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Masculinity in Crisis in Checkov's *Ivanov*

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Letter of Recommendation

Narayan Chhetry has completed his thesis entitled "Masculinity in Crisis in Checkov's *Ivanov*" under my supervision. He carried out this research from October 2015 (A.D.) to January 2016 (A.D.). I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval letter

The thesis entitled “Masculinity in Crisis in Chekhov’s *Ivanov*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Narayan Chhetry has been approved by the undersigned member of the research committee.

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Abstract

The present thesis entitled "Masculinity in crisis in Chekhov's *Ivanov*" exposes the critical condition of masculine identity of Ivanov, the protagonist of the play. Beside him this research project also excavates the panic and pathetic condition of other male's characters of the play. It also exposes the major causes and consequences after the crisis of masculinity. Masculinity as the school of thought demands some sorts of activities from males in the society. Males in the patriarchal society are demanded to be bold, courageous, rational, domineering, leading, aggressive, and like that. In the play, most of the male character along with protagonist Ivanov, instead of conforming their male values, practice and traits, adopt and expose the feminine traits. Their suffering, irrationality, irresponsibility, poverty are the major promises to prove their poor masculine power. The condition of the reversal of their masculine identity have analyzed with the help the theoretical conceptual tools named masculinity, by borrowing the main ideas from R.W. Connells's *Masculinities*. The way the protagonist commits suicide and escape from the responsibilities is the strong evidences to show his timidity. Along with the protagonist, other male characters' irresponsibility, cowardice, irrationality can be observed throughout the play.

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Masculinity in Crisis in Chekhov's *Ivanov*

This research paper entitled "Masculinity in crisis in Chekhov's *Ivanov*" investigates into the problem of males' identity on the verge of crisis with particular references to Ivanov, the protagonist of Chekhov's melodrama *Ivanov*(1889). Along with the central character Ivanov, this research project will probe into the roles and responsibilities of other male characters of the play. This research paper mainly depicts how the masculine traits of male is challenged and push into crisis and aims to present the possible cause and consequence of masculinity in crisis on the basis of the roles and responsibilities of male characters.

After the study of the concept of masculinity/masculinities, femininity/femininities and gender studies, it is discovered that most of the male characters are unable to preserve their masculine ethos. They became unable to fulfill the roles as assigned by patriarchal society. Their inability to accomplish the assigned conventional masculine traits ultimately transfers them into the state of the crisis of masculinity. The male characters of the play have not been able to perform and fulfill the male values, practice, traits and significance rather they have adopted the feminine traits like; immature, emotional, irrational and so forth. The condition of the reversal of the conventional gender roles adds extra challenge and threat to the masculinity of man. On the other hand, emerging female consciousness about their subjectivity and their resistance over mans' supremacy are some of the major cause of masculinity in crisis.

This research regarding the story of *Ivanov*, believes that the men being ruled and guided by deep-rooted traditional psychology of masculinity, they have the inner desire to have the masculine position in the society as well as in their family. But when they can't enable themselves to have the masculine qualities within themselves

they suffer in many ways: they began to be frustrated, depressed, they hide themselves from the social activities, start to use drugs and sometime in the name of easy escape, they kill themselves. Instead of searching the logical way to get out from the pound of problems they accept exile, suicide, frustration are the possible signs and symbols after the masculinity in crisis. The male characters' escaping from their life, running after the problem, losing their male ideology like: bold, courage, mature, logic to handle the situation have been documented as the strong evidence to prove the fact that the conventional form of masculinity is in crisis in the play.

To see, this drama from the theatrical perspective, the play *Ivanov* belongs to melodrama, the sub-genre of the play, which presents the struggle between and among the characters. Melodrama is unique in the presentation of the struggle, event, suspense, poetic justice and movement of the plot. The issue of struggle is most important in melodrama, where we can find one character is struggling with another character of the play. The plot construction of Melodrama contains the series of reversal to arouse the feeling of fear and danger. The critic Hill McGraw defines Melodrama as "a tragedy that never quite grew up" (Hill 23). In the same way the present play displays the struggle between and among the characters; one character of the play is struggling with another character. Ivanov is struggling with other characters of the play like; Borkin, Shabelsky and Paul Lebedev in order to present himself as the honest and responsible in front of them. Chekhov employed his characters with their active roles; they reflect the external behavior of human being and most of the time they remain in the mood of tension. With the story of Ivanov, Anna, Borkin and other characters' the play beautifully mirrored the social reality. Along with the 'imitation of human action' Chekhov also followed Aristotelian concept

of 'poetic justice'-rewarding the virtue and punishing the vices. The death of Ivanov is taken as the punishment for his evil deeds.

On the other side, the roles as occupied by the male characters allows us for investigation, problematization and interrogation of characters' goal. Theater critic David Rush defines Protagonist or the 'Agent of Action' on the basis of the roles performed by the character in the stage. He argues that "this character's function is to make the events of the play happen. It's the passion behind this characters goal and the power behind the strategies she/he generate the drive the play forward" (Rush71). As the hero or protagonist character of the play, Ivanov fails to preserve his leading roles. Though, he is the agent of action in the play, his action does not justify as hero of the play. Beside the protagonist characters other male characters also do not enable themselves to bear the message of the play.

