

Through a window darkly

Males selling sex in other males in India and Bangladesh

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HIV/AIDS has generated many new terms in the arena of developing programmes for the promotion of sexual health services and products. Terms such as "men who have sex with men", and "male commercial sex workers" have been heavily promoted, and where the labels, homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual, continue to be used to define personal sexual identities. More often than not these terms are meaningless in differing cultures, and perhaps, we should be looking at sexual practices and locate them within indigenous cultural terminologies and identities.

In India and Bangladesh the term homosexual has been used by UNAIDS, foreign donor agencies, and governmental as well as nongovernmental AIDS agencies to identify males who are anally penetrated by other males, whilst the word heterosexual is used to define those who practice vaginal sex. But people are not so clearly divided by monotheistic sexual practices. What about anal sex between males and females? Does this define "heterosexuality" too? And there is certainly a significant amount of evidence to indicate that many males who have anal sex with males (both penetrated and penetrator) also have sex with females, and this behaviour includes both anal and vaginal sex. Sufficient anecdotal evidence exists also to indicate that many males within India and Bangladesh begin sexual activity at ages of 10 and younger. Can the term "men" encompass their activities and needs? (1)

Within India and Bangladesh (as well as within the other countries of the South Asia region), there is a high degree of amorphousness within the indigenous frameworks of sexualities and identities that most males have. Here identities are mostly based on family, community, and social frameworks, and to some extent participation in particular sexual practices, that of penetrator or penetrated. It is not based so much on who you are but on what you do, and in what context your social life is constructed

The term "commercial sex worker" was promoted by the AIDS "business" to de-stigmatise what were once called "prostitutes", a word that was seen to carry a great deal of shame, dishonour, and stigmatisation. This process of re-naming now appears to carry a sense of "political correctness". In any AIDS meeting, or conference, or workshop, use of the term seems to be mandatory, whether in the London, New York or Calcutta. Does re-naming prostitution dignify "sex work"? I well remember a conversation I had in a village in Orissa with a small group of women, where wives

would often say that they "did work" with their husbands, meaning that for them sex with their husband was seen as work. Husbands would state that "they did duty" to their wives. What are the local terms for so-called "sex work"? How do people name themselves? How do individuals at a local level feel about this? Is the new language being imposed from on high? How do you translate these contemporary terms into vernacular languages? And if prostitution is now renamed as "sex work", then what about the women in Orissa quoted above?

This relatively new term of "commercial sex work" seems to carry a sense of choice, that "sex work" is just another job, a job that one can leave at any time. It reduces what is a complex issue, resulting in frameworks that can dehumanise the struggles that the vast majority of male and female "sex workers" (I don't want to get into trouble!) go through just to survive. For the vast majority, "commercial sex work", or whatever name you give it, **is** a survival strategy for these individuals. For most it is enforced by the context of their lives, one of poverty, degradation, homelessness, hunger, and what often seems as powerlessness, a form of slavery to economic, social and cultural deprivation, stigmatisation, and marginalisation. And for many it **is** slavery; kidnapped, sold, raped and forced to lay down their bodies for others to discharge into. For most males and females involved in "selling" their bodies for cash, for clothing, for food, for shelter, it is their only option.

The term "sex work" appears to imply some form of equality in economic and negotiating power, a labour contract between the customer and the provider. But can this be true in a city like Calcutta, Mumbai, or Dhaka, or in any city in any developing country, where poverty, hunger, homelessness, family deprivation are factors that shape so many lives and where the existence of significant numbers of such "workers" below the age of 14 can be seen as primary "wage earners" for their families? Too often there is no other choice, no power to negotiate labour terms and working conditions.

Alam is a 9 year old boy living in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Every evening you will find him at M., a religious shrine where some 150 male "sex workers" congregate regularly. Their "customers" are local rickshaw drivers, truck drivers, shop-keepers, worshippers, and other men, who also come there for sex. He will charge anything between 20 - 100 taka **(2)** per customer. On an average evening he will get about 5 customers. Sex is penetrative, and no condoms. The *boys* **(3)** vary in ages from 8 to 60, and call themselves *kothi* **(4)**. Not all sell sex in this place. Some also come to find *panthis* **(5)** for "fun" sex and penetration. The differentiation between those *kothis* who sell

sex, and those who come to have sex is very narrow. Many of these seeking fun sex also receive small gifts, such as a item of clothing or some other gift.

Alam now wears lipstick, acts in a feminine manner, sways his hips seductively at passing men, and hopes one day to find a *panthi* to take care of him. The money he earns helps feed his family as well as buys him his makeup and "sexy" clothes. His parents don't ask where he gets the money as he tells him he has a job working in a rickshaw repair shop. They need his money to help feed his five brothers and sisters. The father has no work and drinks heavily. The mother is pregnant again.

I have been coming here for a year now. The first time I came here with a friend. He left after a little while and I stayed behind because I saw all these "boys" who had make-up on. A man approached me. He offered me 20 taka,. I was hungry so I did it. The other kothis here are all my friends. Yes, I am a kothi now. I will find a nice "husband" for myself one day. He will look after me and my family and then I will stop this life. But that might be hard because I like all these men.

Zahid is 62 years old and operates in the same place. He has a wife and four children, known as a *tokai* (6), and is a pavement dweller. He calls himself a *kothi* too, but only in this place. While he likes to be sexually penetrated he will charge for it to supplement his daily income to buy food for himself and his family.

I can only ask for perhaps 5 or 10 taka a shot because now I am old. What can I do? Look at me, I only have this old lungi (7). I can't afford to buy myself another piece. I have my family to feed, look after my wife and children.

For us to use the western constructions of sexuality and of AIDS is to loose sight of local realities and languages, local sensibilities and constructions. Use of them create frameworks which are nothing to do with the realities of people lives, how they see the world and themselves, and how they "fit" into their worlds and survive.

This essay is about males who sell sex to other males in India and Bangladesh. In this context, the term "sell sex" is used loosely, for while the exchange may well in cash, it can also be a meal, or shelter or clothing. It can also be opportunistic and

situational. And who is to say that some of us do not submit to the discharge of others for the sake of love and affection as the exchange?

Arjit is a cycle rickshaw driver in Calcutta. His net income is about 800 rupees (8) a month. He is 25, has a wife and two sons living in his home village outside Calcutta to whom he sends about 400 rupees every month. He is a pavement dweller. Sometimes he is approached for sex by middle class customer who, while riding the rickshaw will ask all sorts of questions leading to a sexual proposition.. Arjit obliges where there is space. Usually the man asks Arjit to penetrate him. Sometimes the man will give him oral sex too.

Once there was this student, about 21 I think. He was very nice. I kissed him and hugged him as well. After we did sex in this building site he took me to the market and bought me a very nice shirt. I see him every couple of months, and we do. it.

