

certingly apart. In fact, orgasm is reached in only about half of female homosexual contacts (and in a still smaller portion of female heterosexual contacts).

Moreover, female sexuality tends to be far more pliant, and thus more changeable, than equivalent male responses. Thus while the sexual revolution made no appreciable change in the male percentages cited above (Gebhard, 1969), certain changes in female responses, especially regarding homosexual try-outs, have been noted subsequent to Kinsey's 1953 findings (Bartell, 1971; Tripp, pp. 271, 272). The reasons for these and a host of other complex matters in both male and female sexuality continue to intrigue sex researchers, and continue to validate the Kinsey 0-6 Scale as a much needed and appreciated measuring and descriptive device.

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C. A. Tripp

INDIA

The Republic of India includes over 800 million people crowded onto the Indian subcontinent, an appendage of the Asian mainland which it shares with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. Historically, the Indian cultural zone has included all of the subcontinent as well as the island of Sri Lanka, and at times large areas of Southeast Asia, though India's political boundaries have been a frequently

shifting kaleidoscope.

Attitudes toward Sex. Indian history, geography, and demography all exhibit a rich diversity of traits, making generalizations hazardous. Sexual attitudes and practices also show considerable variation, ranging from the classic sex-affirming *Kamasutra* and the world-famous erotic sculptures of ancient temples to the extreme prudishness of ascetics who condemned all forms of seminal emission and a modern educated elite which still derives its inspiration from Victorian England.

Shakuntala Devi observed in 1977 that "any talk concerning homosexuality is altogether taboo" and that "serious investigations on this subject in India are almost nil." This taboo, which applies with somewhat less rigor to discussion of sex in general, can be traced back to at least the British colonial occupation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Independence, which came in 1947, has done nothing to loosen it.

The strength of this taboo is such as to lead noted Indologist Wendy O'Flaherty to describe India as "a country that has never acknowledged the existence of homosexuality." While Giti Thadani was right to call this observation "factually incorrect" in an unpublished paper, as a broad generalization it is not so far from the truth; one must search far and wide to find the exceptions.

Any discussion of homosexuality in India must be placed against the background of the Indian social system, which is centered on the extended family. The first obligation of any Indian is to his or her family, not to his own goals. Everyone is expected to marry (as arranged by the families) and procreate sons. Until the marriage takes place (often to a complete stranger), the modern Indian of either sex is expected to remain celibate and avoid masturbation, though some allowance is made for the involvement of males with female prostitutes. Nevertheless, there

may be a significant amount of well-hidden homosexual activity among unmarried boys and young men.

Ancient India. The oldest surviving literature is the set of scriptures called the Vedas, the first of which (the *Rig-Veda*) is usually dated from 1500 to 1200 B.C. These texts were composed by the Aryans who invaded India from Central Asia. A common view is that of the Czech scholar Ivo Fiser, who reviewed their references to sex and concluded that "in the Vedic period . . . homosexuality, in either of the sexes, was almost completely unknown and if there were such cases, the Vedic literature ignores them."

Later, but still ancient legal and religious texts, however, starting with Buddhist codes going back at least to the third century B.C., seem to take homosexuality for granted as a rather minor part of common life. The Buddhist monastic code cites various instances of homosexual behavior among the monks (all of which, like heterosexual behavior, was prohibited).

Vatsyayana, writing the *Kamasutra* in the fifth century of our era, included a whole chapter on the practice of fellatio as performed by eunuchs. Other erotic manuals suggested that sodomy was common in Kalinga (southern Orissa state) and Panchala (in the Panjab). In general, sex for pleasure was explicitly validated (at least for males, and often, as with Vatsyayana, for females as well) and not necessarily linked to procreative function.

The Medieval Period. Indian medieval history (twelfth–eighteenth centuries) saw the North Indian cultural heartland dominated by Islamic conquerors, who did not succeed in converting most of the Hindu masses but did leave an indelible imprint on Indian life. Enough of their subjects became Muslims for large areas of India to become primarily Islamic in character (becoming the nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1947 and 1971).

