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## The Gendered-Peripherals: Studying the ‘queer’ with Jeet Thayil’s *Narcopolis* and Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City*

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The paper proposes to present with a study on the identity-crisis,-( in terms of ‘gender and ‘sexuality’), faced by individuals not conforming to the set codes and perception of the same and at the same time it also tries to address the curious equation between the trio of ‘power’, ‘economy’ and ‘sexuality’ and how the ‘others’ try to adapt into the norms to sustain and survive, norms, which are carefully constructed accordingly for the convenience of the top-rank of this ‘sexual-hierarchy’,- the ‘masculine’.

To identify and elaborate this ‘identity-crisis’ and the struggle to claim a space for existence of the ‘sexually-peripherals’, the paper has chosen to go with two referential literary-characters, the first one is of ‘Dimple’, a castrato prostitute from Jeet Thayil’s *Narcopolis* and a second one of ‘Manoj’ alias ‘Honey’, - a crossdresser bardancer from Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum city*. Both the literary texts mentioned offer an array of various other perspectives and address and depict many other issues, both being literary ventures capturing the adventures of the metropolis Mumbai , such as, if Thayil’s fiction pans on that of a 1970’s ‘Bombay’,- with a focus on the changing face of the city, and the change in its drug-culture, with the much lethal ‘garad’ or drugs replacing the opium-addiction in its psychedelic saga-telling, then the ‘city-ride’ in Mehta in his journalistic documentation (perhaps, with a page 3 flavour as well) of Mumbai in his non-fictional text plays the confidante of people from different nooks and neighbourhoods of the society, - of gangsters –of murderers- of riot-makers and riot-victims- of – of bargirls and businessmen-of film-folks-of Mumbai- Police and criminals- of encounters and escapades-of ambition and abandonments,- and many more,- but to help the case concern in the paper particular, resisting to tease with any other perspective , the study has selected out the two characters mentioned , with Thayil’s ‘Dimple’ being the prime one in the text ,whereas Mehta’s ‘Manoj/Honey’ contributing to only a slice in his Mumbai panorama, to pursue the primary objective of the article, concerned with the crisis of the sexual- outcastes, as already mentioned before.

### Introduction:

A particular individual’s identity against the contemporary setting is conditioned with quite a few factors, like,- physical-features, racial, national, cultural, educational, economical, ideological, and of course one of the most important (or better say ‘influential’) one , - the sexual status, which in its turn builds up the individual’s ‘gender-consciousness’,- providing with a particular ‘gender-tag’. But this simple act of labelling gets complicated when an individual’s sexual appearance, feelings, or needs deny to fit in the binary of the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’, as in cases such as of, ‘transsexuality’, ‘homosexuality’, ‘bisexuality’, ‘cross-dressing’, and of ‘eunuchs’, ‘hermaphrodites’, and ‘castratos’. If the term ‘sex’ carries much of an ambience of the biological and medical reality ,the the term ‘gender’ certainly carries within the idea of social-acceptance and sexual-categorization and consciousness,- and thus the concept

of 'gender' ignores and marginalizes every other sexual-consciousness outside the doubly divided categorization, compelling the norm-defying lot to be the 'outcasts', the 'peripherals', the 'marginalized', or to simply go invisible with coercion to conceal or convert. And perhaps thus while teaching 'Gender' to children, the primary set consists of the two,- 'masculine' and 'feminine', the other two being the 'neuter-gender' suggesting inanimate objects etc. while the fourth one, the 'common-gender' presents the concept from a perspective of putting a stay on explicitly discerning between the 'male/female' binary where professions are concerned, rather than addressing the issue of 'intersexuality' where the lines of discernment get blurred, - a certain sign of an attitude of unacceptance towards the non-normative sexual-beings. And this social unacceptance of any other sexual-identities beyond the formula of 'male/female', 'penis/vagina', 'testosterone/estrogen', actually creates a sense of identity-crisis for the said individuals, and for them, it becomes an incessant search to harbour a steady, static, acceptable identity. The loss of acceptance and the rejection engenders an existential-trauma,- the trauma of being a no-face with no 'space' on the pre-determined plain of the construct called 'Gender'. The identity-crisis also engendering from the reality of the coercion faced by the sexually non-normative folks, - a pressure,- direct or manipulated, to embrace appropriation, exercised by different authoritarian sects, such as,- society, government, or even religion. To practice a conscious-ignorance about the 'others' and thus conveniently robbing off any legal-sanctity and arrangements for punitive measures also contributes to the manipulation, resulting often in criminality and corruption in such relations, and a burden of secrecy. And in some nations, like Iran, the government with binary-gendered prerogatives, acts quite much 'lenient' in pressurizing 'gay' and 'lesbian' people to accept offer of government-assistance in surgically altering their biological sexual-identity, even if they intend not to go with such alteration, and where the only other alternative is the 'capital-punishment', as is defined by the law of the said country. And as has been reported by a B.B.C com, this pill of forced assistance has compelled many such people to migrate in order to avoid the manipulation, or the punitive rigidity.