In one month I will get this opportunity perhaps 2 or 3 times. I like the sex as well. Also every month, I go to one of the girls in my area and have sex with her also. But this costs me 50 rupees. This way I get more sex, I get a gift or money, and I get to release my "body tension". (9).

This essay arises from the conversations the author has held over the last four years with hundreds of males who have sex with other males, whether for cash or gifts, or because of "sexual tension" and "discharge", or because of same gender desire. These conversations have been held in Dhaka, Calcutta, New Delhi, Mumbai (10), Chennai (11), and a variety of towns and villages. There have also been a range of Naz-sponsored consultation meetings, workshops, focus groups, and seminars. Their sexual histories, explicitly told, were part of discussions reflecting their lives, their hopes and aspirations, their needs, spoken quietly in parks, bus stands, hotel rooms, lake-sides, in rickshaws and tea shops, in taxis and on the street. Gaining trust and confidence through self-disclosure and friendship, the people I talked with were primarily from lower-income groups - "the working classes", "the labour classes", pavement dwellers, - speaking in their own languages. They were hotel boys, shoe-shine boys, rickshaw drivers, taxi drivers, tea boys, *kothis*, *panthis*, construction site workers, gay-identified men, truck drivers, "male sex workers".

Whilst this essay primarily focuses on males from lower income groups, this does not mean that male to male sexual behaviours and males selling sex to other males does

not exist at other class/economic groups. Of course it does. Here though terminologies may well be different, with emerging and recognisable gay identities being formed within these class groups. Within the male sexual networks accessed by middle and upper income groups you will also find similar stories as below, with the clearly identified male prostitute, the hustler, the pimp, and all the layers of interaction that go on, from sex parties, to street and park hustling. From the 10,000 rupee a night (about £200) to the 500 rupee for a two hour session.

Ranjit is a student studying in a college in New Delhi. He is 19 years old, comes from a middle class family, speaks English fluently, watches MTV, wears Levi jeans and likes Haagen Das ice cream.

I started selling sex accidentally. I was in this park in central Delhi one evening, and this man approached me and offered me 200 rupees for sex. I was feeling "hot" and I thought why not? The last time I had done anything like this with another guy was when I was 16, when over several months, I and my friend would play together. So I did this guy, got the money, and thought what an easy way to get some money. My parents never give me enough pocket money. So perhaps a couple of times a week I will come here. Here there are "good people", you know clean, come from my class. No "dirty" people here. I usually get taken to a local hotel, or sometimes to the guy's home when his wife or family are not in. Sometimes I will also go to nice, posh hotels and sit in the lobby. I know some to the staff in these hotels, and they sometimes will arrange a meeting with a particular hotel guest. I have to give them a percentage though. Or sometimes I get invited to parties where I can get a client

Now I have more experience I can charge much more money. Sometimes I get 1000 rupees, sometimes 5000 rupees. I usually spend the money on clothes or music, but I am also saving what I can for my future. My parents don't notice anything anyway. I tell my mother I have a part-time job. My father is not interested.

Sameer is also a student, 21 and from a middle class family. His father died two years ago, and his mother struggles to get enough money for his family and for Sameer to finish his college education.

I have to do this if I want to finish my education, and get a good job afterwards My mother tries in her job, but it is a real struggle. I tell my

mother that I have a part-time job, you know, computer stuff which explains the money I bring home. If I didn't sell my arse, we wouldn't really have enough money for me to finish my studies.

How much do I get in a month? Well perhaps 10000 rupees if I am lucky, but usually between 5000 to 6000. I know this other guy, a top-class model. Sometimes he can get 10,000 rupees from a rich businessman. or film star. He stays the night with him. This guy is going to introduce me to someone like that soon.

But in these frameworks, privacy, money, and other luxuries of the middle-class operate and the "sex workers" are less visible than those from the lower income groups. Middle class male sex workers organise themselves individually in different ways, through the telephone, through magazine adverts, through social/sexual networks, through parties.

The majority of the "park boys" we talked with shared similar needs. Food, shelter, clothing, love, affection, acceptance. "I want a husband, a real man who would love me and look after me. I would make him a good wife", was a constant refrain from so many of the *kothis* working the parks. "I only like "real men" was another. But "real men" don't touch the genitalia of their partner. They just penetrate or receive oral sex. To touch is to show that you are not a real man. To receive or give anally or orally is the measure of one's identity. They had their own language, a *kothi* language, and they named themselves *kothi*. The word *panthi* or *giriya* (a word used in New Delhi) was their term for a "real man" who was sexually active with them.

But for many others, no sexual identity appeared to be operating.

Says, Salem, a housekeeping boy working in a hotel in Dhaka:

Its very hard to find a girl who will give you sex. here. Everybody watches what a girl will do, who she is with and so on. I have been having sex with my friend since we were 13. We had been sharing a bed in my home in our village, and he started holding my cock. Well it was nice so we did. Then I came to Dhaka to go to a school here and the boys in the hostel were all doing sex with each other. We would watch a blue film, get hot and then start to play. Sometimes we would save up some money and go to a woman prostitute. A clean girl, but very costly. Girls here don't give you sex. You can kiss them, you can "breast pump" them, but getting it inside. Very hard

and difficult with no privacy. Then I started working here at this hotel and this hotel guest offered me 100 taka for a massage. Well money is money. So after my duty shift I did it. The man was only wearing his under-shorts when I came in. I started the massage and he got hard very quickly. He offered me more to shake him. So I said whatever, and did. I got 200 taka from him. Now I get perhaps 3 Or 4 hotel guests a month. Sometimes they want to fuck me, sometimes I fuck them. Sometimes its thigh sex. Its great. I get regular fun and extra money. I know there are several other boys who also do this, and I have a friend in this 5-star hotel who gets quite a lot of money this way.

In the parks, bus and railway stations, and many other sites there are often social networks in operation amongst males selling sex. The "guru" or focal point was usually the oldest person, who could be of any age. Age was the dignifier. South Asian cultures centre on respect for age. The older male is called uncle, but in the parks will often be called aunty. In one park in Delhi the oldest person was 42 and was still selling receptive sex. In fact the majority of sex for sale in these environments was receptive anal sex. I have yet to come across "boys" selling sex as the penetrator amongst these low income groups. *Kothi* boys do not penetrate, so they stated. They are always penetrated, whether the sex is free or for a price. Similarly, *panthis* are never supposed to be penetrated. If they are then they are not *panthis*. However, many rickshaw drivers, hotel boys, and others spoke of penetrating their middle class clients, younger males, friends, and others, as well as being penetrated themselves.

Within the parks these networks are seen as very important to the "boys". When a new person of whatever age comes into the park there is pressure to join this network, where rules are agreed, what you can do what you can charge, who to avoid. Often the park *darwan* (12), the local police and other notables would get their discharge for free or for a lower rate. Violence and harassment are part of their lives. From customers who refuse to pay, to local "rowdies" who come in groups, and beat the "boys" before having sex with them to the local police who may take some of their money as well as do sex to them.

