categories of analysis, terms that reference important social divisions" (Collins and Bilge 7).

Thus, the use of intersectional theory helps us to investigate the varying depths and dimensions of marginalization, discrimination and alienation that individuals face based on their multiple identities. This chapter investigates the effects of intersecting identities by the in-depth analysis of major characters in the texts in the context of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality.



## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The present study entitled “Journeying into the World of Identities: A Reading of the Select Fiction of Shyam Selvadurai” investigates in detail the identities of the major characters’, including sexual, ethnic and intersectional aspects. The issues of sexual and ethnic minorities along with other minority sections of society had been always a global concern. Selvadurai through his works showcases the plight of minority sections of Sri Lanka and their experiences after reaching Canada. He contributes to the world of literature by exploring the intense suffering and predicament of the marginalized individuals. The thesis has made an in-depth analysis of the characters’ identities using the relevant theories and concepts.

Identity studies had provided a wider canvas to delve deep into the troubles that human beings had encountered all over the world. Various factors had played significant roles in the formation of identities recognizing of different concepts such as self and social or collective identities were particularly crucial in making identity readings of the texts. According to Mary Jane Kehily identity formation is “structured through the identification of processes of ‘sameness and difference’, inclusion and exclusion at work in the everyday interaction of talking to others” (3).

Selvadurai had explored the journey of the protagonists' recognition of their sexual orientation and identity from their younger age except in *Cinnamon Gardens*. Thus, the inner struggles of the individuals during each identity formation stage are intrinsically portrayed in the works. The social factors and norms that had contributed to the ascension of their struggles had played a major part in showcasing the homophobic Sri Lankan families and society. To theoretically investigate the identity

formation of individuals and the societal conditions creating hindrances in their way, the thesis places Davies and Neal's text *Pink Therapy* as the major source for the second chapter.

Thus, the chapter entitled "Gay Identity and the Select Narratives" had explored the gradual development of the protagonists' identities by employing the framework of gay identity development models proposed by Natalie Jane Woodman and Harry R. Lenna, Vivienne Cass and Eli Coleman in the work *Pink Therapy*. The text plays a significant role in evaluating the texts chosen for the present study.

Exploring the novels in the context of gay identity development models is a major study put forward by the second chapter. The different stages of gay identity development proposed in the models of Woodman and Lenna, Cass and Coleman were employed to examine the identity development of the protagonists. According to Woodman and Lenna, the stages are denial, identity confusion, bargaining, and depression (Davies 71); Vivienne Cass's model includes stages of identity confusion; identity comparison; identity tolerance; identity acceptance; identity pride and identity synthesis. (Davies 76). Eli Coleman proposes a five-stage model and the stages are pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationships, and identity integration (Davies 82).

The socio-political conditions around the individuals are crucial in their identity formation along with the conditions in their family. Selvadurai underlines the significance of family support in creating a positive environment for gay individuals to connect with their inner self. The lack of familial and social support had created mental traumas for the protagonists in varied depth and dimension leading to the development of internalized homophobia. Arjie, Balendran, Shivan and Amrth go

through it. Balendran even leads a closeted life by going to the extent of marrying a woman, presenting himself as a heterosexual man.

The readings of his texts provide a clear answer to the role of family in accelerating the inner turmoil of gay individuals. Instead of helping people with gay sexual orientations to escape social homophobia the families often inject feelings of shame and insecurity among kids who show any behaviour against the “social norms”. The first chapter of the thesis shows how internalized heterosexism shatters people.

The thesis had investigated in detail the workings of internalized heterosexism in the gay protagonists. One of the major reasons for internalized homophobia as evident through the novels is the lack of family support and understanding. The parents of Arjie, Balendran and Shivan had behaved almost rudely while knowing about their sexual orientation. Shivan’s mother Hema had insanely responded by saying that she would have strangled him at birth if she knew it before. The trauma created by her words had haunted Shivan for a long time and had made his mental health worse.

The different instances of characters showing internalized homophobia are analyzed in the second chapter. Balendran’s hatred towards himself each time after indulging in a physical relationship with Ranjan, Shivan’s fear after encountering his first sexual experience with Ronald and Arjie’s anxiety towards Shehan after their first romantic endeavour are all reflections of their internalized heterosexism. It also stands as a hindrance in their way of coming out. Everyone encounters the fear of others discovering their sexual identity that had also sprouted from the deeply engraved internalized heterosexism within them.

Internalized homophobia present in the character is well examined using Margolies and her colleagues proposed ways of finding out internalized homophobia in the individuals. The proposed ways are “fear of discovery”; “discomfort with obvious lesbians and gays”; “rejection and denigration of all heterosexuals”; “feeling superior to heterosexuals”; “belief that lesbian and gay men are not different from heterosexuals” and “short- term relationships” (qtd. in Davies 59-64).