To fish out a stable 'gender-identity' against this binary setting, often gets synonymous with a compulsion to sync with the norms, or at least pretend to sync with. And this binary-vision of the gender of an individual is often influenced much by the phenotypical facts, rather than prioritizing his/her actual sexual tendency and gender-consciousness. The paper proceeds to address this issue of 'identity-crisis' of the 'sexual-others' and the exploitative manipulations faced by them, with the two characters of 'Dimple' and 'Manoj/Honey', (respectively from Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*, and Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City*) contributing concreteness to the study.

### **The queer's quest for 'Identity' in Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*, and Suketu Mehta's *Maximum***

*City* : Thayil's maiden venture in the world of fiction (till now) *Narcopolis* offers nostalgic exploration of the 90's 'Bombay' with the changing dope-culture at its centre, presents with the character of 'Dimple',- the eunuch prostitute, the castrato bartender,- who cuts out to be the most striking and deep character among the others,- and it is to Thayil's credits who depicted 'her' in shades of a mystique symbolic way, almost a 'Christ-figure' in all her sufferings,- though the focus in this paper will be an assessment of the same character as a documentation of the identity-quest of an individual with no certain 'sexual' or 'gender' label to rely upon. A victim of 'castration',- 'sexual-amputation' in 'his' very childhood,- a childhood spent in being groomed as a 'castrato-concubine',- the character of 'Dimple' appears in the text in 'her' mid-twenties for the first time,-with all the typical 'feminine-charms', as the term 'feminine' is

expected to be like, or gets speculated upon by typical set standards. In fact, the first impression of - 'her',- presented by the narrator Dom is almost a cinematic projection of the sexually-charming 'heroine':

She was about twenty-five then and she had a habit in those days of shaking the hair into her eyes and shaking the hair into her eyes and smiling for no reason at all, a sweet smile as I remember . . . . (Thayil )

What turns out interesting in this search for an identity-cloak in terms of gender and sexuality is the conflict between Dimple's intellectual and philosophical speculations on the superficiality of the 'man-woman' binary and yet 'her' motives rooted in a desire to cling to a feminine identity,- a conflict not rarely faced by 'individuals' of so called 'uncertain' gender-types. To Dom's query of gender-preference Dimple's speculations bear a detached philosophical disinterest as she quips out:

Woman and man are words other people use, not me. I'm not sure what I am. Some days I'm neither, or I'm nothing. On other days I feel I'm both. (Thayil 11)

And yet her conscious efforts of detaching herself from the set gender-binaries are not enough for a complete denial of the same,- and she goes on discerning the differences of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' traits,- quite rightly commenting on the power of the 'male',-in sexual terms. She explains that "For conversation, better to be a woman, for everything else, for sex, better to be a man." (Thayil ). And yet Dimple's actions throughout the text speaks for her quest to fit within,- to appropriate her space within the set 'feminine' space,- a quest to harbor a stable gender-identity for herself, which is not in conformity with her intellectual and philosophical assessment of the same,- rather her idea of 'gender-fluidity' attempts to pour in more 'feminine-liquid' in practice. Her preferences,- from sartorial to sexual, reflects the trap of the binary gender construct, - where one must choose to conform with any one of the set polar identity,-and 'she' chooses to be the 'female'- with accordance to feeling and as well as convenience. As in Dimple's affection for the pick-pocket Salim's small-talks and attempt to understand the ambience of domesticity clearly hints at her desire to be counted within the social-ambience.

