

# A Jihad of the Heart



## Faith, Cultures and Sexualities

*A pilot study on the impact of Islamic beliefs, traditions and customs on Muslim males who have sex with males*

## Study Report

**Naz Foundation International**

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## **Naz Foundation International (NFI)**

Naz Foundation International is an international MSM agency headquartered in the UK, but working in South Asia on policy, advocacy and support on male sexualities and provides technical, institutional and financial support to MSM networks in South Asia to develop their own self-help responses to their sexual health needs.

It has conducted a broad range of situational and needs assessments among MSM in a variety of cities in the countries of South Asia, along with developing a range of implementation and management tools, training programmes, and other resources for MSM networks, groups and organisations, along with assisting in the development of some 28 MSM sexual health community-based projects in the region.

Shivananda Khan is the Chief Executive and founder of Naz Foundation International and has been the key principle researcher and developer of these studies and tools.

For more information on NFI please see their website [www.nfi.net](http://www.nfi.net).

## ***A jihad of the heart***

*An inner struggle of being a person of virtue, and submission to Allah.*

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## Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
Alliance	International HIV/AIDS Alliance
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MSM	Males who have sex with males – also men who have sex with men
NFI	Naz Foundation International
STI	Sexually transmitted infection

## Khilafat or Imamah

After the death of the Prophet the question of the vice regency of the Prophet arose. At this point the Sunnis and Shi'ite differ. After Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny) Sunnis believe in the Khilafat while Shi'ites believe in the Imamah.

### Khilafat

After the death of Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah be on him and his Progeny) Sunnis have a faith that the true Islam was with the Four Caliphs who were the true heir of the Prophet known as Khilafate Rashida. These Caliphs were (in order) Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique, Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Usman and Hazrat Ali. Only these Caliphs had the right to make any changes in Sharia in accordance with the principles of Islam. These Caliphs were of the highest order and considered next in excellence to Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah be on him and his Progeny).

Khilafate Rashida is followed by Khilafate Bani Umayya, Khilafate Abbasiya, Khalfah-e-undulus and Usmani Khilafat.

### Imamah

Shias believe that Nubuwwat ended with Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah be on him and his Progeny). Then Allah deputed Imams to guide. They were *masooms* (sinless) and considered next in excellence to Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah be on him and his Progeny). The Imam has his knowledge from God, and his verdict is in conformity with the *Quran* and *Hadith*. He deals with every religious problem in the light of the *Quran*.

Imams are twelve and they are the only rightful Imams. There is no successor to the Twelfth Imam. He is alive but invisible in accordance with the Will of Allah and will reappear when He commands, which will signify the end of the World and be immediately followed by the day of Judgement.

## Preface

Religion and religious beliefs and practices are complex phenomena arising out of what is perceived as historical truths, sacred texts, and social practice. In contemporary Christianity, ever since Luther's and Calvin's Reformations, personal meanings and interpretations of sacred texts and a prophet's sayings have influenced belief and practice. In that sense the extremely broad church that represents Christianity has become democratised to a significant extent. But in terms of Islam (and to an extent Hinduism), this possibility is foreclosed. Tradition and interpretation of sacred texts can only be through those qualified to do so, the religious scholars and teachers who are given that authority based on their expertise. This is more true to an extent in the religions of South Asia where belief, culture and tradition co-exist, not as separated domains but as an interwoven whole, where religion and belief are co-mingled with cultural and social practices and beliefs.

For example, Bengali Muslims, while having the same faith as Pakistani Muslims, will often have very different customs and traditions that at times are also sanctified within Islam. This is because of different languages, different histories, different geographies, and so on. Further, while sometimes these religions are seen as monolithic, they are not. Islam has several different branches and while all accept the Quran as central, each has its own traditions and customs, based upon interpretation of the *Quran*, *Hadith* and *Sharia*, whether they are Sunni, Shia, or Sufi, and so on. Similarly Hinduism is not constructed around a central person, creed or doctrine, but is a mixture of a broad and eclectic system of beliefs and doctrines. Sikhism arose from an attempt to unify the beliefs of Islam and Hinduism.

What needs to be clearly understood is that religion and the culture in which it is practised are not separate from each other but are interwoven in complex dynamics, and it is often extremely difficult to separate the two, if at all. In other words, religious beliefs and practices are informed and contextualised within specific cultures. There is no such thing as a pure religion. Thus, while religions will specify and demand particular social practices, beliefs and attitudes, very often, cultural traditions and customs will outweigh religious beliefs and statements, while co-existing alongside these beliefs and statements.

This is clearly shown in terms of, for example, Islam and the statements concerning women, particularly the rights of married women, in the *Quran*. Cultural practices however are often very different from these statements. The caste system so deified in current Hinduism does not exist in original Vedic texts, the foundation stone (if that can be said) of Hindu beliefs. What matters is interpretation, but who does the interpretation? Where interpretations of religious texts interpenetrate cultural beliefs and customs, then very often these customs and practices will take on a sanctity that never existed in the original sacred text.

In South Asia it should also be remembered that religion and its practice is very much a public event. Private behaviour is invisible, and as long as it remains that way it can be denied. Further, for the vast majority, one is born into a religion. Changing one's religious beliefs becomes an extremely difficult process within a community-based belief. This is because, in contrast to the way that Christianity is viewed and practiced in the Europe, where it is very much a matter of personal choice and individual response, the religions of the sub-continent very much relate to how communities function as a whole. Religious and secular life centres in the mosque, the temple and the *gurdwara* (a Sikh temple). Public faith in a specific system of beliefs, whether Hindu, Islam or Sikh, is not separated from the day-to-day life of the person, but is an integral part of community life.

Daily observances, the food a person eats, his or her relationships with each other and the family, interactions with the community and community structures, various religious celebrations and festivals, are all interlinked and interdependent.

Religious belief, custom, tradition and culture are all woven into a complex tapestry of every day life. They colour and shape the particular world-view of the person and shape his or her response to the world. Religion to our communities thus becomes an obligation to the community, a duty to the community. Not to accept this duty brings shame and dishonour to the family and to the community.

Here religion provides a sense of community solidarity, and becomes a process of self-affirmation while enhancing community solidarity. It provides a sense of belonging, a context, being part of a community, a process of sharing. By participating within this framework, the person feels less marginalised, less alone, less isolated.