Anton Chekhov, has written so many plays among these some of them are worldly famous and well-known. His first full-length play, *Ivanov* (1887) was an unsuccessful one, but its revised version 1889 was largely successes. His next play *The Wood Demon* (1888) was also fairly unsuccessful. But his others play like: *The Seagull* (1897), *The Three Sister* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) became the masterpieces in the modern theater. In most of his play he captured and chronicled the common issue of everyday people like: the conflicts between husband and wife, economic and social condition of family, business tradition of people etc. Beside these subject matters, in his play he minutely observed the psychological patterns of the characters. We can see the characters' psychological action more than the physical action in his play.

Ivanov(1889) is one of the successful play of Anton Chekhov. That success paves Chekhov to secure his space in the field of drama as a great playwright.

Ivanov (1889) is a social realistic play; beautifully reflects the contemporary Russian society. The play displays the perfect picture of the then Russian society in the background of nineteenth century. In the turn of the nineteenth century the Russian society was in its phase of social transformation. When the society was shifting from the Feudalism to Capitalism its impact can be measured in the daily life concerning of the characters of the play. Along with central character Ivanov, most of the male characters of the play are suffering with different problems. Ivanov has different responsibility to play with, he has to pay back his debt, continue his business, secure the life of his wife and contribute in society etc. Instead of fulfilling his roles and responsibilities he kills himself. Other male characters of the play like: Borkin, Dr. Lovov and Paul Levedev are also live in the burden of their life. Along with all these issue, this research aims to explore the issue of masculinity in crisis in the play.

Ivanov has drowned the concentration of numerous scholars and critics since its first performance in 1887 with its first version. It is highly prosperous for achieving the scholarly criticism from multiple perspectives. Numbers of critics have interpreted *Ivanov* form different angle. Mainly the concern of their evaluation and study attempts to explore the confined nature of characters on the ground of nineteenth century Russian Society. There is the hangover of social transformation among the characters of the play. When the Russian society was being transforming from feudalism to capitalism, the impact of it can be reflected from the social behaviors of the characters. The theater critic like; Charles McNalty, Jason Jinoman and ElyceSommer tries to explore the confined nature of the characters. Most of the characters of the play are suffering from social transformation. For example, when the society was paying its focus to money, the characters like Lebedev and his wife has the tension that their money is in the hand of other people. On the other side, the

characters like Ivanov and Borkin are suffered from their poverty. The main reason of death of Anna was also the poverty. In that turning phase the main concern of the people was to make money more and more. Most of the male characters of the play are running after the money. They have the common aim to earn money as much as they can but unfortunately they failed in their money making mission.

Times theater critic, Charles McNulty regards *Ivanov* as “a study of a superfluous man” (21). He investigates the *Ivanov*, as a recurring personality of nineteenth century Russian literature. His review, “Ivanov; at Odyssey Theater a wining Exploration of Confounding Humanity” (2012) affirms to picture the confined nature of protagonist character, Ivanov. He regards Ivanov’s financial, social and familial troubles are the sources of his confoundedness. Ivanov tries to come out from that confined world but finally he fails to come out and end his life.

Similarly, Jason Zinoma’s in his theater review “Chekhov a Brutally Normal Midlife Crisis” published on *New York Times* explores the identity crisis of Ivanov. According to him “*Ivanov* is a play where most of the characters are in the condition of their identity in crisis. They have not their own free life” (8). He also explores the dilemma of Ivanov and compares it with Hamlet, hero of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

According to him:

It has become fashionable for onetime Hamlets like to tackle Ivanov. This seems natural, as the characters are both indecisive brooders with suicidal tendencies. Chekhov even makes the comparison in the play, but Mr. Fekete’s effortlessly natural performance has none of the tragic sweep of Shakespeare. His midlife crisis seems brutally ordinary. (20)

He argues that the suffering faced by the protagonist, Ivanov is natural in the sense that he himself is responsible for this suffering. His weakness and poor logical ability arrows the different trouble in his life. His love affection with Sasha is not because of other reason but because of his inability to distinguish what is accepted in love and what not. Similarly, his negligence in his business is the cause for his poverty.

Another theater critic, Elyse Sommer investigates the psychological complexities of central character Ivanov. He presents Ivanov as unredeemable and shockingly unsympathetic. Hi argues- “Yet, he’s not a monster without the conscience. In fact, his behavior is unjustified and cruel exacerbates the self-loathing that’s part of his depression” (7). He takes the positive characteristic of hero Ivanov and presents as the victim of transforming society. Ivanov have the different role to play with but with the light logical quality it is quite difficult for him.

In the same way, some other critics have examined Ivanov from the theatrical perspective. The theater critics Ben Brantely focus upon the overall presentation and intention of the characters. He writes, “we need to believe that its characters have at least the hope of connecting with one another” (12). He means to say that Chekhov's presentation of character in relation of the other character is really meaningful to forward the hidden message. He employed his character with proper connection to each other. The role of the one character is impacted by the role of other characters. Most of the time activities of one character have impacted on the activities of others characters.

