

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Theme of Masculinity in Crisis in John Updike's *Rabbit Run***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
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Masters of Arts in English**

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### Abstract

The novel, *Rabbit Run*, presents the utter failure of the protagonist in his family, social and professional life due to his irrational, irresponsible and lustful nature along with his helpless surrender before the domineering influence of women in his life. Rabbit frequently runs away from his family, wife, children and responsibilities. He is guided by whims, emotions and carnal desires without having any ambition, mission and destination. He not only abdicates his responsibilities but also cowardly pledges and begs for sexual intercourse, shelter and support from a part time prostitute, Ruth. He demeans himself by bearing all sorts of violence, abuses and humiliation from a prostitute and his wife just to get his sexual desires fulfilled at the cost of his masculine pride. The protagonist, instead of confirming male values, practices and traits adopts and exposes feminine traits being timid, emotional, weak and submissive. Since almost all forms of violence beginning from verbal through the physical upto the death crime have been committed by female characters, there is the reversal of traditional image of women as kind, tender and docile. In fact, the novel depicts the protagonist as an anti-intellectual hero who is in futile race being guided by sensual hedonism remaining away from the masculine traits of intellectual aspirations and social position.

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## I. Introduction

This research paper is an attempt to read John Updike's novel, *Rabbit Run* from the perspective of traditional form of masculinity in crisis. After the thorough analysis of the concept of masculinity, femininity and gender studies, traditionally assigned gender role has been found in the state of problem and trouble in the novel which ultimately turns out to be one of the causes of crisis of masculinity. The masculinity as a set of values, practices or disposition is in crisis in so far as it is undermined and devalued through the portrayal of inept protagonist endowing with series of negative rather than positive associations and connotations. The protagonist Harry Rabbit Angstrom has been portrayed as a bizarre character, who is devoid of manhood and manly attributes being away from conventional assumption of masculinity. Masculinity is in crisis in the novel. The novel, *Rabbit Run* has been attempted to explore by unveiling the situation of reversal of stereotypical gender role, threat and challenge to men's previous privileged position along with the female's resistance over male domination in arena of family, work, education and sexuality vis-a vis the conventional ideology of masculinity. The protagonist's petty cry for support and sexual intercourse with a prostitute despite her rude behaviour, verbal and physical attacks has been documented as a strong evidence to justify the fact that the traditional form of masculinity is under elimination in the novel.

The intensive study of gender studies and masculinity studies enabled me to explore the masculinity crisis in the novel. Though there are many responses from scholars about the novel from different angles and various perspectives, but no such criticisms appear to analyze the novel from gender studies viewing through the lence of masculinity in crisis. This very issue is attempted to be researched here.

Evidence for proving the masculinity in crisis in this novel has been assembled from two inter-linked sets of concerns. The first is the crisis from without. This includes some partially empirical documented concerns relating to the position of man within such institutions as the family, education and work. A specific concern here is the perception that men have lost or are losing power or privilege relative to their prior status in these institutions. The second is the crisis from within; which is the feeling that men are somehow experiencing a crisis more personally due to their own weakness and inability. This is far or less easily documented as it centers precisely on a perceived shift in men's experiences of their position as men their maleness and what it means. Most importantly, this often refers to a sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness or uncertainty in traditionally assumed men's position and performance.

This shift in men's powerful position as dominant men and their maleness has been clearly displayed through the demonstration of women's independent and domineering position in their family and society. So alien to the traditionally idealizing bent of masculinity, the protagonist, Rabbit frequently runs away from his family and responsibilities. He is hypnotized by impulses and carnal desires without having been guided by reasons and responsibilities. The masculine provider ethics and the role of the father has been shown severely undermined and displaced through the exposure of protagonist's utter failure to provide, protect and control to his wife and children. His inability to conform conventional ideology of masculinity has led him towards his own doom. The abnormal and unconventional behaviour of the protagonist has made easier to prove masculinity in crisis in the novel. The criticism like Marshall Boswell delivers which discloses the protagonist's non masculine identity and fuels to consolidate the hypothesis. In this regard, Boswell state: "During the time of novel's initial reception New York Times called Rabbit a "hollow hero

and desperate weakling” (42). This very small comment on protagonist Rabbit clearly indicates the futile status of the protagonist in the novel.

Through out the novel Rabbit is shown in constant race seeking favour and shelter from women. He bears all sorts of verbal abuses and physical violence from his wife and a prostitute only to get his sexual desires fulfilled. It shows the helpless, dominated and weak image of the protagonist which has provided the sufficient evidences to justify masculinity in crisis in the novel Rabbit’s selfish and animalistic nature is well documented and repeatedly commented in entire novel which have been used as headlight to see the novel from the eyes of masculinity in crisis. At one point Rev. Eccles tells him: “The truth is, you’re monstrously selfish . . . you worship nothing but your own worst instincts (140). A part time prostitute, Ruth Leonard echoes this sentiment when she observes: “He just lived in his skin and didn’t give a thought to the consequences about anything (154). Janice’s mother calls him “Spoiled” while his own father thinks he is “the worse kind of brewer bum” (167). The protagonist Rabbit has been shown rejected from almost every where due to the lack of masculine traits and performance in him.

Whole novel seems to unfold the inferior and subordinated position of male characters, including the protagonist, to their domineering wives and other women. It is clearly visible in the criticism where Gerry Breneer argues: “the domestic bliss turns matriarchal, not only with Ruth and Rabbit, Both Mr. Augstorm and Mr. Springer Squirm under relatively domineering wives. Tothoro is slapped by his whore, Margaret Koskoa, and coldly nursemaid by his wife after his strokes” (5). The novel and the above criticism have vividly exposed the submissive and dominated picture of male characters. Such reversed situation of masculinity has provided the ground to view the novel in the light of masculinity in crisis. The insights and approaches developed in the field of gender study have provided the necessary tools. It helps to examine how Rabbit experiences masculinity crisis and how

he is failure to have personal and spiritual development. As the evidence unfolds, it has become apparent that John Updike has challenged socially constructed masculinity dramatizing the traditional form of masculinity in crisis.

The present work is largely based on the concept of gender studies, traditional ideology of masculinity and crisis of masculinity with the critics' opinion regarding the novel, *Rabbit Run*. For the purpose of exposing the masculinity in crisis in the novel, the research work has been divided into three parts. The first chapter of this research paper briefly provides the outline of succeeding chapters focusing on what types of factors that encouraged to see novel from this very perspective of masculinity in crisis. It also includes views of some critics which are related to the sense of masculinity in crisis in the novel. The second chapter is the combination of the embedded theoretical tools and elaboration of masculinity in crisis in the novel in the detail form of textual analysis. The last chapter has concluded the entire efforts carried out in this research.

## II. Theme of Masculinity in Crisis in John Updike's *Rabbit Run*

Almost all the male and female characters in *Rabbit Run* fail to confirm and perform the traditionally assigned gender role within the family and the society. On the contrary to the traditional ethics of masculinity, male characters in spite of being husband not only lack the dominant power over their wives but also lack rationality, responsibility and functionality along with many other masculine traits. Conventional image of women as weak, nurturing and submissive no longer prevails in the novel due to the fact that female characters, especially wives in the family, are domineering, authoritative and reluctant towards their housekeeping role. Thus masculinity is in crisis in this novel, due to the personal weakness and inability of male characters, most importantly the protagonist who cannot perform masculine gender role as per the expectation of the traditional form of hegemonic masculinity. Similarly, it is also because of females resistance over male domination, masculinity is in crisis in this novel.