Thus it can be said that participation, more than belief, has a greater relevance. Participation within the religions of the sub-continent is very much a public performance, not necessarily a private function. It relates a lot more to what you are seen to do than what you actually do. Participation involves submission to the daily

rituals, customs and traditions that surround a specific religious belief. It is public acceptance rather than a private knowing.

To step outside this public acknowledgement is also to challenge one's relationship with family and community and threaten to a large extent those relationships. It often will lead to rejection, isolation and in some cases, threats.

In the context of a South Asian person's sexuality, when discovering his or her sexual and emotional desires and feelings, the issues becomes charged with particular risks. By confronting the issue, the person risks losing community support and participation in community rituals. By hiding feelings and desires, the person can "pass" within the community and fulfil his or her community obligations.

But such choices can create a compartmentalised state of being, which carries all the psychological risks that two mutually opposed frameworks of being, of thinking and feeling, can have on a person's mental health. This also will have an impact on sexual practices and risks.

Because of the community nature of religious affiliation, most people will have strong links with their religious traditions and celebrations. Thus these celebrations and particular beliefs play a strong role in their lives.

A key concern arising from socio-cultural frameworks in South Asia is the conflation between the terms "loneliness" and "aleness", where no distinction is made between the two. To be separated from one's family and community is usually experienced as extremely difficult and painful, if not impossible.

There appears to be very little public knowledge about what actually the various religions really have to say about sexuality and sexual behaviour. There is much focus on admonishments, punishments and supposed quotes, but much of what is said has no foundation, is based upon misinterpretations, on a history of tradition given religious sanction over time.

Neither does there appear to be a great deal of knowledge of the history around sexuality and same-sex sexual behaviour in South Asia. Who knows that Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire had young male lovers, or that there are many Hindu temples with erotic same-sex couplings, both male and female? Or that the specific civil law against homosexual behaviour (lesbianism not being recognized at all) was brought into the Indian Penal Code by the British in 1860 (known as Section 377 in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan). Thus there is evidence, well hidden, that indicates that irrespective of the religion, homosexual behaviour was well-known in the South Asia long before the Muslim invasions as well as before the British Raj, while both Mughal and British added to the homosexual history of the region.

Such a lack of knowledge - religious, secular, and political, as well as sensuous - means that much confusion arises. Such confusion leads to denial, to anger and self-hatred, to deep sense of isolation and loneliness, and for some in a final resolution to their pain, suicide. Shame and guilt cover their feelings and desires and will often lead to behaviours that are not particularly healthy. Constant tensions between release and shame create barriers towards building a successful and affirming life.

The person then loses his or her sense of place, of context, of relationship. Personal identity carries dangers for the person. "Who am I?" or "What am I?" are not resolved.

*I enjoy going to the mosque. It is part of my life. When I do namaz, I feel connected, a part of something bigger than myself. When I read about Babur, it was like a great pain was lifted off me. Not that Babur was a hero of mine; it just was that he has a great respect in the community. A great Muslim. It made me feel a part of the community again. Of course I can't come and say that I am kothi, but inside I shout it loud all the time.*

## Some definitions

### Gender

There are some basic biological differences between female and male bodies, linked to their different roles in reproduction. But beyond these differences, many societies define different roles, rights and responsibilities for women and men. “Gender” is the term used to refer to these **socially defined differences** between men and women.

**Gender differences** are based on widely shared beliefs and norms within a society or culture about male and female characteristics and capacities. These beliefs and norms about gender usually create inequality between men and women. In most societies, men have more political, economic, and social power than women. Such gender inequalities have a significant impact on women and men’s sexual health.

### Gendered framework

The word *gender* is a classifying noun and but often when the term gender is used, it is focused on women, where men are absent as a gender in themselves. The author has used the term *gendered* as an adjective to describe a state. In South Asia where there is often fairly strict social policing of gender(ed) boundaries, and where the primary (and visible) framework of male-to-male sexual behaviours is constructed not around sexual orientation, but around gender(ed) identities, the term *gendered framework* is used as a short-hand description of this state of affairs, i.e. males/men who identified as *kothis* do not perceive themselves as males, but as “not-males” or feminised males.

### Hierarchical and oppositional framework

NFI uses this phrase in the specific context of gender(ed) relationships between male and female, or masculinity and femininity, where these genders and their qualities are seen as a hierarchical and in opposition to each other. In other words, maleness is superior to femaleness and in opposition to it.

### Homosocial and homoaffectionalist culture

In South Asian countries, gender segregation of social spaces is a strong form of social policing of gender relationships. Primary relations are between the same gender (homosocial). Homoaffectionalism in the sense that the term is used in this text means social acceptance of the public display of male-to-male or female-to-female affection. For example, it is common in Bangladesh to see two males holding hands or arms wrapped around each other as they walk. Often male friends will also share beds when sleeping, wrapping themselves around each other. (See Hardman: 1993; Also Khan: 1996, where he points out that the boundary between homoaffectionalism and homosexual behaviours is very “thin” particularly in shared spaces and “under the blanket.”)

### Hijra

A self-identified term used by males who define themselves as “not men/not women” but as a “third gender.” *Hijras* cross-dress publicly and privately and are a part of a social, religious, and cultural community. Ritual castration may be part of the *hijra* identity, but not all *hijras* are castrated. Sex with men is common.

### Kothi

A self-identifying label for those males who feminise their behaviours (either to attract “manly” male sexual partners and/or as part of their own gender construction and usually in specific situations and contexts), and who state that they prefer to be sexually penetrated anally and/or orally. *Kothi* behaviours have a highly performative quality in social spaces. Self-identified *kothis* use this term for males who are sexually penetrated, even when their behaviour is not feminised. This is the primary and most visible framework of MSM behaviours. *Kothis* state that they do not have sex with other *kothis*; however, they may also be married to women.

In Pakistan, the equivalent term is *zenana*, while in Nepal it is *meti*. In Calcutta, India, the term *parik* is sometimes used. Other terms probably exist in other areas.

## **Masculinity**

Masculinity is interpreted as the predominant and “hegemonic” framework, which defines how a man should behave and act personally, sexually, socially, and culturally. However, it is also recognised that there are different constructions of masculinity that vary across cultures, age groups, sexual orientations, sexual preferences, actual behaviours, gender identifications, economic classes, and religions, and thus we should speak of masculinities.