The Muslims brought with them the institution of pederasty, and forced the

withdrawal of women from public life. The free and open Indian attitude toward (heterosexual) sex which had characterized the ancient period now gave way to Islamic semiprurience.

At the same time, the Hindu (and later the Buddhist) religion saw the rise of Tantrism, with its hospitality toward sex as a means of liberation and its explicit endorsement of cross-gender role-playing.

The Colonial Period. The British, who came first as traders and stayed to conquer the subcontinent (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), were scandalized by the sexual customs of the Indians, but in keeping with their policy of minimizing interference in the local mores, they did little about them. The educational system they established, however, eventually created a new Indian elite which enthusiastically absorbed British ideas, including the more prurient attitudes of the Victorians toward sex. This elite, in turn, imposed their new antisexuality on the Indian middle class.

A jaundiced description of Indian Muslim sexuality was written by the Dutch Admiral John Splinter Stavorinus in the 1770s. Referring to the Islamic Bengalis, Stavorinus opined that "The sin of Sodom is not only in universal practice among them, but extends to a bestial communication with brutes, and in particular with sheep. Women even abandon themselves to the commission of unnatural crimes."

"I do not believe that there is any country upon the face of the globe," the Dutchman continued, "where lascivious intemperance, and every kind of unbridled lewdness, is so much indulged in, as in the lower provinces of the empire of Indostan. [This] extends likewise to the Europeans, who settle, or trade there."

According to Allen Edwardes, who based his book *The Jewel in the Lotus* (New York: Julian, 1959) largely on nineteenth-century sources, pederasty was rare among the Hindu majority, though "rampant" among the Muslims and Sikhs of the Panjab, Deccan, and Sindh. Sir Richard

oldest extant law codes, therefore, are not decrees by kings but sacred texts written by Brahmin-class priests. Often conflicting with each other, they were held in widely varying degrees of reverence by different communities and social groups; in many kingdoms they were not followed at all.

The earliest surviving text on Indian law is the *Arthashastra*, a manual on statecraft by Kautilya, a minister of the Mauryan Empire of the fourth century B.C. Kautilya set out fines of 48 to 94 panas for male homosexual activity and 12 to 24 panas for lesbian acts. These fines were much lower than those for many heterosexual offenses.

The *Code of Manu*, which dates from the first to third centuries of our era and is the best known of the sacred law texts, prescribes that an upper-class man "who commits an unnatural offense with a male . . . shall bathe, dressed in his clothes." The same purification ritual is prescribed for one who has intercourse with a female in the daytime. An expiation ritual is prescribed for a man who swallows semen. The members of the lowest of the four great classes, as well as outcastes, were not restricted at all, as they were not expected to uphold high standards of ritual purity.

Manu laid down more severe restrictions on women, prescribing a fine of 200 panas plus double her nuptial fee as well as ten lashes with a rod for a girl "who pollutes another girl"; if a woman pollutes a girl she is to undergo the humiliation of having her head shaved or two fingers cut off and be made to ride through the village on a donkey.

Some later sacred-legal writers held that oral sex was equivalent to the killing of a Brahmin, the worst imaginable crime as far as the Brahmins (who wrote the texts) were concerned, and could not be expurgated in less than one hundred life-cycles.

When Britain took control of India, British sexual law was imported by

the colonial administration. The 1861 legislation which changed the British penalty for sodomy from hanging to life imprisonment became Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code after independence. This law prohibits "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and continues to prescribe imprisonment up to life as well as whippings and fines. Any sexual act involving penetration of the anus or mouth by a penis, whether homosexual or heterosexual, makes both partners criminal, according to Indian courts. In addition, intercrural (between the thighs) sex has been held by Indian courts to be banned by this law. Lesbian activities, and heterosexual cunnilingus, however, are legal.

Indian legal tradition justifies this law with the argument that "the natural object of carnal intercourse is that there should be possibility of conception of human beings, which in the case of unnatural offence is impossible." Indian legal scholars, however, trace it to English beliefs that "all emission other than *in vas legitimum* was considered unchristian because such emission was supposed ultimately to cause conception of demons."