Tim Edwards defines crisis of masculinity as: "the position of men, often perceived as being in relation to institutions such as the family, work, education or even representation. On the other hand, the crisis of masculinity refers more precisely to men's experience of these shifts in position." (14) Masculinity crisis in this novel, *Rabbit Run* is attempted to analyze in relation to six key areas of concern mainly. These areas of concerns include the family, work, violence, education, sexuality behaviour and physicality which, when taken together may then inform an overall masculinity is in crisis thesis. Traditional form of hegemonic masculinity in crisis due to the effects of industrialization of nineteenth century, structural change and social upheaval of the world in the twentieth century. The claim of traditional forms of hegemonic masculinity is in crisis, in this novel, is attempted to justify mainly in relation to the change in stereotypical gender roles, shift in man's privileged position and female resistance over male domination especially in the arena of family, work, violence,

education, sexuality, behaviour and physicality analyzing in the following key areas of concern:

The family is perhaps the most complex arena within which the greatest sense of concern relating to a perceived crisis of masculinity resides. The traditional concept of masculinity assumed men as rational, strong, dominant, responsible, protective and decisive in the family. On the other hand, women are supposed as irrational emotional, nurturing and submissive. In this regard Anne Cranny-Francis and Wendy Waring state: "Women are stereotyped as emotional, nurturing, sensitive whereas men are taken as removed, rational, responsible and authoritative (145). It seems to empower men as commander, provider, protector of women. But women are expected to be obedient, submissive and dependent to their husband. The conventional assumption of gender role has come into crisis in this novel due to the inability of male characters to perform as per the traditional form of masculinity expects and female's aloofness towards their gender role along with their resistance over male domination. In the novel there are eight major characters. They are Harri Angstrom (Rabbit), Rabbit's wife, Janice, Jack Eccles, Jack's wife, Lucky, Ruth Leonard, Marty Tothoro, Margaret, Mrs. Springer. Almost all the male and female characters especially both wife and husband go beyond the traditionally assigned gender roles in the family. The protagonist, Rabbit is far away from the traditional ethics of masculinity because of his irrational, emotional immatured and irresponsible behaviour towards his family. He cannot conform the conventional assumptions of man as a provider, protector and patron of his family. He is rather dominated humiliated and resisted from his wife and other women for the lack of responsibility, rationality and functionality in him.

In the beginning of *Rabbit Run*, the protagonist, Rabbit is seen helpless and submissive to his wife, Janice who does nothing except watching T.V. and drinking alcohol. Traditional image of husband as master, commander, and controller of his wife and wife as

submissive and obedient towards her husband is totally subverted in the scene where Janice orders her husband, Rabbit to go to get their car, pick up their son, Nelson and get her some cigarettes. Janice orders her husband to bring a pack of cigarettes in the following way: "Oh ! Jack pick up a pack of cigarettes, could you?" Rabbit can't dominate and refuse her. He rather becomes helpless in front of his own wife. Being unable to control and confront to his wife's demand Rabbit is paralyzed in front of her and he cowardly decides to run away from his wife and family. His act of running away from his family is the outcome of crisis of masculinity in him. Donna L. Perry in this regard presents some outcomes of masculinity crisis saying, "Men having a crisis of masculinity reveal a variety of outcomes: in some cases they attempt to stop their wives from working while in other cases they lash out through wife abuse, alcoholism, sexual promiscuity and abandonment" (210). This argument can be a strong evidence to justify Rabbit's abandonment of his family is an outcome of masculinity crisis in him as reflected in the following narration, "Rabbit freezes, standing looking at his faint yellow shadow on the white door that leads to the hall and senses he is in a trap. It seems certain. He goes out" (18). These lines depict how Rabbit lacks power over his wife and his lack of courage and intellectuality to overcome the problems and obstacles. Instead of being able to control, convince and command to overcome the commanding nature of his wife, Rabbit decides to run away from his house. A man is expected to be bold enough to overcome the challenges and obstacles. The cowardice step of running away from his wife shows the weak, helpless and poor picture of a husband. The immature decision of running away from home and responsibilities exposes the protagonist as a non-masculine figure.

Rabbit being unable to tolerate and control his wife's alcoholic habit and commanding nature decides to run away from his wife and family. Rabbit being guided by impulses secretly runs away leaving his pregnant wife and two years old son, Nelson without having fixed mission, ambition and destination Rabbit in his decision is not only escapist but he turns

out to be an irresponsible and careless husband and father. Rabbit runs away from his family feeling it as a trap. He runs away as a coward without having any mission and destination, only to avoid his responsibility and hide his weakness. Rabbit's childish nature and immaturity is reflected in the following dialogue between him and a farmer in the course of his escaping journey:

Where do you want to go?

"Hug ? I don't know exactly"

"Where do you want to go?"

"Where are you headed?" The man is patient. For the first time Rabbit realizes he is a criminal. (29)

From the above dialogue it is justified that the protagonist lacks masculine traits of courage, responsibility, fixity and determination. He is in futile journey without any reasonable mission, ambition and destination. He himself is unaware regarding his destination of his journey. This small incident shows the protagonist away from masculine traits of rationality and responsibility.

Rabbit's futile act of escape is further becomes naked when he comes back to his former coach, Tothero and tries to justify his act of running away from his family in the following conversation.

"What has happened to your home?"

"Well it kind of went"

"How do you mean?"

"It was no good. I've run out. I really have."

"That does not sound like very mature behaviour," Tothero says.

"What sort of mess?"

"I don't know. My wife is an alcoholic." (44)

The above dialogue also proves Rabbit's non-masculinity. He instead of being dominant husband to improve his wife's alcoholic habit, fears and runs from the problem. Another male character, Tothero also takes his step as immature step which further justifies the protagonist's escaping journey as meaningless. The protagonist undergoes through the crisis of masculinity which is justified from his meaningless and cowardice step of running away from his responsibilities.

During the time of his escape, Rabbit encounters with many other characters. Among them he also comes across with young minister, Jack Eccles. Jack also asks him about the cause of his leave. Rabbit's attempt to justify about his running away from his family signals towards the tendency of men to run away from his family being unable to address and suppress demands of modern wife. Rabbits' irresponsible and immature decision of running away from his family turns out to be a living proof of masculinity crisis. Martin Mills and Bob Lingard's argument consolidates this idea as they state: "Masculinity has changed and been subject to crisis during the last two hundred years. As a result some men are passive in their acceptance and some of them try to escape from their family (284). Rabbit can't perform his own masculine gender role, on the other hand, he is unable to convince, control and confront the modern wife's demands and activities. Rabbit's reply to the question asked by Eccles regarding his leaving home exposes the crisis of masculinity.

What did she do that made you leave," Eccles asks "She asked me to buy her a pack of cigarettes.

It was the truth, it is the truth, it just felt like the whole business was fetching and hauling, all the time trying to hold this mess together she was making all the time. I don't know it seemed like I was glued in with a lot of busted toys and empty glasses and the television going and meals late or never and no way

of getting out. Then all of a sudden it hit me how easy it was to get, just walk out and by damn it was easy. (109)

The above expression of the protagonist's justification shows the unconventional and odd picture of a wife from the prospective of traditional gender role in a family. Janice violates her traditional gender role and duties of a housewife. Similarly, Rabbit's escapist attitude and cowardice step of running away from his home is also a strong evidence of masculinity crisis. Troubled gender role is the cause of tension and break in the family. But immaturity, irresponsibility and mis-judgment of the protagonist has become the major cause of problem in his family life which is certainly the outcome of masculinity crisis.

The protagonist, Rabbit runs away from his wife and family time and again. Rabbit runs away for three times in the novel being guided by emotions, feelings, sense of irresponsibility and childish impulses. The following comment delivered by the writer of this novel in his foreword vividly exhibits the true nature and plight of the protagonist Rabbit:

"In *Rabbit Run* Hary Angstrom, now in his mid-20s, his work is unfulfilling, his marriage is moribund and he tries to find happiness with another woman. But happiness is more elusive than a medal and Hary must continue to run from his wife, his life and from himself, until he reaches the end of the road and has to turn back [ . . . ]. (5)

This very comment openly presents the helpless and poor picture of the protagonist. It is due to the lack of masculine qualities of responsibility, rationality and practicality, the protagonist is in futile race throughout the novel. He is failure in his family, society and job because of his weakness of being guided by feelings, emotions and lust rather than rationality. The poor plight of the protagonist is the outcome of the lack of masculine traits of intellectuality and functionality.