It took some time to build up enough trust for them to be truly open about their lives. An example of this were a group of shoe-shine boys who I met in a park in Delhi, where a lot of foreigners would go to sit and gaze after a tiring walk around the gift shops. After an initial couple of visits making friendships, it was easy enough to talk about their sexual encounters with local girls, or with "female sex workers", or with

some of the foreign women. But it took two years of visiting these young males aged between 14 and 25, before several of them would tell me of their sexual activities with other males, both local and foreign. With foreign males they would charge something like \$20 a time. With the local males, it was discharge, it was pleasure of sexual release, it was *maasti* (13).

Similarly, talking with young cycle rickshaw drivers in Calcutta, whose homes are their rickshaws and the streets, after two years of getting to know them, visiting Calcutta twice a year, they began to use the term *jiggery dost* (14) to express their sexual activities amongst themselves. They began to speak of sex with certain customers who used their rickshaws, and how they sometimes would get cash (on average 50 rupees a time equivalent to \$1.50) Whereas in prior visits they were only able to tell me of their sexual encounters with local "female sex workers".

So many stories over the years. Each unique, individual, and yet all sharing similar threads, whether it is Cochin in the South India, or Dhaka, in Bangladesh. From Mumbai to Calcutta. From a little town in the hills of Uttar Pradesh, to a village in Orissa. It has taken time for these stories to be revealed, with patience, support, trust.

The stories reported below are just a few to engage in what I could term the essence of SOME frameworks of "sex work" in India and Bangladesh. Four stories are from India, two from Bangladesh. I have restricted the frameworks somewhat. "Boys" sell sex in a wide variety of locations, situations and life conditions, from the 7 year old boy at a railway station earning his food and shelter for the night to the room service "boy" in a hotel who can supplement his meagre salary. From a boy working in a tea shop who must give his body to the tea shop owner to keep his job to the "boy" in a park who defines himself as a *kothi* and sells sex to keep his family free from hunger. From the rickshaw boy who can get a nice new shirt or a few rupees more once in a while to the full-time "worker" who totally relies on the income earned through sex.

Names of all the people who shared their stories with me and are reported in this essay have been changed.

Kamal, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Kamal is 21 years old, lives in Dhaka and works as a lift boy in one of the larger hotels. He goes to the park 3 or 4 times a week, where he averages 5 clients an evening. He has many friends in the park, all who sell sex. Like the other boys in this park he has been taking oral contraceptives so that he can develop his breasts, which are now quite enlarged. He states that the

men like him to have big breasts because they like to squeeze them when they fuck him. They do the same to girls he stated.

I suppose the first time I did sex was when I was 8 years old. My uncle had visited our home when I was with my family in C, which is a village close to Barisal. We were very poor, and had only two rooms for our whole family. So my uncle shared the floor space with me. That night, he pushed his cock between my thighs and came. Only for a couple of minutes really. It felt nice, and he was a nice uncle, so I never said anything. He gave me 5 taka the next morning. Not that my family would have believed me, and what could I say.

This went on for several years every time my uncle came to visit. After a couple of years, we were alone in the fields, and that was the first time he fucked me. It was painful, but after several times I got used to it. There were also a couple of older boys in the village who also used to fuck me.

I went to live in Dhaka with another uncle where I worked in his cycle rickshaw garage. I was 13, and there were two other boys of the same age as me, a couple of older boys about 17 or 18, and my uncle. He and his wife and children lived behind the garage, and I slept with the boys inside the garage. After the garage was closed, the older boys used to fuck us younger boys at least once a week. Sometimes they may buy us younger boys a shirt or a lungi as a gift.

I was 14 when I started coming to this park. The first time I came here it was early evening. It is close to my home and I had come to see a friend. Usually I would come in the afternoons. As I walked through the park, I saw several boys, you know, walking in that way. Some of them were even wearing lipstick. I was interested, so I sat down on a bench. Then I noticed a man go to one of these boys, talk for a few minutes and then go into the bushes, there.

Then just after that, when I was wondering what was happening behind the bushes, one of these boys came and sat next to me. We started talking, and he told me what was going on. He took my hand, looked at me and said that I could make money like this. He described himself as a kothi and the men as panthis. He said he would help me. I forgot about meeting my friend and that evening I had my first client.

My new kothi friend explained to me the prices, how to do in the park, who the panthis were. I got to know the other kothis selling sex., there are about 50 of them here every night. Between us we do about 300 men every night. I also get to see the other kothis, the one that do not charge. They have their own section of the park though, and we don't mix to much. They are all from higher up, you know students, shop-keepers and so on. They wear jeans and shirts, live in nice homes. Not like us.

When I was 17 I had this customer who used to work in this hotel. He said he could help me get a job. That's how I started working as a lift boy. I left my uncle and moved into this man's home. He had a little room to himself. We started living as husband and wife. He is really married with four children, but they are all in his village near Comilla. He buys me nice clothes sometimes.

I stopped going to the park for a little while, perhaps for 6 months when I moved in with my husband. But I missed all my friends. So I started coming back for an hour or two each day and did not tell my husband. Then a client would approach me and I would do and get extra money. I never tell my husband.

I have also had offers in the hotel. Sometimes I take a hotel guest in my lift and if we are alone they will invite me into their rooms. This is difficult since I am not allowed into any guest's room. But usually I can get 15 or so minutes after my duty shift, when I can say I am in the toilet or whatever. Then I go to the guest's room. I can make quite a lot of money that way.

I send something like 2500 taka a month to my family, and use the rest to buy make-up, clothes and help with the room rent and food. My husband thinks I give him the money from my job at the hotel.

I like it here in the park. We kothis stick together, help each other. There are some very poor kothis here and sometimes I will give them some money or buy them a gift, or give them food, when I have had a good week and have extra money.

Khobir, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Khobir is 14 years old works as a table boy in a small tea shop/restaurant in Shantinagar, Dhaka. He has been working in the shop since he was 8 years old. He came to Dhaka with his oldest brother who is a rickshaw driver.

Khobir lives in the tea-shop with the other boys who work there. There is an age hierarchy, the young boys cleaning the tables, then those older serving the tables. There are several boys who are in their late teens and early twenties. None of the boys working in the tea-shop are married, except for the owner who also sleeps in the tea shop.

My brother first fucked me when I was 5 years old. I was the youngest and he was the second oldest at 15. He would do this about twice a month.

It was my oldest brother who took me to Dhaka. He had already been in Dhaka for several years and worked as a rickshaw driver. He had a friend who worked in this tea-shop and that is how I got this job. I earn about 500 taka a month and I send 400 taka a month to my family.