Under a 1925 court decision still cited in legal texts, fellatio (called "the sin of Gomorrah") is "less pernicious than the vice of Sodom. . . . It has not been surrounded by the halo of art, eloquence and poetry. It is not common and can never be so. It cannot produce the physical changes which the other vice produces."

Evidentiary standards are rigorous, however, in that penetration "must be strictly proved" and corroborating testimony is normally required. According to Devi, prosecutions are "very rare." All the Indian cases cited in the legal manuals involve boys.

Following the British law reform of 1967, attempts were made in the Indian courts to challenge Section 377. In 1983, the Supreme Court (in *Fazal Rab Chaudhary v. State*) declared that "Neither the notions of permissive society nor the fact that in some countries homosexu-

ality has ceased to be an offense has influenced our thinking." Having said that, the court, dealing with a case involving sex between a man and a "young boy" but without force, upheld the law but reduced the sentence to six months.

Lesbianism. Female homosexuality is not discussed in modern Indian law, reflecting its invisibility in society at large. The harems of the rulers of various Indian states are said to have been "hotbeds of lesbianism." In the realm of legend, however, we find mention of *strirajya* or female-ruled ancient kingdoms in which "women were said to have group congress with their own sex, and more rarely with men." No historical evidence has survived for such kingdoms.

Hindu Traditions. As with most everything else in that amorphous collection of religious traditions loosely called "Hinduism," there is a wide variety of attitudes displayed toward gender identity and homosexuality. In keeping with general Hindu attitudes, however, there is little attempt to impose religious views on sexuality on those who do not share them.

Apart from the previously mentioned writings of the Brahmin legalists, there are not many references to homosexuality in the enormous corpus of mainstream Hindu scriptures and sacred texts. The yogic tradition, however, has maintained a morbid concern that any emission of semen is debilitating and has thus taken a relentlessly hostile stance toward any male sexuality.

Throughout Indian history, the only acceptable escape from marital duties has been "renunciation" (*sannyas*), leaving family and caste behind to take up the unattached religious life as a monk, guru, teacher, or wandering holy man. It is not difficult to imagine that many Indians who had no heterosexual inclinations must have followed that route, which had the further advantage of placing them in the company of other members of their own gender.

Shiva, the most popular of all Hindu gods, has from the most ancient of times been worshipped primarily in the form of a *lingam* or erect phallus; in the most common ritual milk is poured over the tip of the lingam and flows down on all sides. The lingam is worshipped by males as well as by females, suggesting the existence of a sublimated homoerotic element.

Perhaps the only record of something approaching homoeroticism in Hindu mythology is part of the myth of Shiva, who engaged in intercourse with his wife Parvati for a thousand years without ejaculating. Interrupted by a delegation of other deities, he withdrew from Parvati and then ejaculated. The semen was swallowed by Agni, a male god connected with fire and ritual sacrifices, but it proved too hot for him to handle and he vomited it up; eventually the sperm turned into Shiva's son Skanda ("The Ejected"), without any contribution from Parvati. Skanda became the god of youth, beauty, and warriors.

Indian mythology shows many examples of sex changes, which Thadani considers to be covers for male homosexuality. Vishnu, Shiva's main rival for the devotion of Hindus, turned himself into the stunningly beautiful Mohini in order to distract the demons at a critical moment. Shiva was so taken with Mohini that he copulated with her and impregnated her so that she bore him a son. In some versions of the myth the son is Harihara, but in South India, where the act is described as a rape, the son is Ayappa, focus of a rapidly growing cult.

Androgyny has long been considered a divine attribute, and many of the leading deities have been pictured as *hermaphrodites*, half male, half female, reflecting the Hindu belief that godhead contains within itself all the elements of the cosmos, including both male and female. The most notable example of this, however, is Shiva, who is often shown with the left side female, the right male, and in this form is called "Ardhanarishvara."

Devotees of androgynous deities have occasionally sought to further their approach to God by emulating this divine quality, giving a sacred aura to androgyny. Thus the famous nineteenth-century Hindu reformer Ramakrishna went about for some time wearing women's clothes.