His questions were useless but comforting.she wondered if this was what it meant to be married, to be a wife. You were bored and irritated and comforted, all at the same time. (Thayil 130-31).

Her relation with Rashid, the opium-house owner initiates on a note of sexual cohabitation leading to a much deeper bonding,- Dimple being a prime partner in his dealings,- 'romantic', 'sexual', or 'mercenary',- keeping in note that his being a much married man with two wives and children as well posit no inhibition in his being romantically and sexually involved with an 'eunuch'. Her very first sexual encounter with Rashid makes her supply with an explicit affirmation of her 'woman-ness':

She knew what he wanted. She took off her salvaar and folded it on the back of the chair. She lay on the cot and pulled her kameez up to her shoulders to show him her breasts. Her legs were open, the ridged skin stretched like a ghost vagina.

He said, 'you're like a woman. She said : I am a woman, see for yourself.' (Thayil 127)

The 'I am a woman' utterance coming out as a self-defence against her lack of a proper female-genitalia and a strong move to register herself within the typical concept of being a 'female',- a 'woman'.

Her sartorial preferences and experimentation also falls within the category typed as the 'feminine',- and quite much groomed to manipulate male-attention,-quite a compulsory trick to be mastered and applied by sex-workers with target male-consumers:

She'd learned how to wear the petticoat low on the hips, how to lean forward accidentally on purpose and let the pallu slip just a little. She admired the uses to which women put the sari, how they wore it without under-wear, slept in it, bathed in it, used it as a towel and comforter, and the convenience, to simply lift it up if you wanted to pee, or if there was a customer. (Thayil 157).

Dimple's admiration for how,- 'women'- 'put on the sari', at once registers her detachment from other 'women', and as well as a desire to sync within. A case, further attested by her risqué dressing with a 'silk-burqua' or a transparent 'begum-bahar saree',- and experimenting with 'male-attention' as well,- an experimentation which happens to be a curious concoction of objective curiosity and a subjective, personal craving as well:

She went out in the burkha and she saw the way the men looked at the lipstick on her mouth and the kajal around her eyes. The men looked at her, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, they all looked. (Thayil 157).

Dimple's equation with Mr. Lee, also somewhere, gives her a scope to recognize and construct her feminine-persona,-being the 'god-daughter' (and not a 'god-son') to the expatriate Chinese,- a connection perhaps gone stronger with an apparent ethnic-bonding between the two with Dimple actually being from the North-East. Dimple's private views on her gender do have a feminine-tendency,- thinking herself to be a woman with some 'biological deficiencies', rather than a man with 'amputated genitals'.

The final female-makeover for his queer protagonist comes with Thayil portraying a feeling of completeness and acceptance in Dimple on her maternal feelings being accepted and attested by Jamal, Rashid's eldest son, generating a feel of acceptance within the family, a feel of acceptance within the feminine construct:

Jamal would'nt tell her, but from then on he always greeted her when they met on the street or the staircase, which to her was a great thing, an achievement, something , finally, to be proud of." (Thayil 205)

If Dimple's struggle to earn a stable identity is a struggle to register herself within the typical feminine construct to erase the stigma of her being an eunuch or a castrato, then in Mehta's *Maximum City* the character of 'Manoj' alias 'Honey' poses quite a different struggle,- a struggle to choose a single gender-identity,-a single gender-tag and to get rid of a confused condition of 'dual-identities'. If Thayil's Dimple was the castrato prostitute with a woman's sensibilities, then Mehta's 'Manoj/Honey' is a 'man',- a 'male',- conforming to all the biological and sexual conditions of being one,- and still an uncertain entity in terms of gendered-existence. The cross-dresser bar-dancer was initiated into the world of cross-dressing for reasons not involved with sexual orientation,- rather sheerly economical ones, and the process was not only approved of but



initiated by the thirteen years old Manoj's own family,- his own mother,- to be specific. The popularity of Manoj's female alter-ego,-'Honey', even brought proposals of sponsorship and extra rewards for undergoing a sex-change surgery,-with conditions to pay back in forms of sexual favours:

Honey became so popular there that the owner offered to pay her one lakh rupees if he would undergo a sex-change operation. There was one caveat: after the operation she would have to have sex with him. (Mehta 347).