When I first came here to the tea shop and my brother left me, I was scared but I had a duty to my family so that was that. After a couple of months, one of the older boys called me over to him when we were going to sleep, and asked me to sleep with him. This wasn't unusual as several of the boys slept together under their blankets. When I got under the blanket with him, he started to pull my lungi up. I resisted, but he whispered that if I didn't obey him he would tell the owner I was a bad boy and I would lose my job. So I stopped resisting. I knew what to expect because of my brother, so when he started fucking me, I didn't make a noise. It was over in a few minutes and he turned around and went to sleep. This boy would fuck me 3 or 4 times a month. Some of the other boys would also fuck me. The owner has done it several times too.

When I was fourteen my thing grew large and I started fucking the younger boys in the shop.

Sometimes, a customer comes in who likes me and gives me a tip, maybe 5 or 10 taka. They usually ask my name and then go on to ask me to meet them outside later. If they are nice I do, and then we go somewhere and he fucks me. Usually he will give me another 10 or 20 taka for this. This money I save and send to my family every month also.

My family are very poor. They are farm labourers, and have no land of their own. My brother who is a rickshaw driver also sends money. My other brother is still in the village. The rest are my sisters. One of my sisters is already married, but with the other two we have to collect enough money for dowries. And that is a lot of money, easily 50,000 taka.

I would like another job which pays more money. I ask some of the customers quietly, especially the ones I do sex with if they can give me a job. I want to earn more money. Here I get very little time to myself. I work 7 days a week, usually from early morning to late night. I get some time to go to mosque, which is when I get a chance to meet some of the customers who want sex with me. I also want to save for my marriage when I get older, perhaps when I am 25.

I have never had sex with a girl, because there is no chance to. Where can I meet girls? And I can't afford a prostitute. So all my sex at the moment is with the boys in the shop or with some shop customer. I have had sex with a foreigner once. He was German and had come into the tea-shop. He was very nice to me. And I got a lot of money from him. He bought me some nice clothes as well. I was very sad when he had to go back to his country.

Rajesh , New Delhi, India

I suppose I must have been about 7 years old when I first had sex with another boy. I was the youngest of 6 brothers and sisters, and I lived in a small hut in a slum colony in Calcutta with them and my mother and father. Everyone worked. I used to go rag-picking and maybe I would earn about 20 rupees a day if I was lucky.

That evening, my family had gone to visit my mother's sister's husband, and I was left alone with Suresh. He was my eldest sister's husband's brother and he had come to stay with us from his village while looking for work. He was 21 years old. He had come home and he had brought a bottle of beer with him and a sexy magazine. Then he started drinking the beer and looking at the magazine, and all the time his hand would go down there, you know, rubbing it against his jeans. I was looking at a picture book, can't remember what it was, and then he called me over to him. The magazine was on his lap and I could see these naked men and women, all foreigners. I asked him where he got it from. He said from a friend, and did I like the pictures. I had

never seen naked women and men before. It was interesting. Then he put his arm around my shoulders and said to come and lie on the bed with him so we could look at the magazine together. First he locked the door, then we lay on the bed with the magazine between us. His hand was between his legs, rubbing up and down, and he saw me looking at his hand. He removed it and said "look, it is hard" . I didn't understand. "What is hard?" I said. Then he said, "I will show you", and he lowered his pants. His thing was standing up surrounded by hair. He then pulled my hand and told me touch it. I was a little bit scared but I touched it. He seemed to shake, and then moving the magazine to one side he hugged me. He pulled my pants off. He touched mine, and told me that one day I will be as big as him.

Then he asked me to move my hand up and down on his thing. He showed me what to do, which I did. A few minutes later I could feel his body tense, and he hugged me tight. I felt a wetness between us, and his body shook. Then he moved away, looked at me, smiled, and said don't tell anybody. He then went and washed, told me to wash, and then said go to sleep. About an hour later, the rest of my family came in.

Suresh did sex to me several times after that until he moved to New Delhi for work. After Suresh, I did sex with my uncle, a couple of my friends, and some neighbours. Many times it was gand (15). They would call it maasti.

When I was 14, my father sent me to his brother in Delhi. There he was living with his wife, his two children, my brother and his wife and their one child. We only had one room and all sleeping in same room. Sometimes the men would sleep outside. I started working in my brother's shop, cleaning, bringing tea, helping to mend the auto-rickshaws. I had been in New Delhi for about 2 months when my uncle took me to this park. It was a very large with many trees and bushes. It was about 6 o'clock in the evening and just growing dark. There were few lights in the park, and there seemed to be many men walking around. I could sometimes see two men go behind a bush, or behind a tree where it was much darker, then after a few minutes they would come out and move away from each other. I didn't know, but I sort of guessed what happened. Then my uncle took me behind this bush and did me. I wanted to do it, but I was very scared. It was outside, and maybe someone would see us. When he finished, we came out and he gave me 20 rupees. It was the first time someone had given me money for doing this. He

said he had to go just around the corner to see a friend, that I was stay here in the park and wait for him. He would be gone for an hour.

When he went away, I was excited. I now knew that men come to this park to do sex. I sat on a bench and within a few minutes another man came sat next to me. He asked me the usual questions, you know, where I am from, where do I live, what I am doing in the park. Then he said he wanted to do sex with me and would give me 40 rupees. Where I was working, I would only get about 20 rupees a day, which I had to give to my uncle for food and room. If I did sex with this man I would have 40 rupees which I would keep to myself. So I did it. After we finished, I handled myself also.

Now I have been coming to this park for the last four years. I have made many friends here, and am a kothi like the others. There are about 40 to 50 kothis here in the park and we look after each other, help each other and so on. I make maybe 1000 rupees a week. Some of this I send to my family in the village. I still work in the shop. Because I had picked up some kothi habits, the boys in the shop would also fuck me, including my uncle. But they don't pay. Maybe they would gift sometimes, or take me to the cinema. I only get 1000 rupees a month in the shop. My brother has now gone to the Gulf with my uncle these last two years and I stay with my aunty and my brother's wife. I pay room rent and for meals. Without my sex in the park, I would not have enough money for myself and my family.

The boys here have taught me a lot about sex. What to do, what not to do, who is dangerous, who to look our for. With them I have learnt to be kothi which brings me more men for sex and more money. I walk this way, I use my hands that way, my voice I make higher.

Sometimes it is hard. Each night, maybe 5 or 6 men come and fuck me. They are so fast, and they don't use anything, and sometimes I bleed. I always have problems there. Piles. Yes, I have had these diseases. I go to a friend of mine who gives me something. A few days, or maybe a couple of weeks, it goes away. I have heard about condoms, but many men don't want to use. Anyway, sometimes it is difficult in the park, you know to take time to put on condom. And who is carrying condom anyway?

It is like two lives, one is my park life with my friends, one is my street life with my job. I am like two people, and this gate is the line. Maybe I want to

stop, because now I want to find a friend who I can be with as my husband. My other friend here, he has a husband.