## **MSM**

This is usually an acronym for Men Who Have Sex with Men. However, the term *men* can be problematic within the context of different cultural definitions of Man, Manliness, and Manhood. In the context of this study we will be using *MSM* to mean Males Who Have Sex with Males. In this context, the word Male specifically refers to biological sex.

It should also be recognised that ‘MSM’ is a behavioural term and does not reflect a sexual identity. Within the use of the term ‘MSM’ and male-male sexual behaviours, there are many frameworks of ‘MSM’, from self-identified males with gender or sexual orientation, to those who anally penetrated other males as a masculine behaviour, to those who are situationally involved in male-to-male sex.

Within the framework of male-to-male sex, there are a range of masculinities, along with diverse sexual and gender identities, communities, networks, and collectivities, as well as just behaviours without any sense of affiliation to an identity or community. This statement addresses the concerns of all these diversities within the framework of *males who have sex with males*.

## **Panthis**

A *kothi* label for any “manly male.” Male-to-male sexual behaviours are usually highly gendered in terms of sexual roles. Most male-to-male sex in South Asia appears to follow this pattern, where a *kothi* is not defined as a man, thus enabling the penetrating partner to still see himself as manly. A *panthi* is by definition a man who penetrates, whether it is a woman and/or another male. *Panthis* may also be married to women. Their occupations vary across the social class spectrum from rickshaw drivers to businessmen.

## **Parik**

A *kothi* label for the “husband” of a *kothi*. The *parik* may also be married to a woman and have sex with other women as well as males. Note the use of the term *parik* in Calcutta to mean any “real man”.

## **Sex**

The word sex is used both in its biological sense, that is the “sex of a person”, i.e. male or female, as well as a term reflecting an action, i.e. “to do sex” or “to have sex”. However we can also talk about a cultural definition based on the meanings and significances that sex has which are socially constructed.

## **Sexual health**

The WHO definition of sexual health is considered to be meaningful in this study, that is:  
*The integration of physical, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects of sexuality in a way that positively enriches and promotes personality, communication, and love. (1975)*

## **Sexuality**

“Sexuality” refers to all aspects of people’s sexual lives: their sexual **desires**, their sexual **behaviours** and their sexual **identities**. It is important to focus on sexuality in HIV prevention work because it is important to understand people’s risk behaviours in the context of their sexual desires and sexual identities.

However, contemporary researchers have been discussing the concept of a range of sexualities, expressing the enormous diversity of cultural interpretations, meanings and significance placed upon sexuality.

### **Social constructionism**

The theory, which underlies this study, is based on the principle of social constructionism, which holds that masculinities, sexualities, and sexual behaviours (if not sexual desires themselves) are socially constructed through social and sexual scripting processes.

### **Vulnerability**

The idea of **vulnerability** is useful in helping us to understand why some people in some places (at some times) are more likely to get infected with HIV than others. We can identify **factors of vulnerability** that influence:

- People's **exposure** to the risk of HIV infection;
- The **choices** that are available to people to deal with that risk;
- The **abilities** that people have to make safe choices; and
- People's **desire** to use their abilities to make these choices.



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

While male-to-male sex is a significant phenomenon in South Asia, one of the primary constructs of these sexual practices and behaviours is based on gender/sex roles and identities arising from constructions of masculinity and femininity.

To be a feminised male, such as self-identified *kothis* and *hijras*, leaves one extremely vulnerable to a regularly experience of stigmatisation and social exclusion, along with significant levels of violence and sexual abuse. But what appears to be the key driving force of such personal and social abuse arises, not from their involvement in male-to-male sex, but that of the gender/sex roles that they perform. In other words it is the performance of male femininity that is seen and experienced as problematic. The masculine male who penetrates is often defined as “boys will be boys”, as *masti* (mischief), as addressing the sexual needs of such males. As a “real man”, he merges easily and invisibly into the general male population.

Such experiences for the feminised MSM create conditions of high risk in the context of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, where disempowerment, vulnerability, and isolation often frame sexual encounters and partnerships. Vulnerable because of their sexual practice, but also vulnerable because of the construction of penetrative masculinity and sexuality, and social and cultural values that demean the feminine, and perceive them as sexual objects in cultures that strongly socially police its females.

For many, religious belief can often provide a source of comfort and solace, as well as a position in a community and society. But what occurs when desire, sexual practice and gender variance are believed to be at odds with religious belief? How does a person who finds himself in conflict between his religious belief and practice and how he defines himself as a sexual being, along with his experiences in living out his sexual and gender desires, bridge this apparent dichotomy? Where does he find solace and comfort? What choices does he make? How does such inner conflict add to his vulnerability and risk?

With what may well be a lack of knowledge, misinterpretations, and incorrect information regarding what specific religions have to say about alternate sexualities and genders, many males who have sex with males, particularly those with feminised identities, find themselves in a situation of double jeopardy; one the one hand the sexual and gender choices is highly stigmatised by society, and on the other their religious belief also stigmatises their choices.

## Purpose of the study

Both the Naz Foundation International and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance work in South Asia among males who have sex with males, and are both involved in exploring ways that can reduce vulnerability and risk. Too often, programmatic approaches have tended to focus on the actual behaviours of individuals, and very little attention is placed on the psychosocial and religious framework in which male-to-male sex occurs.

It is the belief of both partners in this study, that, unless we can effectively address the psychosocial needs as a key element in building an enabling environment in which risk reduction strategies for the prevention of HIV/AIDS can be sustained, males who have sex with males, particularly those who have feminised identities, will continue to be highly vulnerable to the epidemic.

It was for this reason that a study was conducted among males who have sex with males who were also practising Muslims was conducted as a pilot study in a number of cities in South Asia. While Islam is the majority religion in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and Hinduism in India, Islam was selected as the first, of what is hoped to be a series of such studies reflecting other religions, because of its regional practice.

The key question was “How do religious and cultural beliefs impact on males who have sex with males in South Asia?” Other questions to explore were:

- What does religion say about male-to-male sex?
- What impact does one’s religious teachings have on one’s sexual/gender behaviours and identities?
- What are the psychosocial implications of these teachings and beliefs?
- How does one incorporate religious identities into one’s sexual/gender identities?
- How is any conflict between knowledge, belief and practice managed and what are the consequent experiences?
- What knowledge does one have of one’s own religious teachings?