The Sakibhava cult, which worships Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu), holds that only Krishna is truly male and that all other creatures are female in relation to him. Male followers of the cult dressed like women and even imitated menstrual periods. Vern Bullough, citing R. B. Bhandarkar in his *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York: John Wiley, 1976), says they "all were supposed to permit the sexual act on their persons [playing the part of women] as an act of devotion. Usually, the male members did not show themselves much in public, in part because of public hostility." Benjamin Walker confirms this account in his encyclopedic *The Hindu World*. For comparison, see the Hijra sect below.

Separate from such small sects is a wide religious movement which swept through India, affecting both Hinduism and Buddhism, in the late ancient and early medieval period, though it has become unrespectable since British Victorian prudery became dominant. This "left-handed" esoteric Tantrism utilizes ritual sexuality as a sacred technique. Though mostly heterosexual, numerous Tantric texts do advocate the desirability of a male follower developing his opposite (female) traits and visualizing himself as female; sometimes this has taken the form of participating in homosexual acts.

Walker, in his discussion of sexual "perversions" in Hinduism, considers these to be "aspects of antinomianism thought to be favored by the gods, and regarded as methods of achieving degrees of 'intensity,' which . . . release a stream of vital power which if rendered to the service of the deity is returned multifold to the giver."

Anal intercourse, called *adhorata* or "under-love," involves the anus as one of the most significant *chakras*, or energy-centers, in the body, and thus has been held to energize the artistic, poetic, and mystical faculties. "Some medieval writers speak of it as quite common and do not regard it as perverse," according to Walker.

Maukhya, or fellatio, has also been given sacred significance in connection with the Shiva-Agni legend cited above. "Certain Hindu writers on erotics have held that 'the mouth is pure for purposes of congress,'" Walker writes.

The Hindu-Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation has been used to explain the phenomenon of homosexual orientation by depicting it as a transitional state following a change of gender from one lifetime to the next, on the theory that long-acquired ingrained habits (such as sexual interest in men) are slower to change than the physical body, which is replaced at death/birth. Noteworthy about this rationale is the absence of negative overtones.

Homosexuality in Contemporary India. Indian male friends are very affectionate with each other and do not hesitate to demonstrate this in public (something they would never do with their wives). Men and boys can easily be seen sleeping on the pavement in each other's arms. This has given many Western visitors the mistaken idea that homosexuality is rampant.

The legal scholar Ejaz Ahmad noted in 1975 that "there seems to be a widespread tendency of [Indian] males to experiment in homosexual activities, although most do not become pure homosexuals." Ahmad's observation, which may reflect his Islamic background, has found little support from other Indian writers, though that may have more to do with taboos on discussion—as Devi puts it, "Even today, people in India find it difficult to conceive of the very idea of homosexuality"—than with the accuracy of his remark.

Devi paints a picture of Indian (Hindu) homosexuals leading very cautious, hidden lives, meeting primarily through private cliques while fulfilling their expected marital duties. A lack of privacy which is pervasive in this extremely overcrowded country seems to be the major handicap, along with an absence of clubs, bars, and similar meeting places. Devi states that "boy brothels are very common in the bigger cities" employing boys as young as eight.

Other reports indicate that big-city bus terminal toilets seem to be the major sites for anonymous non-reciprocal sex, while some urban parks serve as meeting places. No gay-oriented organizations are known to be functioning in India.

Among the hundred million Muslims still remaining in India after partition, it may be speculated, ancient practices such as pederasty which were more congenial to Islamic culture may continue to survive, but there are few or no data.

While there is almost no modern Indian literature on homosexuality, according to Devi two Hindi films have touched on the topic: *Dosti* and Raj Kapoor's *Sangam*.

The Hijras. No discussion of contemporary homosexuality in India can ignore a religious sect, the Hijras, whose numbers have been estimated between fifty and five hundred thousand. This all-male group, divided into those who surgically remove the penis and those who remain intact, worships the Mother Goddess and seeks to identify with her by becoming as feminine as possible.