I remember once , it must have been about a year ago, this student boy came to the park, and he liked me. He said that he would fuck me, but then he wanted me to fuck him as well. I had not been asked to fuck anyone before. So I did. I am not sure if I enjoyed it really. But I did not ask him for money. I felt that when the boy asked me to fuck him, I was honoured by his request. Me a kothi. Fucking him was like being a man. Sometimes I think I am a man, but when I come to the park, I am not a man. I never told my friends here.

I will have to get married soon. This is a problem. What to do. For my family I have to marry. I have never had sex with a girl. Maybe I should go to prostitute and do sex with her just to see if I can do it. But I don't think so. I will keep putting my family off as long as possible. It is hard when everyone is saying get married, get married, all the time. I am only 18, but still they want me married.

How long will I come to park for money? As long as the men like to do sex with me and give me money. Sometimes I see a very handsome man, and I want to do sex with him, then I do not ask for money. I think maybe this man will choose me as his wife. Some men want to see me regularly, once a week, once a month, whatever. Sometimes I have been taken to the man's home, or he takes me to the guest house just around the corner. Maybe God will punish me, but what to do. I need money. My family needs money. They need food to eat. How can God punish me for that.

Rafiq, Calcutta, India

I think I am 10 years old. I have been staying here at this railway station since maybe for five years. My parents and I with my sister came here from a small village, and we used to all live together. They told me we had to come to the city as there was no work in the village. Then first my sister died, and then my parents died. For the last two years I have been on my own. Well not really on my own, as I am with the other boys here. We are a gang.

Our gang is about 20 boys and girls, mainly boys. The oldest is 14, and we have one boy who is 7. None of us have families. We live here sleeping near the station.

I am always hungry. We all are. We beg here, you know, from the passengers, sometimes we thief when we can, you know steal wallets, purses. Passengers rushing around can be so careless. Sometimes we are lucky, some foreigners come here and we can beg lots of money from them. Other times we help passengers with their luggage and they give us a little money, a rupee or maybe two. But all this is never enough. Never enough food...

I first had sex when I was seven, just after I joined the gang. Ramesh, was the leader then, but now he is in some sort of home the police took him to for stealing and other things. He was then 14. We usually all sleep together, and it was cold that night. I was the youngest, and Ramesh chose me to keep him warm. Sometime he woke me up and told me to turn towards him. He put my hand on his "thing". It was hard and warm. He told me to move my hand up and down, and almost immediately this warm liquid came into my hand. He told me what it was, that I would one day be able to do the same thing, and then he told me to go to sleep. The next morning we never talked about it.

Over time I learnt that all the boys were doing it with each other, the older with the younger, and also with the girls, but only the older boys could do it with the girls.

It was about one year later that I got paid to do this sex thing with an older boy who was in a different gang. He was about 16, and he gave me 5 rupees to let him fuck me. I felt a lot of pain, but the money bought me food. Then Ramesh showed me this toilet, where lots of men come for sex with each other. He showed me the railway porters and the local stall people who like to do it. I began to earn money through selling my arse. Sometimes they asked me to use my mouth, sometimes my hand, but mostly its my arse. Maybe I can make 100 rupees a week, and I use to give some of it to Ramesh. Now I give to Debanuj. He is the leader now that Ramesh is gone.

I have done it with a girl. I know I don't have hair, but sometimes my thing gets hard. When it does I go to Ramala and share her blanket, if she is isn't with anyone.

One of the younger kids, he is in hospital right now, Chiku, this police wallah came and forced him to do it. This policeman was huge, and just shoved it in. Chiku was crying, and he was bleeding, his pants around his ankles. What could we do? We don't charge the police anything, and many times we can't charge these other men anyway. Only if they are kind will they give us a few rupees for this.

I suppose I will keep on doing this, whatever, I need to have rupees to buy food, or steal it.

Sethya, Chennai, India

I first had sex with another man when I was 18. I had wanted to before but I was always scared to try. Ever since I was 12 years old, I wanted to. My family is small, only one sister, and my father is dead. I had my own little room. I used to masturbate all the time, thinking on some man who I would see on the street, who would hold me, hug me, kiss me. We are a poor family, and I started working when I was 14 years old.

I met this man on the beach near my home and he asked if I would do oral sex with him and he would give me 50 rupees. He led me to this dark spot against a wall. I did it, my first time.

Even though he didn't touch me and there was no kissing and hugging I enjoyed it. It was very quick. The money was good. I didn't earn a lot in my job as an office boy.

I am 24 years old now. I have been coming to this beach these last 5 years and since I lost my job 3 years ago, every evening. I earn perhaps 200 to 300 rupees in any evening, which I give to my family after I take out what I need for myself. Clothes, cinema, food. I tell my mother I have this office job which explains the money I give her. She doesn't have a job now, and I am also saving for my sister's wedding. I need a lakh rupees (100,000) for her husband.

Sometimes I enjoy sex with a couple of neighbourhood friends that I have. One is married, but he complains all the time about his wife and says that she never does the things I do for him. And then he says she is too lose after the children were born and she won't let him fuck her in the arse. So what to do? Sometimes there is a "hot" movie on at the cinema, and I can also find sex in the toilet. There I choose a handsome boy to stand next to and make sure that he knows I am willing to do. Never fails. There I usually do oral sex and perhaps hand sex.

I also have regular partners, who I see maybe a couple of times a month. Then I go to their homes and enjoy sex with them. Then there is hugging and kissing which makes me feel very nice. I like that.

I have got to know a lot of the boys on the beach here, and that is where I learnt a lot from them, the prices to charge, who to be careful of, who to avoid. Here I learnt about myself as a danga (16). Now I see myself as a danga. I make perhaps about 1000 rupees a week. I am looking for a real man who will take me as his partner. I will look after him and be a good wife to him.

Anil, Mumbai, India

I used to live with my family in our village near Almora which is close to Nainital in Uttar Pradesh. Our family were farmers. My father's second youngest brother had moved to Mumbai and he would send money to his wife every month. When he would come to the village every year for a couple of months to help, he would tell us all wonderful stories about the film stars and the rich city. All of us envied him.

I had sex with my uncle when I was 12 years old on one of his visits. Anita (his wife) was sick with another child, and he had come to visit our hut, talking with my father, his brother. He stayed the night, and we shared my blanket, and things happened.

During that stay we had sex together several times. At that time he was 27 years old.

I have now been on this beach for about 4 years . Came here when I was 15. My uncle had suggested that I come here. Told my father he would help me get work in the city. That first night in Mumbai, after my uncle took me

around Juhu Beach area so I could see where the famous film stars live, and around the Gateway of India, Taj Hotel, and so many places, we did sex in his room. He told me how I could make lots of money through giving massages and sex to men. Then I could send this money to my family and help them. The next day he took me to this beach, and let me watch. There seemed to be so many boys working here. I could see them bending over this man or that man, kneading their backs, arms, legs. Sometimes I could see their hands moving in the crotch area. A couple of times in the very dim light I could see their faces bending over the middle part of the body. After my sex with my uncle I guessed what they were doing. Seeing this made me hot.