Critics have studied the role and responsibility of characters in relation to the other characters. Although all these critics and reviewers examined Ivanov from different points of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusions, none of

them notice the issue of masculinity in crisis. In this research project, my point of departure from the finding of these critics will concern with the roles and responsibilities of the hero of the play *Ivanov*. I will focus on how he fails to maintain his male idealism and how his masculinity is in the state of crisis. Beside him, this research project will also excavate the cowardice and panic condition of the other male characters of the play.

With the concept of masculinity a reflection will furnish the main ideas for this research. The Thorough analysis of *Ivanov* is also an integral part of theoretical modality. Regular library visit and consulting the proper websites can facilitate the research work. In addition, the researcher goes through the different website and external links to collect the pertinent ideas. The researcher collects all the advices and inducements from the respected teachers and professors. The researcher's own insight can some help.

In order to make this research convenient and to expose the theme of masculinity in crisis effectively, this thesis is divided in three portions. In the first portion, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis and quotes different critics' view regarding the play. In the same portion, the researcher shows the point of departure from others critics. In the second portion, the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the play *Ivanov* by applying the methodology of masculinity from the view point of how the hero of the play is in the state of masculinity in crisis. With the contained the textual analysis it depicts the sufficient evidences from the text and presents how masculinity is in crisis. The last portion contains the conclusive ending of the research. The researcher goes on to analyze the text by using the theoretical concept of masculinity.

Traditionally masculinity was defined as the essential male quality. It was related with the question of what makes man to be a man or it was taken as the means to be a man. Maleness was taken as synonymous to masculinity, bold, courage; strong, rational, matured, powerful activities are some of the adjectives associated to the traditional form of masculinity. It means to say that being men is to perform aggressive, leading, independent, competitive, protective, strength and self-controlled activities. Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary defines masculinity as "a noun which means the quality of being masculine" (942). The Dictionary further stated that masculinity as "qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men. It is the masculinity which has to do with particular traits and qualities rather with biology". The definition indicates that masculinity is positive quality or attributes associated with male sex. It is related with the maleness. What means to be a man is the central theme of masculinity. To be a man must have adopted the masculine traits.

The different socio-political and cultural movements have brought significant change in our understanding of traditional masculinity. The feminist movements have shown that these categories are culturally constructed. They also claimed that being the cultural construct these categories do not have any essential meaning. They are just constructed for the benefit of some and determinant to the others. R.W. Connell in her second edition of the book *Masculinities* (2005) defines masculinity as historical object. She argues that "to speak of masculinity is to speak about the gender relations, masculinity are not equivalent to men; they concern the position of men in gender order. They can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people (both men and women, though predominantly men) engage that position"(Connell 72). She means to say that though the masculinity was found within male previously but after the different social waves it can be found within female as

well. Social science has radically changed along with the circumstance men and women activities have also change. What we have understood to be feminine quality can also found within men and vice versa. Male can be as feminine as female and female can be as masculine as male. Man can be rational-irrational, strong-weak, control-emotional, active-passive and so on. Thus, masculinity now should be understood in plural form. She further argues that these different masculinities are associated with different position of power.

The notion of masculinity believes that there are different codes of conducts regarding the behavior of male and female. The male in the society is demanded to act in different ways with respect to the female. He is expected to be bold, gentle, educated, rational, commanding and so forth. With these qualities courage is the one of the most essential condition of masculinity. The greatest thing that undermines masculinity is cowardice. To be a masculine one should have adequate amount of courage. He must be ready to accept the new challenges and difficulties in his life. It is necessary to play with the problem and hardness to sake one's masculine identity. When one fails to face the challenge of situation his masculinity is no more functioning. Regarding the masculine quality critics Martin Mills and Bob Lingard stated that "masculinity has changed and subject to crisis during the last two hundred years. As a result some men are passive in their acceptance and some of them are trying to escape from their family" (204). These critics have well observed the masculinity since last two years. They claim that the masculinity since then, is in crisis and one of the result became the crisis of masculinity is the adaptation of escapist mentality by men. Being unable to cope up with their assigned roles and responsibilities, they are running after the problem and escaping from their life. The escapist mentality of men some time resulted in the form of the suicide. Ivanov's

suicide in the last day of marriage with Sasha clearly proves that his masculinity is in crisis. By killing himself, he escaped from his life. This escaping from the life undermines the masculinity.

Similarly, M. H. Abrams studied masculinity in relation to femininity. He measures masculinity in opposition to femininity with different parameter. He opens that "the masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative; the feminine by systematic opposition to such traits has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional" (235). He means to say that when male lose such assigned norms of patriarchal culture, his masculinity goes in crisis. On the other hand, masculinity is different in relation to the femininity.