Because of the nature of the subject matter of the study, along with the fact that study participants would be drawn from the membership of local self-help HIV/AIDS prevention projects working with males who have sex with males, it was decided not to explore the level of knowledge around sexual health issues. Based on the experience of NFI working with these partner agencies, it was believed that a safe assumption would be the significant level of existing knowledge. It was also felt that to have additional issues raised in interviews and FGDs would lengthen the time for these processes beyond a significant comfort level.

## Study methodology

With Islam being the first religion selected for a pilot study, a literature review was conducted on religious texts and other writings, exploring what was said and believed about masculinity, sexuality, gender, and same-sex behaviours, along with religious duty, social obligations, and family expectations.

It was decided that the study would be conducted through focus group discussions (FGD), semi-structured one-on-one interviews, and questionnaire exploring a range of issues that included:

- Self-identity
- Behaviour
- Socio-economic status
- Knowledge and practice of Islam
- Islam, masculinity, and sexuality
- Islam and the sexual self
- Religious, family, and cultural expectations
- Impact of knowledge

These questions formed themes as a framework to explore these issues, as well as thematic division for analysis.

The study was conducted in three cities in India that had significant Muslim communities - Hyderabad, Lucknow, New Delhi - and in Dhaka in Bangladesh. Cohorts would be of a limited size, up to ten participants in a focus group discussion, 5 interviews, and a questionnaire administered amongst them. This would have given a total of 75 respondents.

In the original work plan, Lahore, Pakistan was to be another study site. However, this was not possible within the allotted timeframe. This was because of difficulties and the length of time in trying to obtain a Pakistan visa for the Indian principle investigator, where it was taking an inordinate amount of time, and difficulties in accessing the Director of the partner agency in Lahore so that he could perhaps conduct the Lahore component of the study during this time.

**Table 1: Number of study participants**

City	FGD participants	Interviews
Hyderabad	10	5
Lucknow	7	5
New Delhi	13	5
Dhaka	11	5

The numbers participating in the FGDs for New Delhi and Dhaka were 13 and 11 respectively, which was above the recommended number. This was because other participants brought along friends, and it was felt at that time that it would not be appropriate to ask them to leave. All participants were to be 18 years old or above.

## Participant selection

The study was conducted in partnership with local community-based sexual projects working with males who have sex with males, who recruited participants on behalf of the study through their own membership. In this sense the study was biased since it was not a random selected. Participants were primarily *kothi*-identified, but in Dhaka, two *kothis* brought along their *panthi* partners. In the cities of Dhaka, Delhi, and Hyderabad, translation was provided by the local partner agency for the FGDs, the interviews, and the questionnaire.

## Study instruments

Guides were developed for the FGD and interviews, along with a quantitative questionnaire, and field-tested in the first study site of Lucknow, India. Following the study, a discussion was held with study participants, the principal investigator and Shivananda Khan, Project Monitor whether there should be any amendments to the Guides and questionnaire. It was decided that these instruments fulfilled their function adequately and that there was no need for any amendments. These instruments (see Annex documents) were then used for the remaining sites.

An informed consent form was developed for the study based on previous consent forms developed by Naz Foundation International in regard to other studies on sexualities and sexual health it has conducted.

## Data analysis

While data analysis of the questionnaire was done using MS Excel, the data drawn from the interviews and the FGD was done manually, following thematic divisions identified in the guides.

Statements made were analysed for content, meaning, and significance, according to specific theme and sub theme. These commonalities and differences were then recorded on a spreadsheet, which allowed comparisons within the groups as well as between groups. With these comparisons, the analysis was further refined to commonalities across groups and differences between groups. With regard to the interviews, individual differences could also be noted.

## Socio-economic status

Age:	18-20	8
	21-30	7
	31-40	16
	above 40	0

Education: 52 had attended school, 9 had not

Education level:	no education	9
	1 – 4 years	8
	5 – 8 years	16
	9 – 10 years	10
	above 10 years	18

Thus 23 participants finished primary education, 16 completed secondary, 2 completed higher education, and 11 completed college.

Type of School:	23 participants went to government school, 28 to private school, and 7 to a madrassa (which provides religious studies).
Living accommodation:	7 participants lived alone, 51 with their families, and 2 with relatives.
Employment:	49 (49/61) participants (80%) were employed in a range of primarily low income work, while 14 respondents (23%) reported doing sex work.
Income:	19 participants (33% - 19/57) reported incomes below 2000 Rps (or Taka in the case of Dhaka; equivalent to below US\$45 in India and US\$30 in Dhaka) per month, while 37 participants (65% - 31/57) stated they earned between 2000 – 5000 Indian rupees (or 2000 – 5000 Taka) per month. Only 1 person stated that they earned more than 5000 Indian rupees per month.
Marriage:	Out of the 61 participants, 46 stated they were not, and had not been married. 15 participants were married. It should be noted here that marital status does not reflect choice, but rather the age of the respondent.

## Sexual activities

- 48 participants out of 61 defined themselves as *kothis*, 3 as *panthis*, and 10 as *double-deckers*.
- 60 out of 61 participants stated that they were sexual active with other males, irrespective of marital status.
- While 4 participants stated that had sex with another male every day, 39 stated that they had male-to-male sex more than once a week, and 13 stated more than once a month. Only four stated that had male-to-male less than once a month.
- When asked to estimate the number of sex encounters with males, the total number in a week as a combined figure of all the participants was 191, while that for a month was 863. This is a significant rate of sexual activity.
- In terms of what was the normal sexual practice, 54 participants reported being anally penetrated, 18 penetrating, 28 giving oral sex, and 14 receiving oral sex. This reflects the self-identifying labels.
- Regarding sexual debut, 34 participants (56% - 34/61) reported their sexual initiation by the age of 14 years, of which 3 stated that they began having sex before the age of 10 years. 20 participants began having sex between the ages of 15 years to 18 years, while 7 began having sex after the age of 19 years. This also reflects the self-identifying labels, where *kothis* tend to be initiated into sex at a much earlier age than others.
- When asked to identify their first sexual partners, 10 participants reported their brothers, 19 reported neighbours, 18 their friends, and 13 others (not identified).
- In terms of the first sexual practice, 28 respondents (46% - 28/61) reported being anally penetrated, 6 penetrated, 16 reported thigh sex, 8 masturbation, and 10 oral sex.
- However, while 34 reported good feelings about their sexual debut, 16 stated that they felt bad, and a further 11 stated that it was not so bad.