When we went back to my uncle's room he showed me what to do, how to give massage, how to suck, how to give pleasure, what prices to ask for. I practised on him.

Over the next week I would go to the beach with him and just watch. When the police came to clear us out, we would stand by the road side. There some people would drive pass in taxis or their own cars and stop to pick up a boy and then drive of. My uncle said that they would take the boy to a hotel room or their own house and do sex there. The price was always higher.

Then after I had been with my uncle for a few days coming to the beach and just watching, and standing with him on the side of the road, this car stopped. A man maybe about 30 got out and came to us, and asked me to come with him. I looked at my uncle and he told the man that since I was new in Mumbai we would both come. The man grinned and said OK. That night I did sex with my uncle while the man watched, then the man did sex with both my uncle and myself. He paid us 500 rupees. My uncle gave me 100 rupees and said that was because I was just a beginner.

The next day, with this money, I got myself a towel, oil and a little bag and with my uncle we started out on the beach. After a few minutes we separated and each of us went to work. I earned 200 rupees that night.

Sometimes I get fucked. Sometimes I am asked to fuck. Sometimes I suck, other times I get sucked. On the beach its mainly hand sex and sometimes mouth sex. Anal sex is always in a room. It all changes. I enjoy the sex, although I am careful not to lose too much seed. I sometimes still do sex with my uncle, and I have other friends who I do sex with. Once in a while I go to

female prostitute for sex also. I send my family about 2000 rupees a month, and now I have my own room. My family now are arranging for my marriage. They have arranged it with a local family in the village and next year I will get married.

I will still come here to the beach. What other job would give me over 4000 to 5000 rupees a month. I can't read or write, I have no education. This way I can earn a lot of money and enjoy the sex. Sometimes though it is hard. Some customers are a real problem. Sometimes they hit me, refuse to pay. And the police, they are just as bad. Like the other boys I pay my share to them. But sometimes, they come onto the beach take some of the boys back to the station. There they will take all our money, sometimes fuck us, and then send us out. But what to do.?

Sometimes rich ones come here, pick up a boy and take them to their homes. These boys make a lot of money. So far that hasn't happened to me. I should try harder.

I don't know what will happen in the future. My uncle has left for Delhi where he has got a job as a driver through one of the men he met here. There are boys here who are over 30 and still working. Mind you the younger you are the more you can charge. I suppose one day I will stop, find some other work that can pay as well. We shall see.

There are no estimates as to how many "boys" sell sex to other males in India or Bangladesh, whether it is for cash, clothing, food or shelter. Nor how many male customers they have. Many of these boys speak of anything between 3 to 12 sexual partners in an evening. What is clearly evident from the many stories over the years, is that the number is large, and is at least as numerous as the numbers of female sex workers, if not more. Such male sex workers would include the full-time workers in many parks, beaches and other sites whose main income is from selling sex, to those who are rickshaw drivers, taxi drivers, truck drivers, hotel boys, tea/restaurant boys, and other service industries who offer sex for some form of payment as a supplement to their regular income.

In some discussions with a number of *kothis* selling sex in Dhaka and where over 30 specific sites, including parks, streets and religious sites were identified as areas where males were selling sex, not including the innumerable guest houses, hotels, rickshaw and truck stands, bus terminus, and other areas, their estimates averaged

around 50,000 . Whilst this may appear to be a high figure, I find it difficult to dispute this because of the visual and anecdotal evidence.

These boys also stated that there were a further 150,000 other *kothis* in the city who did not charge for sex.

Dhaka is not much different from other major conurbation in South Asia. And if you include all the urban areas, from major cities through to small towns and many of the larger villages, the numbers of males who sell sex to other males for cash, food, clothing or shelter, must be seen as enormous, certainly in the hundreds of thousands. Whilst the numbers of males who have sex with males must be seen as being in the millions.

As expressed earlier, classifying males who have sex with males as gay men, homosexuals, or even as male commercial sex workers can be problematic. Whilst there were clear identities such as *kothis*, *panthis*, and even *do-parathas* (17) or *double-deckers* (18), often these identities are spatially as well as behaviourally constructed. There were also not clearly delineated. That is whilst *panthis* and *kothis* both stated that their sexual behaviour was distinctly and always "one way", private anecdotal evidence indicated that these were just public statements to what were deemed shameful acts, i.e. for a *kothi* to admit that he also penetrates, or for a *panthi* to state that he also gets penetrated was considered shameful and causes one to lose their identity. When two *kothis* have sex with each other it is called *chapati-chapati* and is likened to sisters have sex with each other.

At the same time, those *kothis* who are penetrated and receive cash or gifts are situationally within a context of family need, marriages, poverty, hunger and sometimes homelessness. Also many middle class *kothis* may buy penetration from rickshaw and truck drivers and other males who do not have a *panthi* identity at all, where the penetrator sees the *kothi* as a sexual opportunity for discharge with the added bonus of a gift of money.

Significantly, all the *kothis* I spoke to about the "selling" of sex spoke of their family needs. Getting cash or gifts for sex was a method of sustaining themselves and their family. Not one spoke of keeping all the money for themselves. This does not mean that this does not happen. It means, I believe, that family context and poverty are the two major parameters that shape the marketing of male to male sex, whilst the issues of gender segregation, homosociability, homoaffectionalism, male power and social spaces, as well as male to male desires, shape the buying and the doing of sex. There

appeared to be few boundaries between these differing dynamics, except perhaps with those evolving and with emerging gay identities. What boundaries did exist as such were based on social class, education, economic power and gendered behaviour. *Panthis* and gay men do not socialise with *kothis* except in sexual environments. And *do-parathas* were seen as potential *kothis* by both *panthis* and *kothis*, as potential gay men by other gay identified men, and were often more stigmatised than either in these park sexual/social networks. These identities, for many of these males, were clearly also separated by time and location. A park identity and a street identity, a home identity, a family identity, a marriage identity.

A significant number of males who have sex with males, including *kothis*, are married with children, and the vast majority who were not already married took it as a fact that they would get married at a later date. This is a cultural, social and religious obligation a necessity to sustain family honour and duty.

A majority of *kothis*, including those selling sex, had their first sexual encounter very early, usually before puberty. Their first sexual partner was usually a male relative, an uncle, cousin, older brother, a male in-law, or perhaps a neighbour.

The range of sexual practices of these *kothis* selling sex was from masturbation of their customers, through to thigh sex, giving oral sex and receiving anal sex. Anal sex occurred always where there was a measure of privacy and space. A room, behind a bush in the dark, in a deserted construction site.