Traditional concept of masculinity assumes husband as a head of his family. He is expected to support, protect, control, convince and console to his wife and children when it is needed but the traditional ideal image of husband is once again shattered when Rabbit's immatured, childish and irrational behaviour is disclosed at the funeral ceremony of his daughter. All of a sudden he ruined the settled grief stricken environment in burial ground. In spite of being bold and carrying responsibility of consoling his bereaved wife, he strikes in her hurt of grief by charging her as a murderer of the baby girl, Rebeca. Rabbit after destroying the settled environment of grief runs away for third time from his wife, family and problem. A matured man is expected to be bold, patient and capable of solving the problem but the following narration explicitly exposes the protagonist as timid, nonsense, irrational and incapable husband which indicates crisis of masculinity in protagonist of this novel:

A strange strength sinks down into him. It is as if he has been crawling in a cave and now at last beyond the dark recession of crowding rocks he has seen a patch of light; he turns and Janice's face, dumb with grief, blocks the light. "Don't look at me", he says, I didn't kill her." He explains to the heads, "you all keep acting as if I did it. I wasn't anywhere near. She's the one." He turns to her and tells her "you didn't mean to." He tries to take her hand but she snatches it back like from a trap and looks toward her parents, who step forward her. A suffocating sense of injustice blinds him. He turns and runs."

(302)

From the above narration it is visible that Rabbit is far away from masculine qualities of boldness rationality and patience. Rabbit can't show his maturity and patience at the time of grief and crisis. He is easily swept by his emotions instead of reason. He abnormally destroys the settled grief stricken atmosphere in the funeral ceremony. Rabbit shows his childish nature when he runs as rabbit after disclosing the murder of the child. Masculine figure is

expected to be guided by reason being bold enough to confront the reality. In this ground also Rabbit fails to perform as a man in the perception of masculinity.

The sense of irresponsibility doesn't limited to the protagonist only, it is pervasive in other male characters too. Almost all the husbands such as Rabbit, Tothero, Jack are seen irresponsible and childish who are not much serious regarding their family and responsibility. Among them Jack Eccles is also an irresponsible husband. Eccles is also seen dominated by his wife. The following narration gives some glimpses of his irresponsibility and domination of his wife, Lucy:

When he does come in, at quarter of eleven, it turns out he's been sitting in a drugstore gossiping with some of his teenagers, the idiotic kids tell him everything, all smoking like Chimneys, so he comes home titillated silly with "How far" you can go "on dates and still love Jesus. Eccles sees at once she is furious. He had been having far too happy time in the drugstore until late night". (195)

It is apparent from the above narration that Jacks cares more for his parishioners than for his own family. Lucy has to wait him until late night. Because of his careless behaviour Jack is dominated by his wife. Lucy looks him furiously because of his irresponsibility. It is because of the lack of masculine superior virtues Jack is dominated by his wife which is an indication of crisis of masculinity.

The ideal figure of husband as a dominant and responsible head of his family is shattered when Lucy controls and dominates her husband. It is because of the lack of power in husband Lucy, as a wife, tries to control her husband's daily life. when Jack becomes ready to go to play golf with Rabbit. Lucy attempts to stop him. Lucy challenges her husband upto the extent that she calls him "childish." The following narration consolidates the fact that Jack

is controlled and dominated by his wife, which is obviously the outcome of masculinity crisis in him:

"Jack you are not really going to play golf again understood. You said you had all those calls to make this afternoon."

"I made calls in this morning."

"Two. You made two. On Fredy's Davis and Mrs. Landis.

The same old safe ones. What about the Ferrys? You have been talking about the Ferrys for six months. You are childish. Oh, Jack you are too tiresome.

You are just afraid of being snubbed and don't quote scripture to justify to yourself. (125-26)

These lines point out the fact that Jack is careless in his duty. He is not in the position to deserve respect and honor from his wife, rather he is dominated and humiliated by his own wife. This sort of situation doesn't suit for a masculine figure from the prospective of traditional form of masculinity.

The traditional concept of masculinity expects a matured man as a good husband and responsible father who play the role of provider, protector and guardian of his family. But the status of fatherhood has also suffered on several fronts resulting into masculinity crisis in this novel. First there has been increased coverage of such issues as domestic violence, child abuse and men's general abandonment of the role of fatherhood being potential violators of their position as fathers and partners. In this context, Tim Edwards says:

Adams and Coltrane highlight the tendency to collapse into anxieties concerning the implosion of gendered differences or the biological stereotype concerning both children and parenting. Secondly, men often remain reluctant fathers and resistant to change and to taking their domestic responsibilities and commitments seriously. (Qtd. in Edwards 11).

The protagonist, Rabbit is reluctant and careless father and husband who is far away from the traditional ethos of man as a provider, protector and patron of his family. Mary O'Connell further justifies this situation asserting: "In both parent-child and man-women relationship, Rabbit fails to achieve the union he desires. Rabbit is poor father measured both in terms of the metaphor of union and in terms of his children's suffering (21). But the protagonist Rabbit is shamelessly seen worried about quenching the thirst of his lust in spite of taking any initiation to solve critical situation. Rabbit who has just come after passing two months with a prostitute is not seen doing any role of provider, protector and guardian in the family. Traditional concept of a man as a responsible provider and protector of his family is totally shattered in the following dialogue and narration where helpless disgusting and selfish picture of a husband and father is clearly visible in *Rabbit Run*:

"Son of a bitch." "Son of a bitch." Janice says to her husband.

"Around five in the afternoon, Janice begins to cry. Tears burble down her dark pinched face. "I am dry," she says. "

I am dry" I just don't have anything to feed her.

The baby has been at her breast repeatedly.

"Forget it," he says. "She'll conk out. Have a drink

There's some old whisky in the kitchens."

Say, what is this. Have a drink routine of yours?

I've been trying not to drink. I thought you didn't like me to drink. All afternoon you have been smoking one cigarette after another and saying "Have a drink" "Have a drink"

I thought it might loosen you up. I thought ... You are tense as hell.

I am no tenser than you are. What's eating you up?

What is on your mind?" "I have fed her three times in four hours. There is nothing there anymore" in a plain impoverished gesture, she presses her breast through her dress". (250-51)

The above situation presents the pitiable condition of a family where Rabbit's wife Janice faces very miserable situation of having lack of food, leave alone, nutritious food, when she comes home just after her delivery. Newly born infant ceaselessly cries due to the lack of milk of her mother. Rabbit's son, Nelson also cries because of hunger. Amid such crisis in his family Rabbit doesn't take any initiation to solve the problem. But strikingly he tries to consume his wife sexually. Because of his inability to performs traditionally assumed role of provider, protector and patron of his family, the protagonist turns out to be non-masculine figure.

When Rabbit can't do anything at the time of difficulties, Janice dares to tell him to go away from her. Janice finds him no help at all. She expresses her anger towards her husband in the following way:

"You are the one's upsetting Becky. She was fine all morning until you came home."

'Forget it. Just forget it. Just forget the whole frigging thing."

Janice puts her arm around Nelson and says "She is hot."

"Baby is hot."

They listen for a minute and it doesn't stop, the wild feeble warning broken by tantalizing gaps of silence goes on and on." (251)

The above expression of Janice is the outcome of her anger to her nothing for good husband who cannot do anything at the time of crisis. This situation also justify the helpless and nonsense position of the protagonist. He is devoid of manhood because he sees and tolerates the difficulties of his family instead of doing something to give solution.

Rabbit never realizes his duty to feed nutritious food to his wife during the time of pregnancy and just after delivery. Rabbit is neither a good and careful husband nor a responsible father he just turns out to be a selfish hunter for sexual satisfaction. Rabbit's animalistic wicked and monstrous character is further exposed when he tries to have sexual advantage in such a critical situation where his children and wife are crying because of hunger. The following dialogue shows the naked, petty and disgusting picture of a husband who becomes cause of irritation rather being a supportive and inspiring husband:

"Rabbit, hopping to possess her eventually, hovers near and her like a miser near treasure. His lust glues then together. She feels this and oppressed by it.

"Why don't you go out? You are making the baby nervous."

"Don't you want a drink?"