While their traditional role in North Indian society is as entertainers, and they theoretically uphold an ideal of chastity, many Hijras function as prostitutes, taking the passive role for Indian male insertors who look upon the transvestite Hijras as substitutes for females and do not consider themselves homosexual or unmasculine. In this their customers reflect an inarticulated belief that

"sexual object choice alone does not define gender." Serena Nanda, in her study of the Hijras, points out that this sect welcomes many teenage homosexuals who are cast out of their own families and have no other niche in a communal-oriented culture.

The level of tolerance experienced by the Hijras appears to vary considerably, so that one must question blanket assertions that their behavior is condoned by Indian society. Nevertheless, they seem to provide the only open social status for homosexuals, transvestites, and transsexuals in a culture which otherwise provides it only through marriage and the family, and which can hardly conceive of an individual not attached to a communal group as well as a family.

Conclusion. The forces of modernization, while slow by Western standards, are accompanied by social changes in India which seem rapid to this very old, tradition-bound culture. Some young people are rebelling against the institution of the family-arranged marriage with its dowries, and educated professional women are beginning to make dents in the rigid social roles prescribed for females. One of the consequences of these changes are that the taboo on discussion of sex is slowly beginning to weaken, along with the devotion of the Indian educated elite to the values of Victorian Britain. Eventually, this candor is bound to open up the subject of homosexuality as well.

Urbanization is starting to loosen the grip of family and caste and beginning to provide the anonymity which seems necessary for homosexuals to develop independent lives. Whether Western notions of homosexuality take root in India (apart from the small English-educated professional class) remains to be seen—Indian mores have already proven their capacity for astonishing resistance to foreign influence. Perhaps a model of pre- and extra-marital experimentalism by "normal" males keeping to insertor roles with a small number of effeminate passives

(and boys and foreign tourists) along more Mediterranean or pederastic lines will develop.

Apart from caste and family obligations, however, Indian society is remarkably tolerant of individual eccentricities, and it is quite possible that when the curtain finally lifts on Indian sexuality one may find the patterns of homosexuality in India distinctively Indian.

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Lingānanda

INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA

Like many societies around the world that accepted homosexual behavior as a common and normal activity, North American Indian aboriginal cultures often incorporated same-sex activity into their way of life.

Underlying Cultural Attitudes.

This acceptance was owing to several factors, especially the fact that sex was not seen as sinful in their religions. With some exceptions, sex was not restricted to its reproductive role, but was seen as a major blessing from the spirit world, a gift to human beings to be enjoyed freely from childhood to old age. Among the matrilineal tribes, women were particularly free in their behavior, since their child's family status depended on the mother's relatives rather than on the father. In general, North

American Indian religions emphasized the freedom of individuals to follow their own inclinations, as evidence of guidance from their personal spirit guardian, and to share generously what they had with others.

Children's sexual play was more likely to be regarded by adults as an amusing activity rather than as a cause for alarm. This casual attitude of child-rearing continued to influence people as they grew up, and even after their marriage. Yet, while sex was certainly much more accepted than in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it was not the major emphasis of Indian society. The focus was instead on two forms of social relations: family (making ties to other genders) and friendship (making ties within the same gender). Since extremely close friendships were emphasized between two "blood brothers" or two women friends, this allowed a context in which private homosexual behavior could occur without attracting attention. Simply because this role of sex in promoting bonds of friendship was so accepted, there is relatively little information about this kind of casual same-sex activity. It demonstrates that the role of sex in promoting close interpersonal ties is just as important for a society as the role of sex as a means of reproduction. While Christian ideology emphasizes that the purpose of sex is only for reproduction, that is clearly not the view of many other religions.

Institutional Forms. Beyond its role in same-sex friendships, homosexual behavior among many aboriginal tribes was also recognized in the form of same-sex marriages. However, the usual pattern among North American Indians (as well as in many areas of the Caribbean, Central and South America) focused not on two masculine men getting married, or two feminine women, but to have a typical man or woman marry an androgynous person who takes on a different gender role. Traditionally in many tribes, the feminine male had a special role as a berdache and the masculine female took on