## Key findings

### Knowledge of Islam

In this theme, the study was to determine the level of belief in Islam and its teachings, along with the level of knowledge that study participants had, and what their source of this knowledge was.

- 97% (59/61) of participants reported that Islam was very important in their lives.
- 57% (35/61) reported doing *namaz* (prayer) at least once a week, while 6.5% (4/61) stated they did *namaz* 5 times a day.
- 59% (36/61) went to the mosque every Friday for *namaz*, and 11.5% (14/61) went to the mosque every day.
- While most participants reported their knowledge of Islam and its teachings were good, only 62% had read the *Quran*, with 8% reading in their own language. Mostly it was read in Arabic.
- 78% (45/61) of respondents stated that their mothers were their primary source of knowledge of Islam, 64% (39/61) reported their fathers, and 33% (20/61) reported religious teachers.
- There was also significant confusion regarding knowledge of the differences between Sunni and Shia beliefs, where several Sunni Muslims stated that Shias are not proper Muslims.

### Islam, masculinity, and sexuality

This theme explored constructions of masculinity and sexuality within the context of Islam. What was clear was that Islamic beliefs and socio-cultural frameworks are intertwined and not possible to separate out contextually.

- All participants expressed normative gender and gender differences between men and women that were defined by differences in clothing, mannerisms, biology, use of words, sex roles, and gender performance. These gender differences were seen as biologically and religiously ordained, and the “will of Allah”.
- Masculinity and malehood were defined in terms of being a “real man” as understood within the normative constructions of masculinity in South Asia, with masculine traits of leadership, breadwinner, marriage, reproduction, large penis, facial and body hair, wearing manly clothes, and a leader. Islam speaks of clear gender distinctions between men and women, and the specific gender roles they have. Men are seen as superior to women.
- Similarly, femininity was defined in terms of beauty, physical form (breasts and vagina), being married, wearing woman’s clothes, obedient, silent, housework, and being a follower, and being confined to the domestic space. Significant males in her life define a woman’s selfhood: father, husband, and/or brother.
- Sexuality was defined in terms of penetration. A man penetrates which makes him a man, irrespective of the biological sex of the person he penetrates. A man who is penetrated is not a man, but female-like. Islam reinforces this belief, where various texts speak of “men without vigour” who are less than men.
- *Kothi*-identified participants (79% - 48/61) primarily saw themselves as less than a man, but more than a woman, while expressing their sexuality in terms of being penetrated, and therefore “woman-like”.

- In Islamic terms, participants believed male-to-male sex was sinful behaviour and to be ashamed of, although there were differences in beliefs as to which was more sinful, that of being penetrated, or of penetrating.
- Both the penis and the anus were seen as unclean and shameful parts of the body, and should always be covered.
- The mouth was seen as a good thing, while oral sex was defined as the most sinful and dirty because one uses the mouth to pray and read out the *Quran*. *Kothi*-identified participants particularly felt ashamed to give oral sex because of this, and would prefer being receptive to anal sex rather than oral sex, as this would be a less sinful act.
- For many participants, diseases arising from sex (particularly male-to-male sex) were seen as a punishment from Allah. For most *kothi*-identified participants, becoming infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases was a deserved punishment, since their behaviour was going against Allah's will. Thus to use condoms to practice safer sex was incorrect since this would interfere with their punishment.

### Islam and the sexual self

This theme explored participants' sense of sexual self in the context of their beliefs as Muslims.

- 77% (48/61) of the study participants defined themselves as *kothis*, 16% (10/61) as double-deckers, that is they penetrate and are penetrated, and 3 participants defined themselves as *panthis* (that is they only penetrate).
- Significant levels of sexual activity were reported, where 64% (39/61) said that they had sex with another male more than once a week, usually with different partners. *Kothi*-identified participants had a higher degree of sexual activity in comparison with those self-defined as *double-deckers*, while those self-defined as *panthis* had the least.
- 56% reported a sexual debut by the age of 14, with 3 participants reporting a debut before they were 10 years old, and where the primarily the debut sexual activity was being penetrated (46% - 28/61). Brothers, as first sex partners, were significantly high at 16% (10/61). *Kothi*-identified participants reported the earliest sex debuts, while *panthi*-identified participants reported the latest.
- For most *kothi*-identified participants, early realisation of their sexual desires for other men, and their *kothi*-identity, was the norm.
- Current sexual practices to a large extent reflected identifying labels, where 88% reported normally being anally penetrated.
- Participants all agreed that their sexual behaviours were against Islam, and that they were sinful, but *kothi*-identified participants believed that they were particularly sinful since they behaved like women and were regularly anally penetrated.
- All participants felt various degrees of shamefulness, with *kothi*-identified participants expressing the highest degree. All were concerned about what would happen to them after their deaths, and whether Allah would forgive them. For many *kothis*, the intensity of shame, guilt and fear was particularly intense.
- All *kothi*-identified participants reported varying degrees of abuse, condemnation, stigma and violence. Those who "acted manly" did not report any such abuse.
- Being a Muslim was deemed to be more important for the majority of the *kothi*-identified participants than they gender/sexual choices. For many participants, expressing a Muslim

identity was also a political statement, particularly those from India, where Islam is a minority religion. Expressing yourself as a Muslim allowed you to be a part of a larger community and gain respect.

- While 43% (26/61) of respondents had asked others regarding Islam and male-to-males, 73% (19/26) of these participants reported that they were not happy with the response.

### Religious, family, and cultural expectations

This theme explored participants' understanding of religious, family and, socio-cultural expectations of them as males/men.

- There was a strong sense of gender-based family, social and religious obligations, and duties that reflected a traditional and conservative framework.
- Children must obey their parents, where sons must act like a man, get married, take care of his parents, give his children a good education, and financially support his family.
- He must be a good Muslim, give his children a good Islamic education teaching them how to behave as good Muslims, and help them get married.
- A man must be a good son, and avoid “bad people” along with “bad habits”.
- A good husband will take care of his wife's needs, physical, emotional and sexual, be faithful to his wife and treat her with respect. He is also the leader in the household. Similarly a good wife should listen to her husband and obey his wishes, take care of the children and the home, cook and clean, and be a good Muslim.
- Marriage was seen as socially and religiously compulsory. All married participants in this study stated that they had a good relationship with their wives, and fulfilled them sexually.
- Respondents believed that being married enhances their social status and demonstrates their adulthood and manhood.
- *Kothi*-identified participants explained the violence often targeted at them was because they were perceived as not men and that their behaviour was against Islam. Where sexual violence was involved, *kothis* believed that this was because of they were being treated by young men as they would treat women on the streets, where sexual harassment was common.