"No. No. I just wish you'd sit down or stop touching me. It's too hot. I think I should be back at the hospital. Stop bothering me." (251-52)

The above dialogue and situation raises a question regarding the role of protagonist. Is a husband only for quenching the thirst of his animalistic lust from his wife or he also should be a responsible guardian of his wife and children at the time of crisis. Certainly the protagonist does not match with the traditional assumption of man and masculinity. Rabbit lacks the qualities of manhood because of his helpless and irrational performance at the time of difficulty. He can't dominate his lust amid such heart rendering situation too. Janice being fed up with the stupidity of her husband orders him to go out. If Rabbit had some drop of masculine traits, he would certainly manage something to feed his wife and children in spite of clinging with his wife who has just delivered baby. He shamelessly requests her to drink old whisky rather than giving nutritious food to solve the problem of lack of milk to the infant. All these facts makes it as obvious as broad day light that Rabbit is devoid of manhood and masculine traits.

Similarly, the protagonist, Rabbit lacks the masculine traits of independent man. He is not only irresponsible towards his role in the family but also is dependent on his wife and in laws. Rabbit comes in the hospital after two months living with a prostitute. He was totally careless regarding his pregnant wife and son during his stay in the room of a prostitute, Ruth. Most strikingly, Rabbit shows his parasitic situation and dependency on his wife when he asks her: "Why didn't you pay any rent on it for two months?" (223). Janice further discloses her husband's dependency by saying "Hary you expect a lot from others. You expect Daddy to keep paying rent?" (223). It does not suit for man to depend on in laws for almost everything. Rabbit's inability to earn for his family's livelihood and his dependence on his wife and in laws is opposite to the conventional assumption of masculinity. Rabbit's inability to be a provider, protector and supporter of his family along with his parasitic dependence on in laws substantiates the fact that the hero of this novel has got masculinity crisis.

So far I have analysed the theme of masculinity in crisis in *Rabbit Run* in relation to family roles. However, the theme seems to be analyzable also through shift in work. Historically, work has often stood as the most fundamental foundation of masculine identity, particularly in relation to modernity or more specifically, advanced western industrial capitalism. In this regard Tim Edwards in his cultures of masculinity states:

It was a key thesis of many of the earliest critiques of masculinity working within the sex role paradigm that work was seen to be the most fundamental element in the formation of successful masculine identity. The primary point here was that work not only matters to men, but is also a part of them as a key dimension of their identity and masculinity. Consequently, successful masculinity was equated directly with success at work whether in middle class terms of career or in more working class terms of physical labour. (7)

According to the traditional concept of masculinity there is straightforward equation of work with masculinity. Man is supposed to earn doing work in public sphere being the breadwinner of his family. On the other hand, women is expected to be good housewife.

The traditional form of masculinity in terms of work is seen in crisis in this novel because there is the rupture in straightforward equation of work with masculinity. Male characters tend to break down the bread winner ethics or the equation of provision with masculinity. To be specific the simplistic equation of masculinity and men with the public sphere and work and femininity and women with the private sphere and home has come into crisis in this novel. It is because of the fact that most of the male characters including protagonist are facing the problem of unemployment and occupational insecurity being unable to support and earn the livelihood of their family. On the other hand, there is increasing participation of women in the public work force in part time jobs as well as in skillful jobs with a greater emphasis on sexual equality. In this regard Rob Gilbert and Pam Gilbert corroborate with their ensuing argument: "There is challenge to men's social position in private and public sphere as gender relations have changed along with the place of women in the society (31). Because of this situation, male characters found their positions undermined and they feel emasculated without work, which is the powerful evidence of masculinity in crisis.

Almost all the male characters in *Rabbit Run* face the problems of unemployment and occupational insecurity. The protagonist, Rabbit does not have a fixed and permanent sort of occupation and work. Due to his lack of interest and efficiency, time and again, he changes his work. Rabbit doesn't fulfill the masculine ethics of 'breadwinner' of his family. He works just to get his daily expenditures fulfilled. He doesn't seem to be serious regarding his family obligations and responsibilities. Rabbit passes time with a prostitute, Ruth after running away from his family in spite of doing his work. When Ruth asks him about his job, Rabbit replies

in the following way which explicitly indicates his lack of seriousness in his work: "What do you do?" Ruth asks. He laughs "Well I am not sure I do anything anymore. I should have gone to work this morning. I, uh, its kind of hard to describe" (65). From these lines it is clear that he does not have work security and fixity along with his irresponsibility towards his work. Rabbit's aloofness towards his work is further justified when Brain Keener comments: "Essentially passive Rabbit likes things to happen of themselves (50). Traditional concept of masculine figure is one who carries the responsibility of his family being sincere and honest toward his occupation and work. But the protagonist's irresponsibility and insecurity in work proves that his masculinity is in crisis because he does not meet the traditional assumption of masculinity means the responsibility to work.

Traditional gender role in terms of work limits women with the private sphere and home giving the role of housewife also has been ruptured in this novel. The conventional division of labour is challenged because of the women's negligence of their housewife's role along with their involvement in part jobs and skillful jobs coming outside the four wall of their home. Quite opposite to the traditional assumption of masculinity some female characters in this novel are living independently doing skillful job. On the other hand, the male hero along with other male characters such as Tothero, Jack, Harrison is seen less secured in his work. The protagonist Rabbit drifts form one job to another. But female character Ruth has got a job in an insurance company as a stenographer. This very incident exposes the women's involvement in skillful job. Ruth challenges Rabbit when he proposes to quit her job. She also satires him signaling towards his inability to support his wife in the following way:

"Quit your job as a stenographer with an insurance company, he says: "I don't care. Sit around all day reading mysteries I'll support Ja."

"You'll support me. If you are so big why can't you support your wife?"

"Why should I? Her father's rolling in it."

You're so smug, is what gets me. Don't you ever think you are going to have to pay a price. (150)

Male's pride of being supporter is shattered in the above ironical challenge of Ruth to Rabbit. Ruth not only plainly rejects his request to quit her job but also challenges him saying to show his power by supporting his own wife and family. The female character's independency being involved in job and male hero's inability to support his wife clearly exposes the crisis of masculinity in him.

The protagonist, Rabbit is dominated and humiliated even by a prostitute addressing him as nothing for good creature. When Rabbit requests her to accept him, she pinches him in disgusting way calling him a joker and a worthless and helpless person. Ruth dares to scold him in such a rude way, it is all because of his inability to do work, seriously. When Rabbit requests the prostitute, Ruth to accept him as her husband coming for third times in her apartment, she warns him in the following way raising the questions regarding his ability, efficiency and nature of his job: "How would you support me? Your jobs are a joke. You aren't worth hiring. May be once you could play basketball but you can't do anything now. What the hell do you think the world is" (312). These lines explicitly indicate the fact that the protagonist can't win even the belief of a prostitute. She calls him nothing for good person standing on the ground of his inability to do work seriously. What can be the more powerful shock than this to a man if he has got a sense of masculinity. But the protagonist is seen helpless to defend her charges on him rather he bows down his head in front of her pleading to accept him as her husband. It is because of lack of faith that Rabbit can support her, Ruth refuses his proposal. This very shocking challenge of Ruth to the protagonist and his helpless tolerance asking her favour shows that protagonist is devoid of masculine traits.

Traditional ethos of masculinity is equal to devotion in work and supporter of his family is in crisis in this novel. It is not only because of the protagonist Rabbit's work and responsibility avoiding tendency but also because of almost all male characters' aloofness towards work. The male characters are seen mostly passing their time drinking, enjoying and being involved in adultery in spite of doing work and carrying out responsibility of their family. The following dialogue between lucky Eccles and Rabbit exposes the aloofness of male characters Rabbit and Jack towards job which is the indication of crisis of masculinity:

"Do you like your new job?" Lucky asks

"Not much"

"On that's a bad sing, is not it?"

"I do not know."

"I don't suppose to like your job.

If you did, then it wouldn't be a job"

"Jack likes his job?"

"Then its not a job" (246)

These lines show the male characters are not interested to do work which violates the traditional assumption of successful masculinity equated directly with interest and success at work.