The play clearly captured the powerless and pitiable position of male characters. In the surface, male characters seem dominating or controlling the power in the society but this is nothing than an attempt to hold up their traditional masculine identity. This attempt after all turn into a futile job and their position falls into problem. Along with the protagonist Ivanov, most of the male characters of the play don't preserve their masculine quality. In many ways, they failed to hold their masculine norms and values. They became unable to solve their family problem, lose their rationality, suffering from the poverty, suffered with their own weakness, became unable to contribute in the society and overall, they fails to hold their masculine features. Their masculinity is in crisis or challenged not because of strong resistance of the female characters but because of their own follies like: immaturity, cowardliness, incapability, irrationality, immorality and so on. To some extent, female resistance and their growing consciousness about their subjectivity and agency have some significance to push the masculinity in crisis.

This research along with the critical conceptual tools named 'masculinity' analyzes the play *Ivanov* by Anton Chekhov in order to expose the issue of masculinity in crisis. The major argument of this researcher is that Ivanov's escaping from the problem and suicide is his inability to hold the masculine traits as assigned by patriarchal society. The patriarchal society assigns him different roles such as: As the male member of the society, he has to contribute in the society and live prestigious life; he has to protect his family, run his business properly and maintain his masculine traits. But the problem here is instead of fulfilling his roles and responsibilities he himself suffers from clinical depression and finally commits suicide. His escaping from his duties shows that his masculinity is no more functioning.

Ivanov suffers in different ways: his poverty is increasing day by days, his business of estate is running on loss, his rationality is no more functioning to handle the situations, people around him are insulting him as irresponsible person, he tries to do one thing but situation leads him to next. Not only outwardly, but he undergoes several psychological conflict as well. Most of the time he is struggling to regained his former glory but when he fails to achieve it he suffers from psychological problem which is clinical depression. He is trying to recognizing himself but his rationality does not enable him to know who he is? His identification is losing along with that there is no security in his existence as well. He is searching his own existence within himself. He is running here and there in search of his identification but he is not finding it. After the exhausted he says that, "I have become so irritable, bad-tempered, rude and petty- minded that I does not recognize myself. Every day I have a headache, I can't sleep, and there are noises in my ears. And there is simply nowhere where I can get any peace . . . simply no-where (4)". This line spoken by Ivanov clearly shows that he is in the state of dilemma regarding his masculine identity. Though, he is

trying to get out from that pond of problems but he is not finding the logical way to come out. The more he tried to come out from the problem, the more he plunged into it. That is why, his maleness is in question. Hence, he does not reflect a matured man, who can handle the situation with his logicity. When he fails to correspond with the problem in different situations he suffers more. He himself is responsible with these sufferings.

Beside these problems, there is one head aching problem for him that is the decreasing sentimentality with his wife and increasing affection with Sasha, (daughter of his friend, Paul Lebedev) which ultimately leads him to the end of his life. His wife is going to die from tuberculosis, if she would not find the better treatment. As the head of the family or as the husband he have the grave responsibility to save the life of his wife. But sorry thing is that Ivanov does not seem responsible towards the decreasing health condition of his wife. The days of his wife's are reducing because of tuberculosis but there is no sentimentality in their relation, the distance existing between them is increasing per day. Ivanov fails to perform his manliness roles and responsibilities to save his wife. His effort to save the life of his wife does not become success. He fails to prove himself as responsible man and protective husband rather he himself presents as cowardice and a failure husband. When he fails to save the life of his wife from the tuberculosis he regrets himself and says:

Anna is a remarkable, an extraordinary woman. She changed her religion for my sake, left her father and mother gave up her money, and if I had asked for a hundred more sacrifices, she would have made them without blinking an eyelid. As for me- well there is nothing remarkable for me, and I had sacrificed nothing. (9)

With this feeling of Ivanov, we can analyze his irresponsibility towards his wife. Not only that, it also reflect how he is becoming failure husband in his responsibility. He does nothing to save the life of his wife. Instead of solving the problems, he is surrendering and escaping from his masculine role. He should be able to save the life of his wife, but he couldn't do so. His inability to save the life of his wife in difficult situation by disease raises the question in his manhood.

Masculinity is the product of patriarchy to great extent. It usually undermines women's empowerment. It always looks the women through the eyes of patriarchy which gives no respect and values to them. Patriarchy commodifies the women. Males are considers as the agent of patriarchy who, with the belief of having masculine power, subordinate and marginalized the women. In this patriarchal system, women are treated not as being but as an object. This kind of patriarchal internalization could be seen in the play. Ivanov's behavior towards his ill wife and his affection with a young girl Sasha enables us to claim that he takes women as the object of his entertainment. Instead of managing the money to send his wife to Crimea for her further treatment as suggested by the doctor, Ivanov begun secret affairs with another girl Sasha that reflect he is trying to commodify her as an object of entertainment. Ivanov casted his evil eyes toward Sasha not because of his true love but with the intention to achieve heavy dowry by her family.

