

Advocacy, policy and support on male sexualities

# Know your sexual culture!

**Acknowledging gender variance and sexual identities in South Asia and their impact on successful HIV prevention programming**



## The problem with naming!

### First gay 'marriage' in Pakistan...

*A gay couple have become the first to get "married" in Pakistan, according to reports from the region. Witnesses said a 42-year-old Afghan refugee held a marriage ceremony with a local tribesman of 16 in the remote Khyber region bordering Afghanistan.....*

**BBC news 5 October 2005**

## **A binary, hierarchal and oppositional world**

**Mind**

**Body**

**Man**

**Woman**

**Male**

**Female**

**Masculine**

**Feminine**

**Young**

**Old**

**Heterosexual**

**Homosexual**

**Straight**

**Gay**

**The world is not so simple**

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# A trinary world?

## South Asia

**Man**

**Not-man**

**Woman**

# Male-male sexual frameworks

## Gendered framework

Male to male desire based on feminised gendered roles and identification - sexual acts based on gender roles, i.e. man/not-man



*Note that these are not transgendered persons as is usually understood*

**“Why do men have sex with men? This is not normal. We *kothis/zenana* are here for them”.**

**“I don’t mind if my *giry*a beats me up. It only shows how manly and powerful he is”.**

**“When my *parik* (“husband”) beats me, I feel as helpless as a woman. Since I want to be a woman, it actually makes me feel good”.**

**Kothis/metis/zenanas/hijras often recognise that they are neither women or men, but some “other”.**

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### **Discharge framework**

**Male to male sexual behaviours arising from immediate access, opportunity, and “body heat”. They involve boys/men from the general male population “using” receptive, feminised males for “discharge”.**

**Also involves males in all-male institutions**

## Doing *masti*

**Opportunistic - body heat, mutual desire and friendship – usually pre-marital**

**Often no significance in terms of orientation and/or identity**

**These males do not perceive themselves as homosexuals, but rather doing *masti*.**

**Across the region**



## ***Beardless boys***

**Older men form relationships with adolescent males - usually between 12 and 18 years - before these males grow beards.**

***Beardless boys***

***Beautiful boys***

***Dancing boys***

**Such boys are not men**

**Primarily in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, but also exists to some extent across the region**



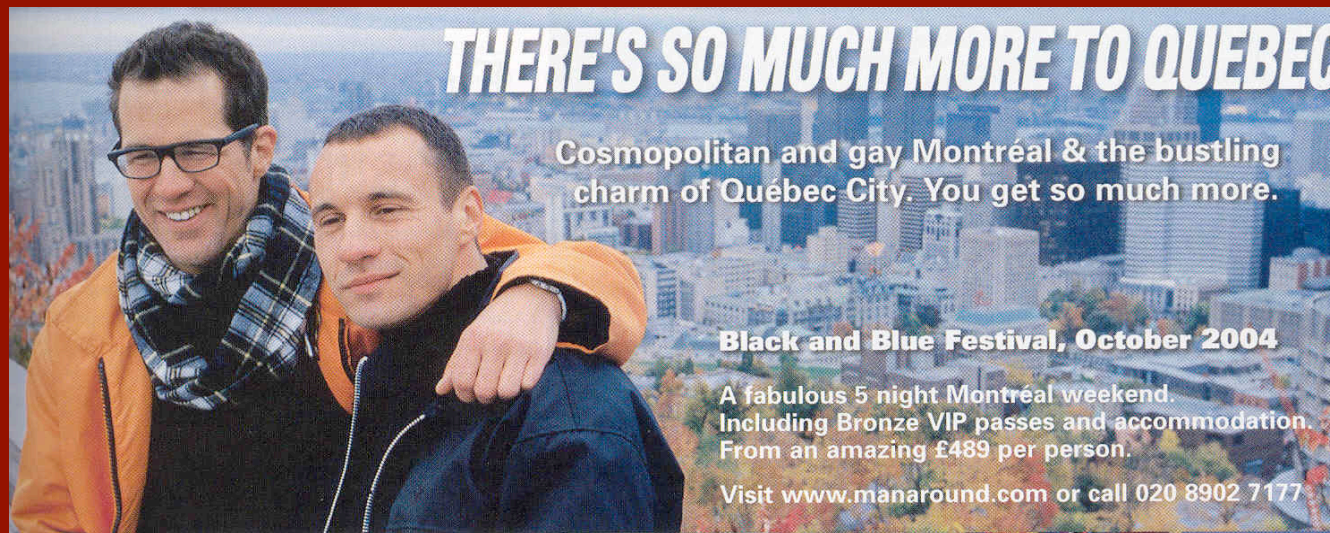
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## Emergent gay framework

Male to male desire framed by sexual orientation.

Egalitarian – the same -

Primarily used by middle and upper classes. Such gay identified men usually seek other gay identified men as sex partners.



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**Identities and/or behaviour**

**Community versus individual**

**Shame versus guilt**

**Toxic masculinity**

**Genderphobia**



**Of course this is all much more complicated than presented.**

## Key issues

- **Sexual diversity and polymorphous sexual behaviours**
- **A primary gendered framework of male-to-male sexual behaviours**
- **Many 'MSM' perceive themselves as a part of a 'real man'/'not-man' binary**
- **Marriage as socially compulsory**
- **Early sexual debut often arising from gendered performativity**
- **Gender segregation and social control of females**
- **Often male-to-male sex perceived within a context of play - not sex**

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**Thank you**