Masculinity expects man to be efficient to do the work in public sphere investing his mental and physical labour being the breadwinner of his family; and women are supposed to be efficient to do the household activities such as cooking, washing, cleaning, and rearing children. But in this novel, the conventional gender role is subverted in the episode where the protagonist shows his feminine traits accepting that he is more efficient in cooking rather than other works in public sphere. But female characters such as Ruth and Janice are not interested

in cooking as well as in other female roles. The conversation below between Rabbit and Ruth displays the feminine traits in Rabbit:

"I was great, It's the fact. I mean I am not much good for anything now, but I really was good at that"

"You know what I was good at?"

"What?"

"Cooking?"

"That's more than my wife is poor kid"

Remember how in Sunday school they'd tell you everybody god made was good at something? Well, that was my thing cooking"

"Well aren't you?"

"I don't know. All I do is eat out".

"Well stop it. (77-78)

These lines depict the protagonist's acceptance of his inability to do the masculine works along with the female's less efficiency and lack of interest in their traditionally assigned gender role. Shift in traditional gender role in terms of work is one of the causes of masculinity in crisis which is portrayed in *Rabbit Run*.

There is also another angle to dramatization of masculinity in crisis in *Rabbit Run*. This angle is related to the resistance by women. In traditional concept of masculinity men are supposed to be strong, powerful and dominant in his family and society. The Collin's Thesaurus defines masculinity as "male, manful, manlike, manly, virile, bold, brave, butch, gallant, macho, muscular, powerful, robosque, red blooded, resolute, robust, stout hearted, strong, vigorous, well built". This very definition of masculinity seems to empower man endowing the qualities of violence and aggression as a means to dominate and control women who are supposed to be weak, submissive and subordinated. Traditional concept of

masculinity assumes power and violence are some of the instruments of male to overpower women proving the superiority of masculinity over femininity. Tim Edwards supports this idea by asserting that: "from the point of view of commonsense too for many people men's propensity towards violence is a direct outcome of their maleness or in short their biology men have always been more violent than women and always will be; it is in their nature" (44). These lines too consolidate the idea that majority of violence and crimes are committed by males rather than females. But there is reverse situation in this novel where many of the violence are committed from the side of female characters. Almost all male characters including protagonist have been made victim of verbal and physical violence from the side of women. Even the death crime also has been committed from the hands of a woman character. This very reverse situation in terms of violence and crimes and resistance sheds light upon the crisis of masculinity in this novel.

Quite opposite to the traditional assumption of masculinity, masculine traits of aggressiveness is vividly seen in the female characters throughout the novel. In course of his escape from his home, the protagonist Rabbit goes in Chinese restaurant in Brewer with his old coach, Tothero in order to meet and have dinner with the two girls, Ruth Leonard and Margaret Kosko. During the time having dinner, they enjoy talking about Chinese food and games with heavy drink. Later in the meal, Tothero causally refers to Margaret as a "Tramp" the word enrages her and she promptly slaps him. masculinity is severely in crisis in this scene because a male character, Tothero becomes the victim of physical and verbal violence of a call-girl named Margaret. As a poor creature Tothero tolerates her physical and verbal violence. The following dialogue and situation in *Rabbit Run* displays the helpless and coward picture of a male character:

"Yes, sir, whose, you're a real sweet Kid," Margaret tells Rabbit.

"Pay no attention Harry", Tothero says,

"That's the way tramps talk."

"Margaret hits him. her hand flies up from the table and across her body into his mouth with a slapping noise; The slap was left a little twist in his mouth that Rabbit can't bear to look at, it is so ambiguous and blurred, such a sickly mixture of bravado and shame, and worst, pride or less than pride conceit.

This deathly smirk emits the words, "Are you coming my dear?"

"Son of a bitch," Margaret says, her little hard nut of body slides over and she glances behind her to see if she is leaving anything cigarettes or a purse. "Son of a bitch, she repeats "you bloated old bastard', Margaret says to him. He glances towards her then down fuzzily. "I could kill you," Margaret says at his side, and they go off". (69-70)

These lines expose physical and rude verbal violence to a male character by a woman and presents helpless, submissive and surrendering picture of male which is the subversion of traditional assumption of masculinity. Physical violence is enacted upon male by a woman and surrender of a male character in front of her is a striking example of crisis of masculinity.

Most of the men try to get benefit by exploiting and dominating women. Traditional form of hegemonic masculinity is connected with the institutionalization of male's dominance over women. In this novel the conventional idea of women or wife as a passive receiver of her husband's sexual advance has come into crisis due to strong resistance of a wife, Janice to her husband's forced sexual advance. The protagonist Rabbit is unable to control his sexual desires and lust. Being overwhelmed by his lust, Rabbit tries to consume his wife sexually though she has just returned from hospital after delivery. It seems Rabbit does not have brain to think and courage to dominate his lust. He attempts to consume his wife, sexually at a time when she suffers from delivery-related bleeding. Rabbit is seen devoid of masculinity because of lack of patience, reason and responsibility in him. Unlike the traditional figure of

submissive wife, Janice's powerful resistance of her husband's brutal attempt of forced sexual advance brings the hegemonic masculinity into crisis, which is visible in the following quote:

"Just a touch, Jan. Just let me touch you"

"Can't you go to sleep?"

"No, I can't. I love you too much. Just hold still". She pushes him back. "You are just using me". She says "It feels horrible". (255)

Even after her refusal Rabbit steps forwards to show his real face of lusty person as narrated in the following lines:

He scrunches down and fits himself lengthwise between her buttocks, Just so that kind of grip. It's beginning to work, Steady, warms when she twists her head and warns him over her shoulder, "is this a trick your whore taught you"?

"I am not your whore, Harry." (255)

These words of sharp warning with her powerful resistance gives him strong shock. Being defeated in his blind sexual effort, Rabbit doesn't see any alternatives except running away from his wife. masculinity is in crisis in this particular scene both because of Janice's powerful resistance towards Rabbit's sexual violence and it is also because of his lack of manly traits of patience, reason and responsibility in him.

Violence and resistance are pervasive in almost all the female characters in this novel. The protagonist Rabbit not only becomes the victim of his wife, Janice but also is humiliated and ill treated by a part time Prostitute, Ruth too. Rabbit after running away from his wife and family comes in the contact of a part time prostitute, Ruth through the medium of his coach, Tothero. After having dinner in Chinese restaurant, Rabbit goes to Ruth's apartment. Rabbit becomes unconscious being unable to control his lust and passion. He tries to quench his thirst immediately by consuming her sexually. But unlike a traditionally assumed submissive, obedient and weak woman, Ruth resists strongly hurting him physically.

Conventional image of powerful, strong and dominant hero comes into crisis due to the protagonist's weak and helpless situations who bows his head and begs for sexual intercourse with a prostitute. The odd scene of protagonist crying and begging with a prostitute for sexual pleasure justify the fact that the male hero, Rabbit is devoid of masculine traits and pride which is evident in following narration and dialogue:

When Rabbit tries to kiss her, she fits her palm against his jaw and pushes as if she wanted to throw his skull back into the hall. Her fingers curl and a long nail scrapes the tender skin below an eye. He lets her go. The nearly scratched eye squints and a tendon in his neck aches.

"Get out", she says

"I had to hug you", he says

"Hug" she says "Kill felt more like it"

"I've been loving you so much all night", he says

"I had to get it out of my system".

"I know all about your system. One squirt and done".

"It won't be", he promises

"It better be". I want you out of here."

"No you don't".

"You all think you're such lovers." (79)

The narration and dialogue presented above shows the vivid picture of women's powerful resistance. The protagonist, Rabbit attempts to consume Ruth sexually meets powerful slap of physical attack and verbal abuse from a prostitute, Ruth. This situation clearly exposes the strong and dominant picture of woman. Similarly, the protagonist, Rabbit not only becomes the victim of a prostitute's physical attack but also shows his weak, lusty and submissive

behaviour. Ruth's powerful resistance and Rabbit's coward surrender have provided the enough evidence to visualize the masculinity in crisis in the novel.

The male hero further shows his helpless, weak and coward picture in front of a prostitute begging in the following way: "Let me undress you please" In his concern he has come to stand beside her and touches her arms now. She moves her arms from under his touch. Rabbit says "you are pretty bossy." "Please," "Please" (80).