All the *kothis* mentioned the speed of anal sex and the rapidity of penetration. From their statements, the average time was about 5 minutes for penetration and ejaculation. Penetration was immediate. Condom usage was extremely low, and levels of symptoms of sexually transmitted infections very high. Use of water-based lubricants was non-existent. What lubricants were used varied from motor oil to cooking oil, from vaseline to spit. On some occasions I was told of the use of Vick's vapour rub "because it makes the hole tighter".

Every single *kothi* selling sex complained of piles. Where they took notice of their symptoms due to personal discomfort, very few would actually go to a doctor for treatment because of shame. Further, in discussing some of these issues with a number of STD specialists in Dhaka, none had asked their patients, male and female, about anal sex transmission, whilst in India only a few would do so.

What the *kothis* will do, if they do anything at all, is to go to a friendly pharmacist or a "street doctor" and take what is given. They may be lucky enough to personally know of a *kothi/panthi* doctor and then they would go to them for treatment. But many of the *kothis* stated that they would follow whatever remedies their friends told them about. There was significant evidence to indicate that many of the *kothis* had a range of sexually transmitted infections, whilst continuing to sell sex. None had gone for an HIV anti-body test. One such *kothi* told me that he was not afraid of AIDS because he had a cure which consisted of this special cream which he rubbed around his anus every day!

Knowledge of HIV and AIDS was almost non-existent. Many had heard of AIDS but did not know anything about HIV. Several *panthi* clients I spoke to said that doing anal sex was safe because only vaginal sex with women was dangerous. This was what they had heard.

From all that has been written above, the risks of transmission of STIs and HIV are enormous, not only from *kothi* to *panthi*, but also from *panthi* to *kothi*, and from *kothi/panthi* to wives and other females.

In a region of over a billion people there appears to be extremely few sexual health promotion services and products dedicated to provide support, treatment and advocacy for males who have sex with males.

I have not been able identified any in Bangladesh (19), Nepal or Pakistan, whilst in India, Naz Foundation (India) Trust is developing such services in New Delhi and Calcutta. In Chennai, Community Action Network is working with male sex workers, and in Mumbai, Humsafer Trust is providing education and support for those with emerging gay identities.

The difficulty is that government and nongovernment agencies do not recognise the issues around male to male sex, and even if they do it is constructed around the terms heterosexual/homosexual. Further international donor agencies also have difficulties recognising these concerns, since the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Asia is defined as "heterosexual", so why "waste scarce resources.

What does this say about the future course of an already rampant HIV epidemic in South Asia? What does this say about the issues, risks and sexual health needs of males who have sex with males generally and specifically, males who sell sex to other males?

In writing this essay, my gratitude goes to all the boys, young men and others, the *kothis*, *panthis* and *do-parathas*, the gay identified men and those with emerging gay identities, the park boys, hotel staff, restaurant and tea boys, the rickshaw and truck drivers, the railway workers, factory workers and construction workers, the students, office workers and business men, all those who told me their stories, shared with me their grief and pain, their hopes and convictions, their desires and needs, and gave me a glimpse, brief and darkly through the windows of their lives, of their courage to face their future, whatever that takes. The sheer capacity for survival of these people is outstanding.

My gratitude also goes to all those friends of mine who shared dark nights, cold streets, tea stalls, hotel rooms and lobbies, bus and railway stations, cheap restaurants and other unromantic places, sitting and translating for me, whose patience and forbearance to all those questions and responses were invaluable. Without their help this essay could not have been possible, nor work of The Naz Foundation develop as it has done.

What does all this imply for the development of appropriate and effective sexual health strategies for males who have sex with males, and in particular, males who sell sex to other males?

We see here complex interactions between identity formation (or lack of any specific sexual identity), different naming processes, a ubiquitous sexual behaviour, invisibility and denial, multiple partners, risky sexual behaviours, low levels of STI/HIV knowledge and awareness, low levels of condom use with a lack of appropriate lubricants.

There is a lack of community identification. For some male sex workers, socialising networks within particular sexual/social spaces such as parks, occur, but economic and social disempowerment, a lack of negotiating skills, as well as a sexual identity formation focusing on the act of penetration, create specific difficulties for developing enabling strategies towards promoting safer sex.

And embedded within all this is the issue of religion (both Hinduism and Islam) and illegality, of cultures based on silence, denial, invisibility and above all, shame.

These frameworks carry huge implications for developing any effective strategies for the management and control of STIs and HIV amongst males who sell sex to other

males, as well as males who have sex with males in India and Bangladesh. The socio-cultural dynamics of these male to male sexual networks are poorly (if at all) understood, with almost no investment in risk and needs assessments, or the development of specific programmes to provide appropriate sexual health services. Boundaries between desire, power hierarchies, economic dislocation and poverty, and the socio-cultural frameworks in which all this is embedded within, construct self-definitions that bear little relation to current imaginings of a "sex worker", nor to the dominant Western sexual ideologies promoted by UNAIDS, national AIDS programmes, and local community-based agencies, which configure so many HIV/AIDS and sexual health programmes.

High quality and meaningful peer research research, appropriate and easy access to high quality sexual health products, explicit information, effective STD programmes that are easily accessible, de-stigmatisation, development of meaningful interventions, economic development, community development, peer networking, utilising sexual/social networks that already exist, changing legal frameworks, beneficiary led sexual health programmes, governments and services recognising anal sex as an issues, well the list goes on.

I don't know the way ahead. The Naz Foundation is trying to evolve a strategic vision as it works towards empowering local individuals, networks, and behavioural/social groups to seek their own answers to address these concerns. Oftentimes working silently without public acknowledgement, using labels such as male sexual health strategies, negotiating with local police and officials, creating off-site social spaces to talk, to share, to grieve, to support, addressing not only sexual health needs, but also looking at psycho-social-economic issues, in other words, developing a community framework, a sense of shared space, loss and identity.

Such a strategy is a long term objective. How do you ask an individual to take care of himself and his partner in these rapid sexual encounters, where denial and penetration itself are self-definers, where the term sexual partner is often meaningless? Perhaps approaching it from a family perspective, addressing broader community issues, for these will often play a larger role in terms of purpose and definition than the sexual act.

It is also clear that it would be fundamental to recognise that sexual health strategies will need to look at the impact of male sexual behaviours and sexual health on female sexual health, as often there are no identity boundaries between males or females as sexual partners. Many of these males are married. This would mean developing

gender/behaviour specific programmes, and yet developing collaborative strategies that address the specific concerns of the "partners". Males who have sex with males will not tell their wives or other female partners about their sexual activities. Marriages in India and Bangladesh are not based on companionship and friendship, nor for that matter are many male to male sexual encounters. Programmes will have to develop that enable females partners of males who have sex with males to address their own sexual health needs without learning of their male partners sexual behaviours.