The thesis also analyses reflection of the toxicity of patriarchal society presented in the novels. Schools and other educational institutions constitute a mini version of the patriarchal society and operate on the same notions. Society’s existing toxicity enters into schools. Children and teachers alike contribute to the lack of a positive identity development atmosphere for gay individuals. The Queen Victoria Academy in *Funny Boy* serves the purpose well. Thus, Diggy says to Arjie, “Once you come to The Queen Victoria Academy you are a man” (Selvadurai, *FB* 211).

The distress of gay individuals in the novels is accelerated more with the rising social tensions around them. Arjie and Shivan encounters ethnic conflicts during their identity development stages and it affects them and their relationships. Thus the “appropriateness of time” plays a significant role in gay individuals’ “coming out process”. The ethnic conflicts marked the biggest threat during their time while invalidating or neglecting their inner struggles concerning their sexuality.

The third chapter entitled “Ethnic Identity and Conflicts: Aspects and Dimensions ” examines the ethnic divide and the consequent conflicts in Sri Lanka as portrayed in the novels along with its effects on the people of Sri Lanka, especially the minority ones on the basis of caste, class, ethnicity and sexuality. The chapter

provides a continuation of the traumas encountered by gay protagonists in the Sri Lankan patriarchal society that had elevated with the escalating ethnic riots.

Primordialist, Constructionist and Instrumentalist schools of thought regarding ethnicity had helped to analyze each character's way of conceiving ethnicity. When the Primordialist school of thought considers ethnicity as a "primal bond to one's ancestral bloodline" (Yang 42), for constructionists, ethnicity is a constructed one in accordance with social conditions. On the other hand, the instrumentalist school of thought had considered ethnicity as a tool to attain material benefits. All these ideas put forward by theoreticians were found feasible to identify in at least one character in the novels.

A better analysis of Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts can be done in the light of two factors proposed by Jonathan Sarna in his *Theory of Ethnicization*: "Adversity" and "Ascription" (Yang 45). Establishing the Sinhala language as the official language of Sri Lanka and other reforms supporting the Sinhalese majority in the country is said to be the adversity faced by Tamils that had led them to fight against it, which culminated in the forming of terrorist groups like LTTE.

However, the chapter mainly discussed the effects of these riots and conflicts on people's relationships and the difficulty it caused to gay protagonists. The ethnic conflicts and hatred elders in the family kept for other ethnic groups put an end to Radha and Anil's relationship and she got married to another man. The case with Gay protagonists is more painful, Shehan and Arjie were separated for a long period after his migration to Canada, and their reunion is left to readers' interpretations. In *Hungry Ghosts*, the scenario is even worse, Shivan loses Mili forever, Mili loses his life for his relationship with Shivan, and Shivan is left with no option to resist and react.

Nalini lost Daryl too by the same ethnic tensions that prevailed in Sri Lanka during the time of the novel.

The fourth chapter titled “Intersectional Identities” evaluated the impact of intersections of diverse factors such as race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation on the identities of the characters. The chapter also provides insights into the manner and depth in which the process of intersection oppresses the individuals on multiple levels. Kimberly Crenshaw had employed the intersectional theory to shed light upon the plight that black women have experienced regarding their race and gender.

The concept of ‘power’ is significant in locating the social marginalization experienced by the individuals. Power creates a hierarchy in any society depending on the multiple social factors that is intensified by the process of intersection.

The disparities that exist among homogenous groups like queer are brought to light by the intersectional theory. The difficulties that queer individuals of colour encountered in a racialized society are made visible through the intersectional reading. “Intersectional Theory and Practice” explicates clearly Doyin Atewologun’s stance on the discrimination and violence confronted by Asian queer individuals.

The chapter analyzes the working of intersectional identities in *Funny Boy*, *Cinnamon Gardens* and *Hungry Ghosts*. The thematic analysis of these texts has stressed the ideas of power, prejudice and privilege that operate in the societies where the characters belong. Since all three novels present gay protagonists, the discrimination that they have experienced has much to do with their other identities.

To provide authenticity to the accentuating intensity of the discrimination faced by gay men of colour in the novels, Doug Meyer’s “An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People’s Evaluations of Anti-

queer Violence” has been incorporated in the chapter. The author stresses the significance of inquiring about the differences among queer individuals such as race and class to fully understand the struggles they confront in their daily lives. This outlines the significance of intersectional theory in literary and critical discourses.