Even after having been illtreated, Rabbit continues to prove his unmanly characteristics trait by clinging to Ruth. He shows his childish behaviour at his frequent requests to have chance to undress her, which doesn't suit with masculine identity. His attempt to have sexual pleasure even at the high price of his masculine identity and dignity.

In spite of being attacked, misbehaved and humiliated Rabbit runs after Ruth only to get his sexual desires fulfilled. None can senses even a single trace of masculine pride in him because of his lusty and surrendering nature. When Ruth tries to go to the next rooms in order to undress her, he pleads her to give him chance to undress her like a crying child. Standing beside her he says "let me undress you. Please, please, please" (80). Rabbit further unmasks his coward, childish, defeated and non-masculinistic nature in the following ways, "Trembling again and shy himself, he brings her to stop by the foot of the bed and searches' for the catch of her dress, He kneels at her feet and kisses the place on her fingers where a ring would have been (81). The above situation explicitly exposes the dominated figure of the protagonist of this novel. He tolerates every sort of violence, humiliation and ill-treatment from a prostitute, Ruth. This shocking scene of male hero's degradation, surrender and defeat proves the fact that Rabbit is facing crisis of masculinity.

The protagonist, Rabbit, faces violence and challenges from almost all female characters in the novel. He is a frequently threatened and challenged throughout the novel either from his wife or by a prostitute or from his mother in law. Rabbit goes to hospital after

two months stay with a prostitute getting the news that his wife is giving birth of his child. When he is waiting in hospital with an expect to be father, his mother in law attacks him with the following challenge and threats: "if you are sitting there like a buzzard young man-hoping she is going to die, you might as well go back to where you've been living because she is doing fine without you and has been all along" (206). Rabbit just listens and tolerates the threats, challenge and verbal abuses delivered by his mother in law, Mrs. Springer. He is challenged to go away from his wife saying Janice feels better in his absence. This threat actually signals towards his useless presence, importantly showing crisis of masculinity.

Conventional assumptions of wife as kind, tender and docile is totally reversed in this novel. Almost all forms of violence; beginning from verbal through physical upto the death crime have been committed by female characters. Janice is careless and irresponsible towards her gender role of a house wife. Just after few days of her delivery, she begins to drink recklessly in spite of being careful and nurturing mother. After the departure of her husband, Janice drinks so heavily that she loses her balance which results into messy and horrible environment in her apartment. Meanwhile, her parents phone her inquiring about Rabbit and her condition. Being horrified at the matter of her mother's arrival to her apartment, Janice tries her best to improve the shameful and messy environment of her apartment. In a panic state Janice struggles to clean the apartment, and in her rushed attempt to clean Rebeca, who is soaked in urine. She accidentally drowns the baby in the bath-tub. The following quote from *Rabbit Run* bears testimony to the death of a newly born baby from the hands of careless, drunkard and irresponsible mother Janice:

She drops gently to her knees by the big calm tub and does not forearms like two large hands, under her eyes the pink baby sinks down like a graystone.

With a sob of protest she grapples for the child but the water pushes up at her

hands, her bathrobe tends to float and the slippery thing squirms in the sudden opacity. (271)

The root cause behind the death of an innocent baby, Rebeca is the heavy drinking habit of her mother. This crime is not worthy to be excused in the name of accidental death. Both Rabbit and Janice are responsible for the death of the baby. Janice has violently crossed the limit. Her reckless drink in spite of nurturing and carrying newly born infant leads to the murder of an innocent baby. This very situation is far away from the expectation of traditional forms of masculinity. On the other hands, Rabbit shows his monstrous and animalistic nature when he runs away from his wife who has just delivered baby only because his wife does not let him do sexual activities. The death crime of innocent baby is the outcome of unconventional manner and activities of her parents which ultimately, is the result of masculinity crisis.

Masculine traits of aggression, vengeance, self respect and pride is maimed in this novel. The protagonist Rabbit does not seem to have a single drop of self respect, aggression and vengeance because he tries to take shelter and clings to a prostitute, Ruth even after her rejection and rude behavior to him. Rabbit comes to Ruth after madly running away amid from the funeral ceremony of his daughter. Like a feather he drifts from one place to another being totally careless regarding his wife, children and his own mission of life. Rabbit is far away from dominant, independence, responsible and bold masculine figure. When he goes to Ruth's apartment for third time, it seems that he can't go anywhere and do anything except the support of a women. Even a prostitute threatens him so rudely as if he is a dog. No verbal abuses touch him at all. It seems his masculine pride has already been emptied. The following narration and dialogue depict violent attack of female character showing the helpless, poor, dependent, coward and nonsense picture of protagonist proving the fact that there is crisis of masculinity in him:

"He rings Ruth's of bell. Ruth comes to the banister and looks down and says

"Go away".

Muh? How'd you know it was me?

"Go back to your wife"

"I can't. I just left her"

"You are bad all around. You are bad with me too".

"Go away", she says, "Go away"

"Don't you need me?"

"Need you she cries. You are no help. You are nothing why don't you get out?

Please get out. I begged you to get out the first time. The damn first I begged you. why are you here?" (208-209)

Furthermore, Ruth slurs verbal abuses attacking him violently as if Rabbit is a victim of her appetite and anger. The following verbal abuses of a prostitute to the protagonist and his helpless surrender in front of her is clearly opposite to the traditional concept of masculinity. "You are Mr. death himself. You are not just nothing, you are worse than nothing. You are not a rat, you don't stink, you are not enough to stink" (310). The above verbal attack by a prostitute to the protagonist and his passive acceptance excessively portrays the lack of manhood in him. These lines expose the extreme verbal violence thrown to the protagonist. Male hero begs for the shelter and support from a prostitute at the cost of his male pride leaving his wife and child demonstrates nothing except the crisis of masculinity in him.

Updike dramatizes the theme of masculinity in crisis also through a focus on physicality, behavior, and traits. Traditional concept of masculinity relates masculinity to the qualities of maleness which represents bravery, power and activeness. It expects man to be rational, strong, protective and decisive taking women as irrational, emotional, weak, nurturing and submissive. M.H. Abrams points out masculine nature and traits saying 'the

masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative; the feminine by systematic oppositions to such traits has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional" (235). The conventional assumptions of masculinity idealizes man endowing superior physical power functionality and rationality. In a similar vein, Kay M. Palan and Charles S. Areni present ideal picture of male saying: "Traditionally masculine gender identity is said to encompass personality traits such as independence, assertiveness, instrumentality and competitiveness (365). Quite opposite to the traditional ideology of masculinity, there is the reversed positions of male characters in this novel because of lacking male values, practices and traits. All the male characters mostly including protagonist are far away from the male values or masculine qualities as stated by Patricia Sexton:

What does it mean to be masculine! It means obviously holding male norms, values and following male behaviour. Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery technological skill, solidarity, adventure and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body. (17)

The protagonist, Rabbit fails to meet the criteria of masculine ethos as stated above. He in spite of following male values, practices and traits, adopts and exposes the feminine traits being timid, emotional, weak and submissive. Rabbit is tender and weaker instead of being butch, hardy, macho, muscular, powerful, robust, strong, vigorous and well-built in terms of physicality. This very reversed situation is reflected in the scene where Rabbit and Ruth go for a walk to the top of Mt. Judge. While walking in the mountain pebbles stab his skin. It is due to the lack of toughness in his body, he is stabbed. Contrary to traditional belief, Ruth walk on without being hurt and feeling any difficulties. It shows Ruth' superiority in terms of physicality and endurance. Rabbit introduces his timid, coward and weaker personality when

he cries in such small accident saying "Owitch". A woman character, Ruth has to console and encourage him to be brave. The following narration overtly demonstrates the timid, weaker and coward nature of the protagonist lacking adventure and considerable amount of toughness in his mind and body, which is the strong evidence to justify the fact that there is crisis of masculinity in him:

She does take off her shoes. Bare of stocking, her white feet lift lightly under his eyes, the yellow skin of her heels flickers. Under the swell of calf her ankles are thin. In a fond gesture he takes of his shoes and socks, to share whatever pain there is. The dirt is trod smooth, but embedded pebbles stab his skin. Also the ground is cold "Ouch", he says "Owitch." He tells her, "let's go back down".

