

Eyes Wide Shut

*masculinities, sexualities and
behaviour: male-to-male sex in
South Asia*

Homosexualities, HIV/AIDS and HIVOS: Why?

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Frameworks of male-to-male sex in South Asia

Sexual diversity and polymorphous behaviour

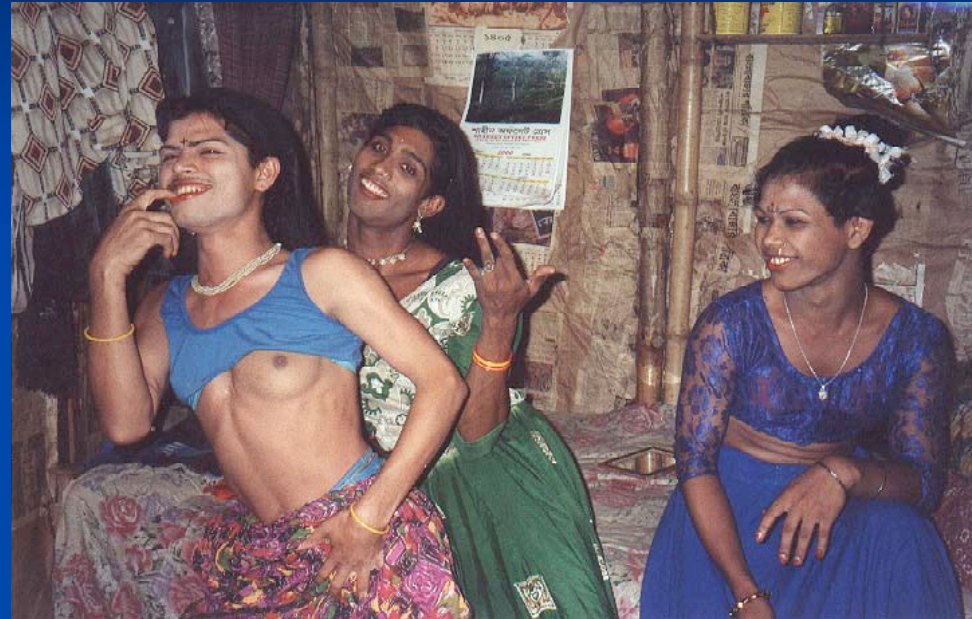
Includes:

- Gendered framework and performative identities, sexual practices, and sex roles
- Sexual identity/orientation
- Discharge, Institutional, Situational, Economic
- Accessibility

Class, education and poverty frame practices and identities

A homosocial and homoaffectional culture

- Gender segregation and social control of females
- Overcrowding and male only spaces
- A gendered/age construction of male-to-male sex
- Poverty, unemployment and low income
- Sex practice defined by behaviour/acts/roles rather than identities



South Asian primary sexualities

■ Kothis/zenanas/metis/hijras

Feminised males who perceive themselves and are perceived as “not men” – identity based on gender roles

■ Males/Men - discharge framework

Male to male sexual behaviours arising from immediate access, opportunity, and “body heat”. They involve males/men from the general male population

■ Age-related framework

This reflects the “beardless youth” construct of male-to-male desire, where the older man forms a pederastic relationship with a younger male (*the Halekon of Afghanistan*)

■ Gay-identified men

Identity based on sexual orientation

In terms of HIV prevention, bipolar categories

MAN/WOMAN

HOMOSEXUAL/HETEROSEXUAL

GAY/STRAIGHT

do not work to address HIV concerns

Hence the category

“MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN”

But the category MAN/MEN can be problematic since this is also socially constructed.



Some Data

- 25% of medical students at Patna Medical College in a 1992 survey revealed that they had same-sex relationships (H/V. Wyatt, 1993)
- Of the 1500 men who replied to a questionnaire in a men's magazine in India, Debonair, 29.5% stated that had sex with another man before the age of 20 years (Roy Chan, et al. 1998)

- In Bangladesh, a study conducted by the International Centre for Diarrhoea Diseases Research, Bangladesh in 2002 indicated that over 22% of rickshaw pullers had sex with other males.



- 40% of men living in a Karachi squatter settlement had male-to-male sex (reported in July 1996 AIDS Analysis)



Violence and Abuse



In a 2002 study conducted in Bangladesh with feminine-identified males (N=124):

- 33% reported sexual assault or rape by their “friends”
- 48% reported being sexually assaulted or raped by local police
- 64% reported being harassed by police



Issues that must be addressed

■ **Advocacy and policy**

Repeal of legislation and sensitising of law enforcement agencies, judiciary and media

■ **Identity-based self-help interventions**

kothi, *hijra* and gay self-help groups towards community building and mobilising, along with recognition of gender variance and diversity

■ **Anal sex as a mainstream behaviour**

Partners of feminised males are from the general male population, many of whom also have anal sex with women

Issues that must be addressed

■ Capacity and skills building

With low income populations there are a lack of skills, knowledge and capacity. They will require on-going technical support.

■ Promote sexual responsibility

Majority of males who have sex with males will become married. female partners are at risk also.

■ Promote sexual rights as human rights for all

In South Asia legal prohibitions deal with behaviour not identity - many non-gay-identified males also are involved in male-to-male sex