And cases of male customers falling for her in spite of knowing 'her' actuality of being a 'him' also presents with an interesting documentation.

But the crisis in identifying himself within the polar limitations of the so called 'normal' concept of gender, arose , not from 'without', rather from 'within'- with the conflicting dual personas of the male-earner 'Manoj' and the female-performer 'Honey' ,- and the conflicting 'gender-labels' of these two personas of the same individual made things much more complicated. The 'female' Honey's ambition for perfection and professionalism lead to the serious existential dilemma for the 'male' Manoj. If Dimple's case was of proceeding to attain a 'feminine' room for herself, then 'Honey was proceeding to attain perfection in 'his/her' professional life,- and the perfection lying in bringing in much more prominence to the 'female-reflection' of the 'male-actual',- a perfection , ultimately costing a normal balance in the individual's 'gender-consciousness' itself,-the prominence of the glamorous bar-dancer Honey, adulterating the actual male-persona of Manoj. The prominence of the reflection permanently affecting the actual itself leads to the puzzle of the 'truth' behind the whole concept of 'gender'- where it appears that the 'truth' is rather a concept and consciousness constructed against sexual-appearance (in concern with the appearance of the external reproductive organs) and sexual performance or function(that is in concern with reproductive abilities) as well- and the biological condition of 'sex' building up the cultural concept- of 'gender'. To look into the "Introduction" to *Genders* by David glover and Cora Kaplan, they speculate:

Sex and gender are therefore intimately related, but not because one is 'natural' while the other represents its transformation into 'culture'. Rather, *both* are inescapably *cultural* categories that refer to ways of understanding human bodies and human relationships, our relationship to ourselves and to others. Sex and gender necessarily overlap, sometimes confusingly so. (xxvi)

And this 'confusion' happens very much in the case of Manoj/Honey than in Dimple,- the later's case being of a melancholic resignation to the fact of her being a 'castrato',- and her attempt to attain a feminine space- a feminine identity proceeds with accepting, and not denying,- her biological sexuality. But Manoj's confusion concentrates with his prioritization of his female alter-ego,- the performer 'Honey'- such as, Honey's attempting to bring in the filmy glam-quotient was an attempt at the performance level,- but his decision to 'tease' with his 'sexual-appearance' to boost up his earnings-was not something comfortable for the male persona of Manoj, and his decision to go surgical implants of an essentially(?) female organ of 'breasts', did not go accordingly with his calculation of his being in the same level to compete with other female dancers, for male attention, and thus an economical necessity acting as the motivator to tease with one's biological sexuality.

She would put on her bra and stuff the cups with a handkerchief or a sponge. Sometimes she had to fill the bra with scrunched up balls of newspaper, which scratched like hell. So she sought surgical intervention, going to the best cosmetic surgeon in India for silicone implants. When she woke up after the operation, she started screaming. It felt like there were two great weights on her. (Mehta 350)

Manoj's calculation on the 'female-breasts' was not the typical 'male fetishization',- it was rather a woman's anxiousness about her 'curves'- her 'breasts', which are counted upon as a woman's sexual assets,-(once again a concept propagated from an essentially masculine idea of a 'sexual-spread'),- an anxiousness of which Germaine Greer addressed in her book *The Female Eunuch*, that "The most highly prized curve of all is that of the bosom. The actual gland that forms the base of the breast is a convex structure extending from the second rib to the sixth beneath" (39) . she continues that "The degree of attention which breasts receive, combined with the confusion about what the breast fetishists actually want, makes women unduly anxious about them " (39). – and Honey's anxiousness of satiating the male sexual cravings (as was the demand of her profession) led her to add up to her structure,-which was quite naturally rejected by Manoj,- whereas utter rejection and shock of the 'female' addition, led him to 'subtract' the same immediately. If Thayil was very much particular to use only the feminine pronoun of 'she' for Dimple, the Mehta is confused as Manoj/Honey's gender-consciousness is,- and he uses the masculine 'he' and feminine 'she' alternatively while referring to Manoj or Honey respectively. Mehta observes for Honey, that :

Her closest equivalents are men who make their living playing female or tamasha artists, the men who make their living playing female characters in folk theatre, who spend their entire lives playing one female character, unless the character takes over their lives (359).