Similarly, Ivanov has lost his social position as the protector of his family and is consequently banished from the public view. With the failure of the masculinity he began to run after the problem. His courage to faces the challenging of the situation does not appear in his overall activities. People around him are complaining him and presenting him as cowardice character. Mostly they are complaining him as he is ignoring the health condition of his wife and casting evil eyes to another girl. They are

not only insulting him but also began to hate him. In one situation Dr. Lovov forward his hearted towards Ivanov in this way:

I can't talk to him calmly, I have only got to open my mouth and say one word, and something here began to suffocate me and turn over inside me and my tongue seems to stick to my palate. How I hate this Tartuffe, this pompous imposters! I heat him with all my heart.....there he is, going out!.....His unhappy wife's only pleasure in life is having him near her; he has the breath of life to her; she implores him to spend at least one evening with her, but he can't! He finds his home too suffocating, there's no enough scope here! Just one evening at home and he'd have to shoot him-self for sheer boredom! Poor fellow. (12)

After the several beating of different types of family and business problems, Ivanov became one of the victims of depression. When he fails to handle the situation and solve these problems with his logical and rational mind he suffers more and more psychologically as well. There is no proper logical answer with him to those people, who are insulting him as the failure of the society.

Psychologically he became frustrated then he goes here and there in search of redemption from this psychological trouble. With his cowardice psychological state he is run after the problem as well. When he felled problematic situation in his home, he began to stay outside very longer at the every evening. For him, his own home became like the cage which trapped him psychologically. In the home he feels suffocated which he no longer can bear. He is such types of man who can't able to fight with the problem rather he is running after the problem. One day when his wife asked him to say why he is suffering psychologically and escaping from the problem, he replied;

I find it is so unbearably oppressive at home. As soon as the sun goes down, a sort of anguish began to torment me. And what anguish it is! Don't ask me why? I don't know myself. Honestly I don't know. I'm depressed here, but when I go there to the Lebedevs', it's even worst there. I come home, and I'm still depressed, and so it goes on all night...I feel quite desperate. (14)

His suffocation in his home is no more than his inability to handle the situation and failure of his masculinity. When he couldn't solve the problem with his logical capability only then he feel suffocation. As the masculine male, he must search the reason behind that suffocation. But instead of searching the reason, he is hiding himself from these problems. His suffocation indicates his masculinity in crisis.

The concept of the masculinity is also the product of male psychology. It is always concern with males' treatment upon their action, which depends on their psychological pattern. They listed a kind of human qualities like rational, protective, leading, dominating, aggressive, active, independent, factual, judgment, self control, courage etc. to be a masculine the action of male must be determine by these mentioned qualities. When one loose to adopt these qualities, his masculinity goes on crisis. Being unable to handle the situation and solve the problem with his rational ability, Ivanov suffers by his psychological state. He failed to maintain his masculine psychological condition that is why he suffers much and more wherever he goes. When he had adopted his masculine norms everything was fine but now wherever he goes he is followed by the problem. Being exhausted by the pressure of several problems he compares his past days with present days. But he has only option to recalling these past days and regretting the present.

In the past I used to think great deal and work a great deal, yet I never felt tired. Nowadays, I do nothing and think about nothing, but I feel exhausted in my mind and body. My conscience worries me day and night, I feel I'm deeply at fault, at how exactly I'm at fault I can't make out. And in addition to that there is my wife's illness, the lack of money, the constant nagging, the scandal mongering, the futile talk... My own home has become odious to me, and living there is worse than torture. (31)

These lines spoken by Ivanov clearly picture his present condition after the crisis in his masculinity. He compares his present days with his past. His past was fine; he used to think about to do something great work in his life. He had not been tired with his work in the past. But the situation is totally different at the present. Now, he can do nothing. He feels tired without doing anything. At the present he is charged with the several tensions. His inability to find out the solution from these problems undermines his masculinity.

The notion of masculinity believes that the husband, being the head of the family must be able to protect his family in different problematic situation. He should be responsible and protective to save his family member. He is regarded as the creator of the family. The husband who can't become able to save the life of his wife, remains no longer masculine. In most of the causes the husband sacrifices his personal wills to secure the life of his wife. He does everything, works day and night and presents himself as the good husband. When the husband loses the husband like- qualities, he gets no chance to secure his wife in danger. He became unable to secure his husband like quality. His efforts are no more worthy to save his wife from her tuberculosis. In the same way the role of the good lover is to satisfy his beloved. He should love her

and care her actively. After the illness of Anna, Ivanov start secret love with Sasha. He pretends himself as her good lover but in real there also he fails to provide her good love as she wishes. When she demands active love from him, he replies her;

Can it indeed, shurochka! It would be the last straw if an old wash- out like me started new love affairs! God preserve me from such misfortune! No, my little clever- head, it isn't a love affair that I need. I tell you, before god I tell you, I can bear anything: anxiety, mental depression, financial ruin, the loss of my wife, premature old age and loneliness, but I can't bear the contempt I feel for myself. (58)

With this line forwarded by Ivanov we can easily say, he is escaping from his responsibility. To get out from his clinical depression, he began to pass his time with Sasha. Leaving alone to his ill wife, he used to visit with Sasha. The continue visit with Ivanov leads Sasha to the close affection. Slowly and gradually she began to think about him. When she began to love Ivanov from her inner heart, it was Ivanov who only takes her as the means of entertainment. His affection with Sasha was not natural rather it was an unbalanced one. But when Sasha became totally mad for him he feared to accept her innocent and calm love. In this respect, neither he became the protective husband nor became good lover. His inability to save the life of his wife and to satisfy his beloved is causes of his masculinity in crisis.