### Impact of knowledge

This theme explored participants' responses to be a practicing Muslim and how they coped with being a Muslim and any conflict that this may have in terms of their sexual practices and self-identification.

- Being a Muslim was deemed as more important than identifying as a *kothi*. There was great pride expressed as a Muslim, despite all the problems participants faced in regard to the sexual practices, behaviours and identities. A practising Muslim, fulfilling his religious obligations, has a place in society and is recognised as a part of the community.
- In contrast, have same-sex desires, displaying *kothi* characteristics, and being sexually penetrated was seen in opposition to Muslim identity. This led to expressions of guilt, deep shame, experience of depression, and fear of what would happen after their deaths when they would be judged by Allah as a good Muslim or a bad Muslim.
- Such anxiety, fear and depression were exacerbated by fears of growing old and being alone, and the social compulsions of marriage. This is particularly true for *kothi*-identified participants who find their masculine partners getting married and leaving them,

- 42% (26/61) participants had thought of suicide, while 15% (9/61) had attempted suicide. 39% (24/61) had deliberately hurt themselves through cigarettes, razor blades, or other instruments.
- For many *kothi*- and double-decker identified participants, since they deemed themselves as “bad” Muslim and sinful, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections were seen as a punishment from Allah for their behaviour. Further because of their behaviour, such infections were deserved.
- Further, the experience of pain, loneliness and fear that so many stated they experienced was also deserved and could not be avoided, as they were being punished by Allah.
- What study participants wanted was more accurate knowledge of Islam and positive examples of expressing same-sex desires while still being a Muslim.

## Final comments

For Muslim *kothi*-identified MSM, the daily conflict between sexual practice, desire and gender choice and their Muslim beliefs leads to an emotional life that swings between pleasure and depression as a constant experience. Each day they are confronted with their own desires and the practice of being a Muslim, a situation that to them leaves no resolution, but a struggle to maintain some sense of balance in their lives.

The need for affirmation was strongly felt, but each day, many participants felt disempowered, denied, and socially excluded, from family, from friends, from society, from the mosque. They believed they could never be true to themselves. Faced with an either or choice, many *kothis* expressed their pain upon themselves as a form of self-damage.

With high-risk behaviours and multiple partners, and living lives that are highly vulnerable to abuse, violence and human rights violations, *kothis* experience HIV and sexually transmitted infections as a deserved punishment for who they are. With lives that fundamentally disempowering, with a psychological framework that tells them that they are “bad Muslims”, and a belief that they deserve to be punished, what is the point of practising safer sex? And in the nature of the sexual environment in which *kothis* live, where transmission risks are not confined to a small group of self-identified *kothis*, but reach out to their sexual partners who are often from the general male population, along with wives and other female partners, it is not difficult to imagine the consequences of such inner turmoil and despair.

## Recommendations

It is highly risky to make appropriate recommendations to resolve the conflicts that Muslim *kothi*-identified males in particular, find themselves involved with, along with other Muslim MSM.

With the current turmoil across the world that is often perceived as a conflict between a Christian and Hindu world against the Muslim world, where Muslims are involved in a range of conflicts that often reflect a conservative and traditional ideology with strict interpretations of the *Quran*, *Sharia* and *Hadith*, one hesitates.

However, there is a clearly identified need that the study makes visible. It is clear that it is not enough just to promote risk reduction strategies amongst Muslim MSM. There needs to be considerable work around developing self-worth, empowerment, and love of oneself that would enable *kothis* to be a practising Muslim and *kothi*-identified.

The following recommendations have been made to address some of these issues:

- To increase knowledge of the Islamic texts and to provide access to the range of interpretations of these texts, particularly in reference to differing masculinities and sexualities. This would require ensuring that a range of documents are produced that contain such material in local languages.
- To ensure that appropriate counsellors are available for MSM sexual health programmes who work with Muslims that are skilled in psycho-social-religious issues and have a good knowledge of Islamic teachings and the range of interpretations of Islamic texts.
- To ensure that “hotlines” are available which can provide telephone counselling not only on issues of HIV/AIDS and sexual health, but also on a range of psycho-social and religious concerns which can also provide emotional support in times of emotional crisis.
- To ensure that advocacy programmes are adequately and appropriately conducted where Muslims who are MSM abide, which can address the violence, abuse and harassment that so many face, particularly among those who are *kothi*-identified



## Introduction

In South Asia, Naz Foundation International has done considerable work supporting males who have sex with males' networks in a number of localities to address their own sexual health needs through the provision of technical, institutional and financial support.

The approach has been community building and mobilising where the sense of community affiliation is based on common understandings and sexual practices, along with shared gendered performances and beliefs within subaltern masculinities.

A key concern has been how religious beliefs, values and practices, impact on the constructions of sexualities and masculinities and the resultant frameworks of male-to-male sex. Further to this would be the impact these have on sexual practices, psychological concerns, STI/HIV/AIDS and risks of infection, as well as issues around care and support for such marginalised and socially excluded populations.

While Bangladesh and Pakistan are predominantly Muslim countries with a small minority of Hindus (approximately 3- 5%), India is primarily Hindu with a larger Muslim population (11%). Naz Foundation International, based on a broad range of social assessments of MSM in South Asia, believes that much of male-to-male sex is constructed around gender/sex roles and class, rather than around sexual orientation and identity. This is not to deny that there are gay-identified men (or even homosexually-identified) in the region, but all the evidence appears to indicate that such sexual orientation/identity formation is class-based, that is, amongst the educated middle and upper classes, primarily urban based.

For the majority of those involved in male-to-male sex, gender/sex roles predominate. The penetrator primarily sees himself as a masculine man and is perceived as such by those males he penetrates. The penetrated however, constructs himself as a 'not-man', a feminised male, and is perceived as such by those who penetrate him. This does not deny that other frameworks of male-to-male sex exist in the region that is diverse and loosely bounded.

Further, religious and cultural values promote a socially compulsory marital system, which means that the vast majority of males who have sex with males, both penetrated and penetrator will eventually become married. Evidence exists that marriage does not stop male-to-male sex, which thus indicates potential risks of a transmission route of male-to-male-to female.