Mehta observes more about this dual gendered-entity of Manoj/Honey,- a married male intertwined with his female alter ego in an inescapable way,- creating identity-trauma in the individual. He says that "Manoj/Honey is like one of those earthworms who are simultaneously male and female, at opposite ends" (363). If in Thayil's text Dimple sought a feeling of completeness in her maternal tendencies being finally accepted, then in Mehta's text Manoj/Honey shows himself/herself to be in a dubious state of mind concerning the pregnancy of 'his' wife, depicting a confusing intrusion of maternal tendencies in his paternal affection:

Though Manoj was not in love with his wife, he does want children, two boys. 'Because boys care for their mother more, so they will care for me.' Then she realizes what she's said and corrects herself (Mehta 354).

Perhaps to understand Manoj's dilemma or Dimple's transformation better, the example of the identity-confusion faced by grown-up 'bacha posh' may help. The 'bacha posh' are little Afghan girls who are made to live as boys for economical reasons,- to contribute in the family earning, as girls are not allowed to work there in 'public spheres'. But in many cases reported when these little girls living as boys do grow up, and are pressured to accept their traditionally accepted feminine roles, many of them do face an identity-problem,- a confusion in their gender-consciousness, accounting to the inability to accept an altogether change in their ways of living, and as did happen with Zahra, a bacha posh in her teen years as well, whose story has been reported by Jenny Nordberg in her article "The Afghan girls who live as boys"(pars.14-18):

By remaining in male disguise at 15, Zahra is treading into far more complicated territory than a younger *bacha posh*. By her age, girls are commonly taught to focus on being proper, shy and very quiet young women, to make for attractive marriage partners. But Zahra lacks most traditional feminine traits and speaks for herself right away. She has lived as a boy for as long as she can remember and has no intention of changing. “People use bad words for girls. They scream at them on the streets,” she says. “When I see that, I don’t want to be a girl. When I am a boy, they don’t speak to me like that.”

And what is interesting is her determination to stick to ‘his’ male identity, with no soft tendency for the ‘feminine’ origin:

It is time, her mother argues, for Zahra to become a girl and develop into the woman inside of her. But Zahra resists. The idea that she would go on to repeat the life of her mother, with a domesticated existence that centres on a husband and a long line of children, seems both absurd and horrifying to Zahra.

A similar thing happens for Dimple, who, though being a born male, was castrated at an early age, in his childhood, to be specific, which somehow affected the influence of normal male hormones, adding to that, he was trained to be an agent to satisfy male sexual desires,-an eunuch prostitute, and both this factors influenced to build up a dominant feminine nature in ‘him’, a transformation of the ‘him’ to ‘her’. Where as with Manoj/Honey, as it has been already discussed, his feminine alter-ego taxed Manoj’s unidimensionality in terms of gender, trapping him on a plain of ‘gender fluidity’.

