ABSTRACT
“We think of manhood as eternal, a timeless essence that resides deep in the heart of every man. We think of manhood as a thing, a quality one either has or doesn’t have. We think of manhood as innate, residing in the particular biological composition of the human male, the result of androgen or the possession of a penis.” (Kimmel)
The biological determinism does not make a man superior being. The social construct of society establishes the universal standard of man also referred to as ‘hegemonic’ masculinity. The hegemonic definition of manhood is, ‘a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power.’ According to the study of Connell 1987 all, ‘standard psychological evaluation, research, self help and advice literature’ constitute towards teaching young men to become ‘real men.’ As a result those who did not measure up to the required scales of the Utopian man were never considered men at all.
As a society we have been conditioned to think that a masculine man is one who identifies himself with strength, nationality, honor and heterosexuality. All those who practise other sorts of masculinities are not considered as real men and are always under the pressure to conform to the dominant
We often take for granted the phrase “It’s a man’s world”. However, if we pause to take into account the cultural assumptions behind the advocacy of this phrase, we realize that categorizing all men into a unitary slot of, ‘man’ is highly misleading. It is no doubt true that Meer 4
hegemonic masculinity has allowed men power over women. It has propagated gender binaries of male/female as active/passive, strong/weak, aggressive/victimized. These binaries in return have helped sustain the power structure and hierarchy of the gender of sexes.
However, what we fail to take into account is that this very hegemonic masculinity has also allowed certain men power over other men. For hegemonic masculinity to maintain its dominance, men practicing marginal masculinities are constructed as less than real men.
The dissertation studies in depth the works of Pakistani artists Ali Kazim and Auj Khan, because both artists deal with the above mentioned issues and complexities which are so often neglected by most people. While in the West marginal masculinities are becoming increasingly accepted as the gay rights movement has gained a strong hold, in an Islamic country like Pakistan, all practiced masculinities which deviate from the dominant model are seen as taboo. In such a restrictive, repressive atmosphere, men on the peripheries face all the more challenges, and have to really struggle to assert their peripheral existence.
It is these struggles which the dissertation seeks to uncover through the works of Kazim and Khan.