"No, no" she says. "We must be half way."

"Come on, soldier," she says, "be brave". (117)

Rabbit's feminine trait is further exposed when he becomes very much frightened in the mountain at his imagination of 'death'. Rabbit pleads Ruth to save and support being frightened and sentimental. The following narration doesn't only exposes the protagonist's non-masculine figure but also shows his timid, coward, submissive and dependent traits justifying the crisis of masculinity in him.

"He becomes frightened and begs Ruth "put your arms around me." She carelessly obliges, taking a step and swinging her hunch against his. He claps tighter and feels better. So it is in a turn of security that he asks, voicing like a loved child a teasing doubt. "Were you really a hoer? To his surprise she turns hard and tists away and stand beside the railing menacingly. Her eyes narrow, her chin changes shape. In his nervousness he notices three boy scouts staring at them across the asphalt. She asks "Are you really a rat?"

He feels need of care in his answer "In a way." (119)

The above narration and dialogue between Rabbit and Ruth in Mt. Judge clearly disclose the fact that the protagonist, Rabbit doesn't embody masculine physicality and traits as per the expectation of traditional form of masculinity. Through the emotional point of view men are considered as unemotional and stoic where as it is conceptualized that women are sentimental, emotional and compassionate. This expectation of masculinity is also vividly distorted in the above situation where is reversed situation of conventional assumption.

Manly, virile, bold, brave and butch identity of male is in crisis because the protagonist fails to maintain the masculine assumption of man as one who never feels anxious, depressed or vulnerable and never cries in the tower of physical and emotional strength being confident determined, aggressive, tough, self-reliant and ab overall not feminine. On the day of their daughter's funeral ceremony, Rabbit and Janice go to their apartment in order to wear black dress. Rabbit is terrified when he reaches in his apartment due to the fear of corpse. The coward, abnormal and childish nature of the protagonist is evident in the following narration which proves him to be devoid of masculine traits:

His groan aches to weep. He is afraid to stick even his hand into the bathroom; he fears if he turns on the light he will see a tiny wrinkled blue corpse lying face up on the floor of the drained tub. The pressure in his bladder grows until he is at last forced to dare, the dark bottom of the tub leaps up black and white. He expects never to go to sleep and awaking with the slant of sunshine. He dresses in haste, more panicked now than any time yesterday. Forgive me, forgive me, he keeps saying silently to 'no one'. (284)

From the above narration it becomes clear that the protagonist is suffering from masculinity crisis. It can be justified forwarding the evidence that he feels anxious, depressed and vulnerable in his own apartment. The bold, brave, butch and determined identity of a man is

also seen in elimination due to the cowardice nature of the protagonist who frightens in his own apartment being terrified by the corpse of an infant.

The protagonist Rabbit's childish, coward and abnormal characteristics trait is further visible during the time of waiting for his daughter's funeral ceremony. He extremely frightens and fears to meet and confront with his mother. The following narration exposing his restless mental state proves the fact that he lacks manhood and masculine features of boldness, patience and intellectuality:

If she comes in and gives him hell, he thinks he'll die rather than take it. Of all the people in the world, he wants to see her least. Sitting there by himself he comes to the conclusion either he or his mother must die. It is a weird conclusion, but he keeps coming to it, again and again. (296)

The above narration further clarifies the timid, immatured and coward nature of protagonist. He fears to confront the reality. He is afraid of his mother mostly. This situation justifies the fact that the protagonist does not match with the assumption of traditional form of masculinity. Besides, the protagonist, other male characters too do not suit with the conventional masculine ideal figure and identity of a man. Tothoro lacks masculinity because he totally depends on his wife. Similarly, jack Eccles also lacks the masculine traits of boldness, manhood and certain form of aggression. Jacks Eccles is dominated, insulted and criticized by his own wife Lucy. Lucy insults her husband with Rabbit in the following way:

Lucy says, "Oh- like the fact that you're not afraid of woman?"

"Who is?"

"Jack"

"You Think"

"Of course with old ones and the teenagers." (247)

Lucy criticizes her husband with Rabbit charging him as a person who frightens with women. Jack's manhood is interrogated by his wife which turns out to be the evidence of masculinity crisis in him. Lucy's dissatisfaction regarding her husband's lack of manhood results into anger and threat in the following way:

'Lucy realizes with resentment that her husband is middle-aged. His hair is thinning, his skin is dry, he looks exhausted.

She cries, "Why must you spend your life chasing after the worthless heel?

"He's not worthless I love him".

"You love him. That's sickening. Oh I think that's sickening, Jack why don't you try to loving me"?

"I do"

"You don't Jack. Let's face it, you don't

You're afraid of that, aren't you? Aren't you afraid?" (272)

The above narration and dialogue displays the anger, threat and dissatisfaction of Lucy towards her husband. She not only warns him but also discloses his inability having lack of manhood. She further gestures towards the critical question of his impotence unmasking the fact that he is afraid of the love of women. This very shocking exposition of his inner reality by his wife is an excellent evidence to justify the fact that Jack is devoid of manhood having the problem of masculinity crisis.

There is yet another angle to the theme of masculinity in crisis in *Rabbit Run*. This angle is related to the sphere of educational enlightenment. Traditionally, a masculine gender identity is said to encompass the masculine virtues of rationality and intellectuality having quest for knowledge for career development. Masculinity tries to legitimize, maintain and justify the male monopoly of positions of economic, educational, social and political power and keeps women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of

acquiring economic, political and social power. The conventional ideology of masculine supremacy in terms of educational access has come into crisis due to the increasing academic success of girls or women. In a similar vein Tim Edwards argues: "Historically this disparity has evened out or even reversed in favour of boys at further and higher levels of education, these too are now perceived as showing signs of maintaining and indeed consolidating the educational lead of female over male" (18). Conventional ideal picture of male as bearer of reason and intellectuality being leader of his family and society crumbles in this novel. John Updike exposes the altered and reversed position of male characters regarding the academic and intellectual gain. Almost all the male characters are aloof towards study and intellectual gain with sheer negligence for career development. The protagonist, Rabbit has suffered a lot being in parthless and confused state due to his weakness to find out the contrast between flesh and spirit division. The flesh here indicates sensual desires whereas, the spirit suggests the intellectual aspirations and rational power. Rabbit through out the novel has become more hypnotized with physical desires rather than intellectual one.

Rabbit runs from his wife to prostitute time and again and bear all sorts of domination and violence from them. It is only because of his weakness to be overwhelmed by lust and emotion rather than by any genuine cause. From the beginning to the end the protagonist is at constant but futile race as rabbit in pursuit of nothing. The protagonist not only lacks the firmness, determination, intellectuality, responsibility and many other masculine traits but is also in directionless race in his life. Rabbit does not have masculine gender identity as Khym Palan and Charles S. Areni state in the following way: "Traditionally a masculine identity is said to encompass personality traits such as independence, assertiveness, instrumentality and competitiveness (365). He is seen unable to encompass masculine traits as stated above. He is far away from masculine ethics of quest for knowledge and struggle to materialize the mission, destination and dream of life. Due to the lack of academic qualification and skill,

Rabbit doesn't have any security in his occupation. Rabbit is in state of fluctuation like an unsteered boat without having any fixed plan, purpose and destination. The following narration presents sufficient evidence of his miserable and pitiable life caused by his failure in academic and social field:

Like an unsteered boat, he keeps scraping against the same rocks; his mother-in-law's ugly behaviour, his father's gaze of desertion, Ruth's silence and rejection the last time he saw her, his mother's oppressive not saying a word, what ails her? He rolls over on his stomach and seems to look down into a bottomless sea, down and down to where crusty crags gesture amid blind depths. (237)

The root cause behind his rejection from almost everywhere is his failure to have academic success, skills and secured job. Rabbit seems to be unable to conform with male ideology because of the absence of determination, intellectual power and ambition in his life. Instead of being active in pursuit of knowledge, skills and jobs to support his family, he plunges into the sea of depression which is the clear indication of masculinity crisis in him.