The situation is complex, and I am not aware of any current strategy that has evolved, either in the West, or in the so-called "developing countries", whether government or non-government, that can effectively and appropriately deal with such situations. What does exist are small scale, localised interventions, which are necessary, but need to be seen in a broader context. What about those males who do not go to parks, toilets, shrines, or hang about on streets, at bus stops, railway stations, bus termini? What about inter-family, intra-family, neighbourhood, work environment, hotel, tea shops, guest house sexual encounters? These are as common, if not more so, than the public sex sites.

I leave this essay with more questions than answers. The Naz Foundation in developing localised strategies with its partner agencies in New Delhi, Calcutta, Dhaka, Salem, Cochin, Lucknow, and other cities in the sub-continent is seeking some broader vision. These local strategies are somewhat trial and error, forging a pathway that few have trod. Imaginings that are being given a reality. It is too early to evaluate these responses, but at the least we have discovered that they do require imagination, forbearance, an ability to rapidly change frameworks and strategies, a willingness to experiment, an early recognition of those methodologies that do not work, and an understanding that there is no one methodology. There is no super model to be adapted. There is just understanding, compassion, empathy and an anger that no human should be denied accurate information, resources and the opportunity for a future. There is no dignity in ignorance, no dignity in silence, no dignity where there is no hope.

At the least we struggle along hiding, slipping between the social and sexual interstices, finding the gaps of allowance. Governments donors and the international agencies must recognise the complexity of the issues, not try to reduce them to the simple dichotomy of heterosexual/homosexual. Nor should there be this constant reference to the statement that "AIDS is a heterosexual issue in Asia". We don't know enough about sexual behaviour patterns in Asia to say this with any degree of

confidence. We only make this assumption because so many women have HIV or are living with AIDS. But what about the males whose sexual behaviour creates this impact?

And finally, where laws and regulations exist that create a high risk for punishment, imprisonment, community disavowal which disables access to appropriate services, these must be amended so as to create safe and secure places enabling service accessibility for male sex workers and other males who have sex with males. Denial and invisibility kills. It kills our people.

Notes

1. See a range of Naz Foundation reports, including
Contexts - race, culture and sexuality, Shivananda Khan, 1994
Making Visible the invisible
sexuality and sexual health in South Asia - a focus on male to male sexual behaviours, Shivananda Khan, 1995

also *Under the Blanket: Bisexualities and AIDS in India*, Shivananda Khan, printed in *Bisexualities and AIDS - international perspectives*, edited by Peter Aggleton and published by Taylor & Francis under their Social Aspects of AIDS Series, 1996.
2. *Taka* - Bangladesh currency. 65 taka is equivalent to £1 Sterling
3. The term boys in this essay is used in a South Asian sense which does not specifically refer to their biological age. A boy can be any age in this context, where it includes frameworks of socio-economic class, marital status and social custom.
4. *Kothi*
In Dhaka, amongst males who have sex with males networks are several boys/men who are self-defined as *kothi*. They cut across income group, class, caste, religion and region. These boys/men gender themselves through effeminate behaviour in specific spaces. Their exaggerated behaviour make them visible in a public arena and is used as a flirtation mechanism. Males in need of sexual discharge irrespective of their sexual choices, may often then respond to these feminised males for oral sex, masturbation, and where space and a measure of privacy permits, anal sex.

In observing several *kothi* in a variety of settings, from walking down a street, in a restaurant, in a hotel, at a railway/bus station or in public sex environments, we have found that in the vast majority of cases, soliciting

another male for sex was extremely easy. The sexual urgency of many of these males was clearly obvious. Such responses relates to discharge sex.

However, many *kothi* are also married with children. Further significant number of these *kothi* also sell sex in certain environments. It is not unusually for a *kothi* to speak of having between five and ten sexual partners in one evening, where sexual penetration and ejaculation takes between five and ten minutes.

Kothis speak of wanting 'real men', where real men don't show any desire for other males. They just penetrate. In the sexual act, the penetrator does not touch the genitalia of the *kothi*. To do so is to show that the male is not a 'real man'. Such a 'real man' is called a *panthi*.

Kothis will also state that do not have sex with each other. For them such behaviour is considered shameful. Yet in personal and private discussion, several have admitted that they do so. However they can never discuss this with their peers.

Condom usage also appears to be almost non-existent, since not only is the behaviour spontaneous and opportunistic, but also the penetrators do not want to use a condom.

A wide variety of settings are used for such sexual activities. During the day time, lodges, guest house, hotels, inside shops, behind bushes, derelict locations, cinema toilets, other toilets. At night time, railway tracks, toilets, cinema halls, derelict ground, construction sites, hotels, inside shops, behind bushes inside parked buses, trucks, railway carriages.

In other cities of South Asia sexual patterning will be the same with other local terms are available.

5. *Panthis*

The males who sexually access the *kothis* are called *panthis*. These are males who exhibit so called 'normative' behaviours, and while some may sexually desire other males, for many it is the act of sexual penetration and discharge that is important. The framework appears to be sexual discharge, that is the male is sexually 'hot', and may well visit specific locations where he knows *kothis* are available for sex, whether he has to pay for it or not. Or they may be sexually active in social and working environments, i.e. hotels, restaurants,

shops, or solicit young sexual partners in bazaars and streets. Many of these males have stated that they like anal sex because it is tighter than vaginal sex. And recent anecdotal evidence has been collected which indicates that many of these males see females as vectors of sexual diseases and therefore unsafe to have sex with, or that vaginal sex is more risky than anal sex. The vast majority of these men will be married or will become married.

It should also be noted that many of these males do not see this sexual behaviour as real sex, not even as sex, but rather as *maasti/khel* (which means play, or fun).

6. A *tokai* is a person who lives on the street and earns income from collecting discarded, but useful, rubbish from the streets which he/she can sell.
7. a *lungi* is a sarong like garment used by males in Bangladesh and India. Most males wearing lungis in Bangladesh do not wear underwear.
8. *Rupee* - Indian currency. Approximately 50 rupees to £1 Sterling.
9. the term *body tension* is often used to describe sexual need, an erection and a desire for sex.
10. Mumbai is the new name for Bombay, India.
11. Chennai is the new name for Madras. India.
12. *darwan* is the term for the gate or park-keeper.
13. *maasti*, a hindi term meaning mischief, or play, and sometimes used with a sexual connotation meaning sexual pay.
14. *jiggery dost* usually means a very close friend with whom you always go around with. Its sexual connotation signifies sex with one's close friend, and it is often indicated in personal conversations through tone and gesture.
15. *gand* is a hindi term which means anus, and is also a slang term for anal sex derived from the phrase *gand marna*.
16. *danga*, a term used in Chennai and has the same connotations as *kothi*.
17. *do-parathas*, a *kothi* term meaning a male who does both, gets penetrated and penetrates.
18. *double-decker*, as *do-paratha*, a term used in Chennai
19. The Naz Foundation has been working with a number of male sexual networks in Dhaka, providing training and technical assistance to develop such appropriate services.