What acts as an important factor in this case of a ‘hollowness of identity’ in terms of ‘gender’ is the ‘power-play’ of ‘sex’ and ‘economy’. If the ‘masculine’ reigns over the sexual hierarchy, then the scenario is identical in case of economical hierarchy as well, resulting in an obvious ‘male-centric’ market and consumerism, with the market attempting to gratify the male needs desires and even products which are not directly connected to the idea of the ‘masculine’, like a woman’s dress, or ‘perfume’ etc. also bears the invisible ‘male-dictates’, the wish of the ‘masculine’. And where the whole market economy plays ‘male-centric’, individuals have really little option open other than to adapt into the mould to gratify the male-desires, to earn their living, to survive, to sustain, and ‘sexuality’ is ofcourse one of the biggest selling product which also needed to be adapted to the masculine desires and needs. In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf speculates on this matter of ‘sexuality as a product’, while addressing the issue of ‘pornography’. She observes that, “Consumer culture is best supported by markets made up of sexual clones, men who want objects and women, and women who want to be objects, and the object desired ever changing, disposable, and dictated by the market” (144). Only that Wolf’s argument can be stretched to cases of those eunuchs, castratos, cross-dresser, and even men themselves,- who adapt to the ‘male’ preferences ,- the male idea of a ‘sexual-spread’, to survive, and thus consciously or unconsciously embracing ways typical of traditional femininity. In her *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* , Rosemary Hennessy explains the complicated equation between ‘capitalism’ and ‘sexual identity’ as “complex ,indirect and historically variable” (4), and so it is surely, though the factor of being ‘historically variable’ shows much variability in form and not much in content as depicted in the current male-centered market economy. Anne Fausto-Sterling in her article “The Five Sexes:Why Male and Female Are Not Enough ” refers to urologist Hugh H. Young’s book titled *Genital Abnormalities, Hermaphroditism and related Adrenal Diseases* , where Young has referred to this interesting



case of a hermaphrodite individual, Emma, who had an upbringing as a female, was married to a man, and was sexually involved with a number of women. And though she was not sexually satisfied with her husband, she had no complaints as being able to enjoy sexual gratification with women. Young has quoted Emma as:

Would you have to remove that vagina? I don't know about that because that's my meal ticket. If you did that, I would have to quit my husband and go to work, so I think I'll keep it and stay as I am. My husband supports me well, and even though I don't have any sexual pleasure with him, I do have lots of girlfriends.

If Emma's case was of a willing, conscious decision, then with Dimple it was a pre-calculated sexual-amputation of an abandoned eight years old child with an eye on his being a product for sex-commerce in near future.

'Castration', or 'sexual amputation' or the 'mutilation of the genitals' has roots in the history of being a way of exploitation, manipulated by royalty, and even religion. With serving the royalty one their prime function used to guard the 'harems' of kings and emperors, where in most of the cases individuals born males were castrated to assign to the charge of royal women, the castration serving to ensure of course no sexual involvement between the 'guards' and the 'guarded ones', both being subject to exploitation and domination of the 'male superior'. Religion also used to claim sexual amputation in the name of god, to build up a breed of male choir singers with a woman's voice (of high-pitch, that is), as women were not allowed perform in the church. And in both the cases of domination by the religion or royalty, the subject of mutilation were generally people belonging from the lower rungs of the economical stratification, and in most of the cases the subjects were 'minors' as well, who were subjected to such permanent sexual amputation with the attestation of their needy families looking for a secure future. As J.S. Jenkins focused on in his article "The Voice of the Castrato":

The boys nearly all came from poor families in various parts of the country, and it seems that their social background often provided the reason for their castration. Their fathers permitted the operation in the hope that the fame and fortune achieved by being a great castrato would come to them and their poverty-stricken families. Unfortunately, despite attempts to assess a boy's quality of voice before the operation, there must have been thousands of children who were castrated and never reached the top grade. Only a very small number progressed to the great opera houses, others into the best choirs, and those of lesser ability into ordinary church choirs, but, driven by parental greed, there were probably many whose mutilation was to no purpose.

Castration for choir singing or opera singing was a sure sign of this equation of power-play between sexuality and economy. Sean Coughlan in his "Singing in the Pain" has also addressed the issue of the castrato singers, where he supplies with informations such as:

In 17th and 18th Century Italy, about 4,000 boys were castrated each year, from the age of eight upwards, with the aim of making a fortune as opera singers and soloists with choirs in churches and royal palaces.

Some may view upon this special 'historical' information as some individual's sacrifice for religion (as with castrato choir singers), some may see in it an extreme dedication for art and

music (as for those castrated for opera singing), and yet the fact of the castratos belonging from poor families certainly and dominantly highlights the fact of appropriation of even 'sexuality', by the powerful,- economical and/or sexual, to serve their interests and convenience.