Tim Edward defines the crisis of masculinity as "The position of man, often Perceive as being in related to institution 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). His argument clarifies that the responsibility imposed upon man because of being male, should be concretized to be masculine. Man has given certain roles to perform in their family as well as in the

society. When the man can't perform his role as per the parameter of the patriarchal society and fails to preserve it, his masculinity falls in crisis. When we judge the present condition of Ivanov through the concept of Edward it enables us to argue that Ivanov is no more masculine figure in the play. His estate is continued by Borkin, distance relatives of him. Though, he is estate owner, he does not bear the ability to pay back his debt. Most of the time he undergoing several conflicts including: declining economic and social status, the poor relationship with his neighbor member, intoxication of a young girl's love, decreasing health condition of his wife Anna and like that. Where ever he puts his feet he fell down. He failed to stand with his own feet that are not because of other reasons but his own weakness. As the male member of the society Ivanov has different roles and responsibilities to play with; he has to protect his family, run his business properly, contribute in the society and maintain his masculine traits. But the problem here is instead of fulfilling his roles and responsibilities he suffers from clinical depression and finally kills himself, these are the major cause which pushes his masculinity in crisis.

Masculinity and femininity function on the basis of gender identity. Ones gender identity is affected by their gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender attitude. This gender identity masculine or feminine is based upon the meaning of individuals have internalized from their association with role of male or female in society. Judith Butler discuss about the gender identification in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) under the topic, 'the compulsory order sex/gender/desire'. In this discussion she argues that,

"on some account, the notion of gender is constructed suggest a certain determinism of gender meaning inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law. When the

relevant 'culture' that 'constructs' gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, became destiny". (8)

In this regards, she claims that gender is culturally constructed. She further argues gender as the social, political and cultural construction, constructed for the benefit of some and to determine the others. In which some sort of positive qualities are given to the male and some other to the female.

In the play, the male characters are presented as synonymous to the power. With this culturally constructed power of male they used to misbehave to the female. The female characters in the play like; Anna Petrovna and Sasha have presented as passive being. They are searching their identity in relation to the male. There is the concept of male power in their mind, they used to think that to be close or married with male is similar to be secure in their life journey. Anna Petrovna marries with Ivanov by changing her religious heritage. One of the essential reasons behind her marriage is so-called 'power' of male in the society. Male in the society are regarded as equivalent to the power. With this hegemonies concept of power, the young girl Sasha has close affection towards Ivanov. She loves him from her inner heart, she regards Ivanov as her legend person. When other people criticized to Ivanov, she immediately opposes their remarks. SASHA "mamma you have told us these thousand times already! But how have you the heart to say all that about a man who hasn't done you any harm? Tell me what harm has he done" (23). When her mother criticized to Ivanov, she could not bear that situation and defense this insult. But on the other side, male characters like: Ivanov, Borkin, Shabelesky and Paul Lebedev tried to dominate their female counter parts with their male ideology. They used to consider female as the auxiliaries of male and sub-ordinate gender. Ivanov's marriage

with Anna and affection with Sasha is guided by his male superior ideology. In the same way Shabelesky takes Babikina as the means of passing his time is one of the evidence of his misbehave towards the female.

The categorization of masculinity and femininity is nothing more than the social construct. In this categorization males have been given some certain features like dominant and brave and labeled with masculine. In the contrary, females have been given the features like passive and emotional and labeled as feminine. In the patriarchal society, the society itself created some sort of boundaries and opposition about the gender role. With this hierarchical distance between men and women they are demanded to act differently. Men are demanded to act by the masculine identity such as rational, adventurous, bold, self-controlling, qualified, responsible, competitive and autonomous manner. On the other hand, society demands some sort of different activities; nurturing, submissive, obeying, sensitive, dominated, inferior etc from the women. In general, with this division of the human qualities, the patriarchal society provides all the positive attributes to the male and vice versa. The male characters like; Ivanov, Dr. Lovov and Borkin are demanded to act very rational and matured work. They are demanded to continue their business, protect their family in difficulties, to educate their family, contribute in the society and so on. On the other hand, the female characters like; Anna, Shavlsky, Sasha, Zinaida are demanded to take care their children, to do the house work and continue feminine works.

Beside the protagonist character of the play Ivanov, the other male characters are also far away in term of their considerable amount of toughness in their mind and body. They are unsuccessful to have enough bravery and toughness in their body and mind. They have exposed the irrationality, emotionality, cowardice and docile types of character which undermines their masculinity. After their masculinity in crisis they

suffer in different way. The other major male characters like Borkin, Paul Lebedev and Dr. Lovov are suffered by the different problem since the play start. The activities and actions done by these characters do not reflect their maleness. Being unable to maintain their masculine norms and values they adopted and reflected some feminine traits like: submissive, docile, powerless, irresponsible, inferior etc. most of the time their activity does not justify them as the male. When they adopted these feminine traits that are became the barrier in their masculine identity. Failure of manliness identity of other male characters of the play has been tried to study especially on the basis of their social status, business management, emotions, husband wife relation, and their reaction to the difficulty etc.