In terms of HIV and sexual health NFI believes that it is these "gendered males" that are most vulnerable. Vulnerable because of their sexual practice, but also vulnerable because of constructions of penetrative masculinity and social and cultural values that demean the feminine (both women and feminised males), and perceive them as sexual objects in cultures that strongly socially polices its females.

## Concept

The key question then is "How do religious/cultural beliefs impact on males who have sex with males?"

In the context of gender/sex roles, where the penetrating man believes he is acting as a man, while the penetrated male often believes he is a "female in a man's body, what does religion have to say, and how do such individuals integrate their religious beliefs and values into their gendered identities and sexual practices?"

With a lack of knowledge, misinterpretations, and incorrect information regarding what specific religions have to say about alternate sexualities, many males who have sex with males, particularly those with gendered/sexual identities, find themselves confused, burdened, with often a strong sense of guilt and a sense of worthlessness. Such inner experience deepens their sense of powerlessness and can often lead to an increase in risky behaviours, if not self-damage and suicidal behaviours.

What does religion say about male-to-male sex? What impact does one's religious values and beliefs have on one's sexual behaviours and identities? In particular, how do various MSM populations incorporate religious identities into their gender/sexual identities, how do they deal with any conflicts between belief and practice and what are the consequent experiences?

As such, very little appears to be known in this specific context.

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance also does considerable work in South and South-East Asia promoting risk reduction strategies among a number of differing at-risk populations. It was agreed that a pilot qualitative study would be conducted exploring the impact of faith upon masculinities and sexualities, and that this study would initially focus on Islam.

## Methodology

A literature review was conducted on Islamic texts and other writings on the issue of Islam and its views on homosexuality towards developing a better understanding and contextualisation of these texts and writing. A report was subsequently produced in October 2005.

The second part of this project was to conduct a qualitative study on the impact of religious belief and knowledge on individual Muslim males who have sex with males to gain an insight in how the apparently diametrically opposed value systems of religious belief and socially disavowed sexual practices are expressed within individual Muslim males who have sex with males. Thus the following key questions were explored:

- How do Islamic religious and cultural beliefs and values impact on the Muslim way of life for males who have sex with males/gender variance?
- How is this impact expressed psychologically and physically?
- How do Muslim MSM cope with the impact of their Islamic religious beliefs?

Potential sites for this study were Lucknow, Hyderabad, and New Delhi, in India, and Dhaka in Bangladesh. In the original project plan, a further site was to be Lahore in Pakistan. However, due to range of political and logistical problems, it was not possible to obtain visa clearance for the principle investigator to visit Lahore within the time frame of the study.

Linking with partner agencies of NFI at each site, a focus group discussion with 10 Muslim identified men, and 5 semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted. This gave a total study cohort of 60 individuals, 4 focus group discussions and 20 interviews. A quantitative questionnaire was also administered to each person involved in the study.

Focus group discussions and interviews were conducted in local languages, and where necessary, the partner project provided a translator. They also recruited the study participants through their own project networks through a snowballing process. Each focus group discussion lasted approximately 2 - 3 hours, with a similar amount of time for each interview.

The methods used to elicit information during focus group discussions were free-listing and ranking, along with group discussion. Free listing has a number of advantages in such discussions that include:

- Respondents can stimulate one another's thinking through the free exchange of ideas.
- Often visual representation can clarify more clearly what is being said.
- Easier to refer to specific statements being made over a period of time
- Cross-checking and verification is much easier
- Useful tool for reference

Guides were developed for focus group discussions (*Annex 3*) and interviews (*Annex 4*), along with the quantitative questionnaire (*Annex 5*), along with an informed consent form (*see Annex 1 and 2*). All study participants were to be eighteen years old and above.

## Study partners

Lucknow	Bharosa
New Delhi	Dart
Hyderabad	Mithrudu
Dhaka	Bandhu Social Welfare Society

Originally, Lahore in Pakistan was to be an additional study site, but due to technical difficulties for the principal investigator, who was Indian, along with trying to access the Project Manager of the partner project so that he could conduct the Lahore study, made it impossible to do this within the timeframe of the study.

## Thematic data analysis

*Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The coding requires an explicit “code.” This may be a list of themes; a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something in between these two forms. A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum describes and interprets aspects of the phenomenon...A theme may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon). The themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research. The combination or integration of a number of codes in a study is often called a codebook...(Boyatzis, 1998, pp. 4-5.)*

Briefly, the study explored how much the study participant knew and understood the teachings and texts of Islam in relationship to male-to-male sex, gender roles, and religious expectations, along with socio-cultural expectations. This was thus the framework through which knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of Muslim MSM were explored. Based on this framework, the study contextually analysed the psycho-social-religious context of MSM, specifically those who identified as *kothis* and as Muslims.

Thematic divisions of the FGD and interview guidelines were followed as the common framework of analysis. Issues under each theme were considered as sub-themes for analysis. This approach facilitated the analysis of each group within a compatible framework.

Statements made were analysed for content, meaning, and significance, according to specific theme and sub theme. These commonalities and differences were then recorded on a spreadsheet, which allowed comparisons within the groups as well as between groups. With these comparisons, the analysis was further refined to commonalities across groups and differences between groups. With regard to the interviews, individual differences could also be noted.

*See Annex 6 for example of this.*

## Consent forms

Since all participants were 18 years or older, the study developed an informed consent form appropriate to the nature of the study and the age of respondents. This was essential since the study would explore personal sexual experiences and behaviours. Confidentiality was absolutely assured and no personal references were noted at all.

*See Annex 1 and 2 for consent forms*

## Key themes and questions

This study did not seek expert opinion from religious teachers, but rather what the average male person who considers himself a Muslim and who is also involved in male-to-male sex, thinks, especially those with gendered identities, such as *kothis*.

In particular this study sought to explore what Muslim beliefs, customs and practices are accepted and are called Islamic, and how this affected the person's life and how he dealt with any contradictions that may occur between belief and practice, particularly in the context of gender, sexuality and sexual practices. Further to this, we sought to understand the psychological, sexual and social impact of such knowledge on males who have sex with males, and who are also Muslim-identified.