In Mehta's text also, Manoj's compulsion to earn his living by embracing the 'sexual and gender appearance' much gratifying to the 'male', justifies the argument, where 'his' male customers know of the female bar-dancer's actuality of being a 'male', and yet pay him when 'he' chooses to gratify their 'sexual-urges' in a female form. Manoj/Honey's condition reflects the condition of the 'launda-boys', who find themselves to be in an identical situation of being subject to exploitation, being professional males who present with dances (generally of the typically raunchy type) in female garbs, for gratification of male sexual titillation, and often are sexually abused, raped, or compelled to be sexually involved with the customer (generally the economically powerful male) to earn the extra amount. The 'launda-boys' again are people belonging to needy families, which points out the exploitation at economical level, and most of these 'launda-boys' are effeminate males, not conforming to the rigid, set idea of 'masculinity' of being strong, stout, etc., they choose to get in 'dancing' rather than being ridiculed in any other profession, which depicts the exploitation in terms of 'gender-stereotypes'. A study-report conducted by Agniva Lahiri and Sarika Kar, under the organization PLUS (People Like Us) explains:

Men are attracted to Luanda dancing mainly by the money and the freedom to express their womanly instincts away from the jibes of relatives and neighbors. In spite of the risk involved very few actually wants to quite the seasonal profession because lack of alternatives.

Luanda dancers are often treated as objects of lust. Living condition is generally filthy and deplorable. They are being put up in the out houses, which are thatched shacks, often shared with goats and cows. The food offered is equally poor. Sanitation is non-existent. Even that is also risky for getting assaulted in the field.

The kinds of manipulation and exploitation of sexuality not only taxes with an imbalance in an individual's gender consciousness, rather the adverse effects contain severe medical abnormalities as well, such as if sex-commerce certainly makes the service-provider vulnerable to AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases, then castratos bear with an additional burden of abnormal growth and brittleness of limbs.

To realize Dimple's leaning towards the 'feminine' sensibilities can be read parallelly with examples of eunuchs and hermaphrodites where most of them earn their living by performing as 'women' or/and by treading the sex-trade way. If one of the reasons is to look for the male-attention in female-garb, then possibility of the general attraction for the 'feminine' as a gender choice is also there. In Alexandra Shiva's documentary *Bombay Eunuchs* the claim of a few of being in a happy-state in being able to choose and change their male-partners in accordance to choice and convenience attracts somehow to read deep into their claims, as by the almost aggressive affirmation of the happy state, it seems to be, something completely contrasting, and perhaps the aggression engenerated from the disappointment of not being able to get a ticket of acceptance in the mainstream 'feminine' construct, and an illusive attraction (and yet unattainable) for the domestic equation between the 'male' and the 'female'.

Thus, arriving at the conclusion, the argument provides scope for justifying the possibility of 'sexuality' and 'gender consciousness' being manipulated and constructed, on the basis of accepted 'norms', or with political or commercial interests riding on the power equation. Gregory M. Herek in his article "Sexual Orientation" included in *Women's Studies Encyclopedia* (vol3), presents with his observation that "From a constructionist Perspective, individual sexual orientation clearly has a sociocultural basis, since the very concept is viewed as a cultural construction." (1302). And 'consciousness' not fitting into the norms are dictated from the locus to the periphery. And of course the equation of power between sexes somewhere determines this tendency of manipulation, with cases of non-conformities being ridiculed, threatened, or at best consciously ignored. The 'male' domination being at its aggressive best erasing every 'other' sexual entities, or reducing them to complete 'passivity', sexual-invasion being one of the symbolic way of this 'reducing the other', as evident in the condition of eunuchs and castrato prostitutes, or in the practice of 'female genital mutilation', a way of amputating the 'clitoris', as it's appearance reflects the 'male power equipment' of the 'penis', and believed to be a tool to the sexual-pleasure for the 'female',- an amputation certainly suggestive of this power-play of domination and reduction. And, the instances of this 'gender-stereotype' induced 'identity-crisis', and 'exploitative manipulation' get interestingly documented in the character studied, of Dimple from Thayil's *Narcopolis*, and Manoj/Honey from Mehta's *Maximum City*, helping to proceed to decode the same in understanding the 'gender-construct' in concern with individuals with non-normative sexual-consciousness.

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