These male characters in-spite of the head of the family and society not only lose their influence in the society, rationality, functionality, responsibility and logicity but also fails to manage and protect their family in difficult situation. The expositions of cowardice figure of male characters like Ivanov, Borkin, Lebedev are really pathetic in the play. To some extent, the female characters like Savishna and Babakina in are powerful than the male characters. Savishna has control over her husband and family. Most of the time, she determines the activities of her husband. In the same way; another female character Babakina used to live alone. She is totally freedom in her life. There is no opposition of male in her life. With her intellectual ability to cope up with the situation, she also earns some money and invests it as per her desire. There is no shade of male in their free and active life rather in some cases; they are playing the role of guide to the male characters. Theirs' rationality, maturity support them to bluer the supremacy of male. But all in all, the strong resistance of the women characters is not the main cause of the crisis of the masculinity of male characters rather the utter failure of their own masculine qualities because of their

irrationality, irresponsibility are the main cause of their masculinity in crisis. In most of these cause male characters personal loopholes have pushed their masculine identity in crisis.

Borkin, distance relative and eastward of Ivanov, is also suffering in differing ways. He does not contain any feature of masculine identity. Being the male member of the society, he does not have any amount of boldness, courage, rational, matured, competitive, and so on. He is a hypocrite type of character in the sense that he is suffering from poverty but frequently saying that he has a plan to make more and more money. His money making ideas does not contain any logicity. He is advising people on how he can help them to make money. He advises Ivanov for several time but all these ideas of him are silly ideas or false ideas. He advises Ivanov in this way;

You're a neurotic, a weakling. If you were a normal man, you'd be making a million a year. Take me, for instance. If I had two thousand and three thousand rubles now, I'd have twenty thousand in a fortnight. You don't believe me? You think that's nonsense, too? Well, it's not. You give me the two thousand and three hundred rubles, and in a week I'll show you twenty thousand. On the other side of the river, just opposite to us, Ovsianov is selling a strip of a land for two thousand and three hundred rubles. If we buy that strep, both the banks will be ours, then we will start to building a mill, and as soon as we announce that we want to make a dam, everybody living down the river will raise a hubbub. All right, we will say, *KommenSieHierher*, if you don't want the dam, you must pay. (53)

This given idea by Borkin reflects about his illogicality and immaturity. He does not have any sense of logicity. He is running after the money but saying that he can earn

money if he desire. He loses his manhood in the sense that he became unable to tackle with the common problem as well. For example, when Ivanov ask him to discuss about their land and harvest, he does not discuss with him rather he leaves the home. Moreover he fell himself is unable to discuss about the serious issue. He is only talkative types of character who does not concern with the result after his talk. He is not result oriented man. Most of the time, he used to complain the activities of other characters of the play.

In the same way, Dr. Lovov is the next character of the play whose masculinity is also under the threat. Though he is the doctor, he became unable to save the life of his patient, Anna. He is also another hypocrite type of character in the play because there is the gap between his saying and doing. He himself calls as a modern doctor but fails to have the quality of modern technique of treatment. No one believes him as a good doctor. He became totally failed when Anna dies from tuberculosis. Along with Anna's death his social status as a doctor also dies. Shabelsky raises the question about the credibility of Dr. Lovov he question him "tell me most talent priest of science. Who is the great scientist that discovered that frequent visit from the young physician are beneficial to ladies suffering from chest complaints?" (40). But Lovov can't response his question to this question with his logical power rather he left this city. Being the modern doctor, he should be able to satisfy his patient with his new technique of treatment. In most of the cases he failed to satisfy his patient. Instead of his continue visit and treatment Anna dies from tuberculosis, his inability to cure seriously is the one of the cause of her death. Others people of that society also do not used to visit to him in their ill health condition. After the death of Anna Petrovna, he leaves this city his leaving from this present city

and hiding from that society clearly supports the argument that his masculinity also is in crisis.

Moreover, another character Paul Levedev is also in the state of masculinity in crisis. He does not contain the manliness features. He wants to help his friend but can't do so because he lacks his subjectivity and freewill. His agency and freewill is in the hand of his wife. Levedev's wife determine him what to do and what not. He even can't suggest to his daughter as well. He is one of the most submissive figures in the play. The strong resistance of his wife pushes his masculine quality into turn. This reversal of his gender identity presents him as the cowardice male in the society. Excessive pressure in his masculinity by the side of his wife forces his masculinity in turn. After the crisis of masculinity he regards himself as the failure man. He accepts his feminine condition in this way, "However, I'm just an old woman, an old woman I've turned womanish, like an old women" (59). His situation in the play is really panic and pathetic, he lived only physically but spiritually he loses his life. The loss of selfhood, self identity, agency, subjectivity undermines the notion of masculinity.