The reversed state of educational lead of female is justified in this novel through the example of Ruth's vigorous interest in study in contrast to the protagonist's aloofness towards it. Ruth's job as a stenographer with an insurance company is skill oriented job whereas Rabbit works as a gardener investing manual or physical power instead of mental power. No any male character is seen interested in study and intellectual pursuit throughout the novel. It is only Ruth who invests her time in study to sharpen her mental faculty. The following narration gestures towards the studious nature of Ruth: "Ruth lets him in, a book in one hand. Her eyes look sleepy from reading throughout the night" (114). When Rabbit purposes Ruth to go for a walk to enjoy, she replies him saying she was busy in study. The dialogue below

further clarifies the fact that female character, Ruth is more interested in intellectual pursuit than the hedonistic male hero, Rabbit, who is away from intellectual gain:

"Let's go for the walk," he announces.

"I'm reading" Ruth says from a chair.

The book is open to near the end. She reads book nicely, without cracking their backs." (115)

The above dialogue and situation demonstrates the fact that male hero, Rabbit is anti-intellectual hero who is guided by sensual hedonism. He is uninterested in intellectual pursuit. Contrary to the conventional ideology of masculinity Ruth is more interested in the academic and intellectual pursuit. The domination of male in academic, intellectual and rational field is no longer prevails in this novel because of the portrayal of the protagonist's inferior position depicting his loss of everything such as education, social life, job and love.

The crisis of masculinity as seen in *Rabbit Run* is actually caused by the commercialization of sexuality. Hegemonic masculine ideology of compulsion of marital heterosexuality based on male dominance has come into crisis. It is due to the women's increasing tendency to live independent and free life by commercializing sex. Women's rising expectations sexually and emotionally often linked with the greater sense of their sexual and emotional independence from men. Commercialization of sex not only rupture the conventional gender role in terms of sexuality but laso brings the hegemonic masculinity into crisis. Karl Bednarik also supports this idea through his argument that: "alienation of work, bureaucracy in politics and war and the commercialization of sexuality all undermine masculinity" (104).

Traditionally sex was the weapon of male to prove his ultimate supremacy, however this notion is in collapse in this novel. The female characters such as Ruth and Margaret are living independent life without being married. They further challenge conventional ideology

of masculinity by having sexual relation with many men making them as puppets in their hands. The stereotypical image of women as a passive sex object being coy and obedient receiver come into crisis due to the vulgar sexual frankness of Ruth and Margaret. They work as part time prostitutes along with other jobs in public sphere.

The protagonist becomes the victim of Ruth for many times in the novel. One night Rabbit and Ruth go out to club castanet on the southside of Brewer where Rabbit becomes unhappy because of his sister's affair with a young man and Ruth's with Harrison. Being distressed and angry, he asks her (Ruth) to go out form the club but she doesn't become ready to follow him. Rabbit's intention to humiliate her by asking her previous relation with Harrison turns to himself. Ruth challenges him with the reference of his sister in the following way:

"You see your sister come in with some boy friend and practically pee in your pants."

"Did you see the punk she was with?"

"What was the matter with him?" Ruth asks. "He looked all right.

"Just about everybody looks all right to you, don't they?"

"Boy, if this what seeing your sister does to you I'm glad we're not married."

"What brought that up?"

"What brought what up

"Marriage"

"You did, don't you remember, the first night, you kept talking about it, and kissed my ring finger." (190)

The above dialogue presents a challenge of Ruth to Rabbit. She criticizes his inferior state by bringing the reference of his sister's affairs in bitter terms saying his sister Peed his pant. She also expresses her wishes to remain unmarried which is also a shock to the masculinity. Bold

and independent Ruth humiliates Rabbit by reminding his disgusting act of kissing her ring finger of her leg. Rabbit is insulted rudely by a prostitute which is one of the evidence of masculinity crisis.

Being furious at her, Rabbit tries to humiliate her by asking her sexual relation with Harrison and other men but ultimately he himself becomes victimized with her bold frank and shocking disclosure of her affairs making him nothing except a client. Rabbit's male arrogance is shattered when she equates sexual intercourse with crap. Ruth further states that she did it for money. The following debate between Rabbit and Ruth displays the commercialization of sex along with the crisis of masculinity:

"You've laid for Harrison, haven't you?"

"I guess. Sure"

"You gess. You don't know?"

"I said sure."

"And how many others?"

"I don't know."

"A hundred?"

"It's a pointless question."

"Why is it pointless?"

"It is like how many times you've taken a crap. Ok.

I've taken a crap.

"I'm not sure. You were a real hooer?"

"I took some money. I've told you." (191)

These shocking disclosures of her sexual intercourse prove the commercialization of sex.

Ruth's Frank and vulgar expression in terms of sex shattered the traditional image of women as coy, passive and obedient. Ruth is unmarried but openly accepts her sexual intercourse

with many men for money clearly justifies the commercialization of sex and crisis of masculinity.

Even after such shocking exposition of Ruth's affairs, Rabbit wants her so much. Masculine sense of aggression is ravaged when he wants to love and marry her in the following way:

"Look I've loved you."

"Well I've loved you."

And now?"

"I want to still love you." (194)

The above situation justifies the fact that the protagonist Rabbit is helpless who surrenders in front of a prostitute. On the other hand sex is commercialized which ultimately undermines masculinity. Women's boldness, activeness and frankness regarding sexual intercourse is also the ample evidence of crisis of masculinity.

Thus, Updike's *Rabbit Run* has presented the traditional form of hegemonic masculinity is on the verge of extinction because of the shift in stereotypical gender role in the family and society with the challenges to men's dominant position in public and private sphere along with place of women in society. The shift in men's privileged position, negative representation of the protagonist as anti-intellectual hero and female resistance over male domination have stood as the leading causes of masculinity in crisis.

### III. Conclusion

John Updike's novel, *Rabbit Run* demonstrates the traditional form of hegemonic masculinity in crisis due to the sense of powerlessness, meaningless and uncertainty in traditionally assumed men's position and performance. The protagonist Rabbit, including other male characters, lacks the conventional masculine traits of rationality, responsibility and functionality. He remains away from the bold, courageous, heroic, determined and success oriented action and performance. Quite opposite to the traditional assumption of masculinity, female characters especially wives in the family appear to be strong, powerful, assertive and domineering over their husbands and other male characters. The female characters instead of being obedient, nurturing and submissive not only go beyond the limitation of traditionally assigned gender roles but also resist, rebuff and confront the male domination. In short, they are bold enough to live independently. The masculine ethos of husband as master, provider, protector and patron of his family has come into crisis in this novel. It is because of the fact that the protagonist along with other male characters severs the ties with former masculine ethics being unable to provide, protect and control over his wife and family. The protagonist's parasitic dependence upon his wife, prostitute and in laws along with the exposition of women characters in the public jobs explicitly manifests the crisis of traditional form of masculinity.

The violence and resistance of the women characters in the novel is pervasive which stands as the leading cause of masculinity in crisis in this novel. Almost all the male characters mainly including the protagonist, Rabbit are victimized from the numerous verbal and physical bouts of violence from their wives, prostitutes and girl friends. Rabbit is frequently devalued, humiliated and attacked by women characters such as his wife, a prostitute, Ruth and his mother in law. Janice strongly resists and refuses her husband, Rabbit's sexual advances. Similarly, a prostitute called Ruth rudely quashes his request. The

protagonist, Rabbit, is only in the pursuit of quenching the thirst of sensual desires which brings the conventional image of male as bearer of reason, education and intellectuality into crisis. Commercialization of sex and open sexuality which is visible in Ruth's bold, frank and shocking disclosure of her sexual relation with her clients also sheds light towards the masculinity in crisis in the novel.

Thus, evidences and testimonies of traditional form of hegemonic masculinity in crisis in the novel *Rabbit Run* have been assembled through the analysis of family role, shift in work, women's violence and resistance over male domination, commercialization of sexuality, men's unconventional behaviours and traits along with the reverse situation in educational attainment and quest for knowledge.

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