Stereotyping is another outcome of the intersection of various social factors that predominantly accelerated the oppression and prejudice that individuals experience. As the chapter’s major focus is on gay protagonists and all hailed from Sri Lanka, the subjugation that Asian gay men encounter is significant. One of the major threats that Asian gay men faced in the Western gay society was the stereotyping of them as feminine. An analysis of Chong Suk Han’s article “Being an Oriental, I Could Never Be Completely a Man: Gay Asian Men and the Intersection of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class” is incorporated in the fourth chapter to shed light upon the stereotyping of Asian gay men in the novel *Hungry Ghosts*.

The difficulties that Asian gay men encounter in the Western gay communities are made perceivable by Shyam Selvadurai in *Hungry Ghosts*. The effects of stereotyping Asian men as feminine and the attribution of masculinity on white men are made visible through Shivan in *Hungry Ghosts*. Along with the struggles of coming out, fear of homophobic society and family, Shivan encounters new issues in Canada based on the colour of his skin. The fourth chapter elucidates the difficult experiences of Shivan by underlining the concepts taken from the articles.

Shivan’s encounter with the white-supremacy-ruling gay community in Toronto was foreshadowed earlier through Ronald’s contempt towards Canadians and the gay community. Though initially his words and opinions seemed strange, as the story progressed, it is made clear that Ronald too had bitter experiences in Canada and

from the Toronto gay community which would have made him contemptuous towards Canadians.

The thesis clearly elucidates the use of intersectional theory to underline the multiple oppression individuals encounter clearly through the character Shivan and his life experiences after reaching Canada in the fourth chapter of the thesis.

The alienation and loneliness that Shivan Rassiah experienced in the Toronto gay community can be evaluated in the light of the stereotyping of Asian gay men. He knew that other white gay men's dislike for him was based on the colour of his skin and his race. Thus, he often ended up having sexual relationships with men who were double his age without any passion towards them.

The impact of intersectional identities is also read through the female characters in the novels Renu and Hema who were Shivan's sister and mother. Their struggles in the new country are further elevated by the intersection of their status as women, migrants and Asians. Renu was silenced in the feminist community at her University by her other white friends who teased her saying about the Sri Lankan women's love for the saree and her inability to criticize it.

Hema endured oppression in her workplace for her racial identity. Her frustrations arose from doing jobs that did not match her educational qualifications and experiences and is reflected in her relationship with Shivan and Renu. The intersecting of her gender ethnic and racial identity has contributed immensely to the marginalization that she had confronted in Canada.

Chapter four also analyzes the effect of intersection on Arjie Chelvaratnam who is the protagonist in *Funny Boy*. Along with his age, he faces discrimination and alienation regarding his sexual and ethnic identities. His ethnic identity as a minority



Tamil in the Sinhalese majority Sri Lanka made his coming out more difficult and time-consuming. In a country where Tamils were hesitant to speak their language, coming out was not even possible for Shivan even in his dreams.

The review of relevant literature in the field of study and the present thesis leads to identifying the existing gaps in this area of research. Though Selvadurai and his novels have received a wide acclaim, a combined study of the different aspects of his writing is lacking in the field. Another evident research gap is the absence of intersectional identity readings of the texts which offers an in-depth understanding adding to the credibility, value and authenticity of his works.

To fill the existing gaps in the research area this thesis employs intersectional theory to analyse the impact of intersection of different identities of the protagonists. The thesis thus investigated the various identity readings of Shyam Selvadurai's major texts and the ethnic conflicts of Sri Lanka. Through his four seminal works, Selvadurai presents a world in which multiple literary analyses are possible. While examining the identities of major protagonists in the light of factors like class, caste, ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality and sexual orientation the thesis touches all the significant aspects of his writing.



## Chapter Six

### Recommendations

Selvadurai presents various Tamil and Sinhalese tales in his works. A reading of these tales can be done to form a better understanding of the culture and traditions of Sri Lanka. He also uses verses from *Tirukkural* at different points in the novels. The Buddhist tales incorporated into the novels are connected to the situations of the characters. Thus a study on the interpretation of these tales can be done.

Similarly Selvadurai includes several dreams in his writing. Most of these dreams are seen by the protagonists at crucial periods in their life. Selvadurai uses these dreams to foreshadow the future incidents awaiting the protagonists and to communicate their internal conflicts. This can also be explored as a topic of research.

The film adaptation of Selvadurai's debut novel *Funny Boy* with the same title was released in 2020 and directed by Deepa Mehta. A comparative study of the novel and film can be done using theories of adaptation. Since Selvadurai's works deals with different periods of Sri Lanka, academic research on the historical readings of the novels is also possible.

Literature often helps to ease the complications regarding the notions of gender, sexual orientation and sexuality. Thus it is significant to have reliable literary sources for young children to understand their sexual orientation and gender especially if they belong to a non-conforming gender and sexual orientation. *Funny Boy* presents a child gay protagonist and his gradual understanding of his sexual orientation. Thus a study on the work can be done as how a literary work ought to address the issues young gay children encounter.



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