



Editorial

Sexuality nourished by culture

Sujita Kumar Kar¹, Saumya Ranjan Mishra²

¹Additional Professor, Department of Psychiatry, King George's Medical University, Lucknow, UP, India

²Director, Indian Institute of Sexology, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

The story of sexuality is as ancient as the origin of humankind. Sexuality is portrayed as art, science as well as culture in the literature. In human beings, the significance of sexuality is not limited to procreation; it solves the purpose of recreation and strengthening relations (Kar and Tripathi, 2018). Sexuality evolves across the lifetime. During different phases of life, culture influences the development of sexuality significantly (Kar et al., 2015).

Culture nurtures human beliefs, experiences, values, practices, behavior, language, and knowledge (Agocha et al., 2014). Culture helps in providing common knowledge and experiences to shape human behavior, including sexuality (Agocha et al., 2014). Cultures give a direction to sexual practices and behavior. Sexual practices like - masturbation, homosexuality, sexual activities during menstruation, contraceptive measures, celibacy, consummation of marriage, polygamy, polyandry, sexually transmitted diseases, and many other aspects of sexuality are significantly colored by the

cultural beliefs about sexuality. Religion plays an important role in controlling the sexual behavior of people. Religions condemn certain sexual practices while allowing certain other practices. The moral values set by society also regulate sexual behaviors and practices.

Several cultures have a unique set of beliefs about sexuality, which becomes pathological at times and results in the development of significant psychological distress among individuals who harbor such beliefs. A classic example of this is dhat syndrome (Mishra and Roy, 2018), commonly reported in South-East Asia. Individuals with dhat syndrome often express their worries related to loss of genital secretion; semen (in males) and physiological vaginal discharge (in females) (Kar and Sarkar, 2015). The sexual myths in patients with dhat syndrome are centered around the ancient beliefs about semen in Ayurveda and the religious literatures of several other religions (Sahu, 2018).

Cultures harbor several cultural myths related to paraphilias, which are deeply rooted in society and strongly influence sexual practice and behavior (Basu et al., 2019; Shukla, 2019). Similarly, the movies and tale shows portray paraphilia as a usual behavior in different strata of society (Roy and Tripathy, 2019). Socio-cultural beliefs influence the degree of acceptance of paraphilia. Similarly, the sexual minority

Corresponding author: Sujita Kumar Kar

Email: drsujita@gmail.com

How to cite the article: Kar, S., Mishra, S.R., (2021).

Sexuality nourished by culture. Indian Journal of Health Sexuality and Culture 7 (2), 1–2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6055678>

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 License which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

populations (queers) are an integral part of society. There are several cultural and social beliefs about this group of population. Movies and cinemas clearly depict the influence of socio-cultural beliefs on public attitude towards the gender minority population (Beaudet, 2019).

Researchers have an increasing interest in the influence of cultural and social beliefs on sexual practices and behaviors (Parker, 2009). Sexuality has been increasingly studied from the perspective of anthropology, sociology, and psychology over the past several decades, as these factors significantly influence sexual behavior and practices. Clinicians evaluating patients with sexual disorders need to explore the socio-cultural underpinnings, attributions, and implications of the disorder for their holistic management.

References

- Agocha, V.B., Asencio, M. and Decena, C.U., (2014). Sexuality and culture. In: APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology, Vol. 2: Contextual Approaches. APA handbooks in psychology®. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, pp. 183–228. DOI: 10.1037/14194-006.
- Basu, S., Bhardwaj, Y. A. and Chatterjee, S., (2019). Portrayal of Paraphilia in History. Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality & Culture, 5(2): 1–13.
- Beaudet, M., (2019). Queer Depictions in American Cinema: Assumed Identities. Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality & Culture, 5(1): 1–9.
- Kar, S. and Sarkar, S., (2015). Dhat syndrome: Evolution of concept, current understanding, and need of an integrated approach. Journal of human reproductive sciences, 8(3), 130–4. DOI: 10.4103/0974-1208.165143.
- Kar, S. K. and Tripathi, A., (2018). Positive Sexual Development. In: Shackelford TK and Weekes-Shackelford VA (eds) Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–3. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6_2470-1.
- Kar, S. K., Choudhury, A., and Singh, A.P., (2015). Understanding normal development of adolescent sexuality: A bumpy ride. Journal of Human Reproductive Sciences, 8(2): 70–74. DOI: 10.4103/0974-1208.158594.
- Mishra, K. and Roy, P., (2018). Historical Perspective of Dhat Syndrome: A brief overview. Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality & Culture, 4(2): 4–7.
- Parker, R., (2009). Sexuality, culture and society: shifting paradigms in sexuality research. Culture, Health & Sexuality, 11(3). Taylor & Francis, Ltd.: 251–266.
- Roy, D. and Tripathy, S., (2019). Paraphilia and other Sexual Variations in the 'Game of Thrones'. Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality & Culture, 5(2): 14–26.
- Sahu, S., (2018). Ayurvedic Concept of Semen. Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality & Culture, 4(2): 32–35.
- Shukla, S., (2019). Zoophilia: Myths in Indian Context. Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality & Culture, 5(2): 108–110.