Judith Halberstam in her article "An Introduction of Female Masculinity" (1998) described about masculinity without men. In *Female Masculinity* she takes aim at the protected status of the male masculinity and shows that female masculinity has offered a distinct alternative to it for well over two hundred years. In her empirical research, Halberstam uncovers a hidden history of female masculinities, while arguing for a more nuanced understanding of gender categories that would incorporate rather than pathologies them. With this "Female Masculinity" she regards masculinity as social construct. She questioned that "if masculinity is not the social and cultural and indeed expression of maleness then what is it?" (335). She means to say that the discourse of masculinity is social, cultural and political construction. In this regards

Female Masculinity signals a new understanding of masculine behaviors and identities, and a new direction in interdisciplinary queer scholarship. Her argument about the female masculinity is sustained in the play when we see the role and responsibility as adopted by female character Shavisna. Being women she should be weak, inferior, docile, submissive, irrational, dominated and emotional. But she is not such type of female characters. She controls her family, instruct her husband, contribute in the social activities and give debt to the other people. The power of her home is in her hand. In some cases, she used to solve of problem of other people of that society with her logicality.

The critics Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett discuss about the masculinity in their book *Masculinity Studies Reader*. They argue that masculinity also concern with the particular codes and conduct of males behavior, which are culturally constructed. They argue:

masculinities are those behaviors, language and practice, existing in specific culture and organizational location, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally define as not feminine. So, masculinity exists as both positive inasmuch as they offer some means of identity signification for males, and negative inasmuch as they are not other (feminine)". (15-16)

There are the different turning and challenging in the notion of masculinity. These challenges are slowly and gradually leading towards the shift of masculinity. The modern men are losing their existing definition of maleness; their boldness is shifting towards the cowardliness. In conventional norms and values male were regarded as the agent of action, they must expected to act per the parameter of masculinity. They had the commanding capability of different situation and also had their own

uniqueness to handle the problem. They bared the knowledge of different discipline. This line as spoken by Paul Lebedev clearly picture that the present males are losing their defining masculine ethos:

There is not much in drinking; even a horse can drink . . . No you must drink intelligently! In my day a young man swats at his studies the whole day long, but as soon as the evening come round, of he had go straight to the first bright lit place he could find and dance like a top until morning . . . but the modern young man. (57)

This remark by Lebedev is clearly shows that the modern men are forgetting their conventional rules and values of male. As the male they have to perform some different roles which are assigned by the patriarchal society. They should not lose their features of bold, courage, rational, problem solving and so on. But these type of defining features of male are slowly losing by them.

After the meticulous discussion and analysis of textual evidences the researcher reaches to the conclusion that Chekhov's Play *Ivanov* depicts the conventional form of masculinity in crisis due to the failure of male characters to perform as per the masculine codes. The major male character of the play like Ivanov, Borkin, PoulLebedev and Dr. Lovov are heavily influenced by the notion of masculinity. Being influenced by the value of masculinity, they tried to present themselves as knowledge's, superior, rational, leader in the society as well as in their home. These male characters tried to dominate and undervalued to their female counterpart. But the active roles of female characters do not allow them to rule over the female.

This research primary focuses the condition of the how the hero of the play, Ivanov fails to perform his masculine identity. He is exposed as the most pathetic

character who has failed to preserve his all masculine qualities. The way which he adopts to solve the family problem and to regain his former glory is illogical. Later on his irrationality and senseless love with Sasha invites the series of difficulties in his life and family as well. He had got the badge of irresponsible husband because of his negligence towards his ill wife and his extramarital relationship with a young girl Sash. His inability to manage the money for the treatment of his wife became the cause of death of his wife. He can't become the protective husband. He became hopeless and desperate. He can't pay back his debt to Lebedev's family. He became unable to manage his business. Along with this he refuses to accept the love from Sasha after the preparation of the marriage. At last, being so frustrated and depressed he commits suicide.

With these entire drawbacks like, irrationality, immaturity, irresponsibility, poverty etc Ivanov is not able to earn his masculine identity. His masculinity falls in crisis because of his own follies. The other male character like Borkin, Dr. Lovov and Paul Lebedev also do not reflect any masculine traits in their behavior. Borkin and Dr. Lovov do not have any sense of logicity, maturity and responsibility. They used to spend their time only on complaining to others' personal lives. Another character Paul Lebedev does not live his personal and free live, his wife has control over him. In this way he loses his subjectivity and agency power as well. His wife determined him what to do and what not. These all male characters are also far away to correspond with their masculine traits.

Regarding all the evidence in the play; suicide of protagonist Ivanov, poor maturity and rationality, escaping from the problem, torture from different presure, low economic and social status, depressed and tormented by his conscience along with other major male characters like Dr. Lovov, Paul Lebedev and Borkin, this

research makes the claim that the conventional notion of the masculinity of male characters in the play is in crisis. The major cause of crisis of their masculinity is nothing but their personal follies like: immaturity, cowardliness, incapability, irrationality, immorality and so on are responsible. To some extent, female resistance: Savisna's control over her husband and their growing consciousness about their subjectivity and agency: Babkina's desire to live her free life has some significance to push the masculine identity of male characters into crisis. Hence, on the one hand females' opposition and on the other hand, males' self inability to adopt the masculine qualities is the major causes of masculinity in crisis.

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