The information we were seeking was:

- Differences between religion and culture (if any).
- Knowledge of Islam.
- Islamic and Muslim beliefs about gender, sexuality and sexual behaviour.
- Sources of this knowledge.
- How this knowledge affects you psychologically, socially and sexually.
- Coping skills with the difference between what Islam says and your actual behaviour and gender identity (if any).
- What would be needed to alleviate any distress that may be experienced (if any).
- Sexual practices, cleanliness and health.

Questions that we would like to be answered were:

- What do you believe are the concepts about men and women in Islam?
- What do you think Islam say about sex in general and male-to-male sex in particular?
- From what sources was this knowledge gained?
- Is there a difference between religion and culture?
- As an MSM how does this knowledge affect your sense of self and self-esteem?
- How does this knowledge shape your thinking/feeling/behaviour in regard to your actual sexual behaviours and practices?
- What coping skills have you developed to manage any psychological and social distress caused by your gender identity and sexual practices?
- What do you believe are the psychological, emotional and social needs for Muslim identified males who also sex with other males?
- What does body cleanliness mean to you in relation to sexual practice?

With these questions in mind, the following themes were developed:

### 1. Knowledge of Islam

- Do you define yourself as Sunni, Shi'ite, or Sufi Muslim (or any other)?
- What do you know about Islam?
- Where did you get your knowledge of Islam?
- What is your knowledge of the *Quran*, *Hadith* and *Sharia*?
- Did you or do you read the *Quran* yourself? In Arabic? In another language?
- Did you try to find any non – Muslim writer's translation of *Quran*?
- Have you gone through the *Sharia*? The *Hadith*?

### 2. Islam, masculinity and sexuality

- What do you think Islam has to say about:
  - Being a man/Being a woman
  - Being a *kothi*/Being a *panthi*
- How do you perceive yourself as a man?
- What is the difference between being penetrated and penetrating according to what you know Islam says?
- What do you about Islam and sex between men? Between a *kothi* and a man?
- What are considered shameful body parts in Islam.
- What do you consider unclean sexually?
- What does Islam say about sexual practices and cleanliness?
- Where did you get this knowledge?
- Where did you get this knowledge?

### 3. Islam and the sexual self

- How did you feel about your first sexual experiences?
- At what age did first realised that you desired to have sex with a man?
- At what age did you realise you were a *kothi*?

- How do you feel about being a Muslim and having sex with a man?
- As a *kothi*?
- Who knows about your identity? About your sexual behaviour?
- How do they respond to you?
- What does love mean to you?
- Which is more important to you: being a Muslim or being a *kothi*?

#### 4. Religious, family and cultural expectations

- What do believe Islam expects of you as a man? As a *kothi*?
- What do you think about marriage? Do you want to get married? Why?
- According to Islam what are the roles of:
  - a. Father
  - b. Mother
  - c. Son
- Where did you get this understanding?
- How should a husband behave towards his wife, according to Islam?
- How should a wife behave towards her husband?
- What is the importance of marriage in Islam?
- What makes a good man? A good husband?
- Why do you think there is so much violence against *kothis*?
- What is your relationship with your father? Mother? Brothers? Sisters?
- If married, what is your relationship with your wife? Children?
- How does your marriage affect your standing in the society?

#### 5. Impact of Knowledge

- How important is Islam in your life? Why?
- How does Islam affect the lives of Muslims?
- How much do you follow Islam in your life? What do you do?
- Who is a good Muslim? Who is a bad Muslim? Why?
- What does a Muslim identity mean to you?
- As Muslim, how do you feel about yourself?
- Do you feel ashamed or guilty about being who you are?
- Has these feelings affected your sexual behaviour?
- Have you ever felt suicidal because of your religious beliefs?
- What do you pray to Allah for?
- Do you look for positive examples in Islam/*Quran* that support your identity/sexuality?
- What information do you need? Who can you get this from?
- What information would you like to have on alternate sexualities in concern with Islam?
- How can positive information about alternate sexualities affect other Muslim's lives?



## Construction of male same-sex behaviours in South Asia

Sexual identities, masculinities and sexualities take shape within psychosocial and historical processes, which in turn are contextualised by religion, culture and language. Different cultures will often contextualise similar words and phenomena so as to take on different meanings with inherent subtleties typical of that culture. This is true of the South Asia region. While consisting of several countries, the region has a shared history and certain cultural and religious values that enable us to determine some common denominators within the phenomena of male-to-male sex.

In this context, and from the evidence, Euro-American understandings and discourses on "gay identities", heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or even the use of the term "sexual minorities" are misleading, and actual invisibilises to a significant extent the range and level of male-to-male sexual activities and those involved in them.

South Asian cultures are supremely patriarchal, gendered and hierarchal, so that the word MAN is defined not so much by biological age, but by gender roles and performance, religious rituals and family duties and obligations. Those who fall outside such normative masculinity would not be defined as MAN, but as NOT-MAN. In this situation, the penetrated sexual partner is seen as NOT-MAN, while the penetrator perceives himself, and is perceived by others, as MAN.

This perception is further reinforced by socio-cultural realities as the invisibilisation of sexual behaviours, gender segregation, social policing of women, an acceptability of male homosociability and homoaffectionalism, male dominance over public space and public discourse, a culture of shame where family and community respect and honour holds sway, compulsory and arranged marriage, pressure of reproduction (particularly of male children), an understanding of sex only in its reproductive sense, joint and extended families, and the negation of the self before the community/family. This behaviour is further defined by gender roles attributed to males and females within society that are deemed biologically driven, especially when important defining events in life like assumption of adulthood are defined by such gender roles.

Thus in these cultures those males who are sexually penetrated would be perceived as less worthy, feminised, debased males, and would be highly stigmatised leading to a range of violence and abuses, as well as sexual accessibility without diminishing the masculinity of the penetrator. The male penetrator is not deviant and is a part of the general male population. It is the penetrated that is subjected to the perception of deviancy.

And within a homosocial and homoaffectionalist culture, along with the general invisibility of sexual behaviours, sexual boundaries between males can be easily crossed in appropriate spaces, at the appropriate time, "under the blanket", and "in the dark".

What seems to therefore exist is a range of masculinities and gender variance with differing contextualisation of sexual behaviours, sex partner choices, perceived sexual needs, pleasures and desires.

Thus for some MSM there are frameworks of specific male-to-male desire (based on object choice/gender), gendered identities and visibility. For others who sexually access these males, often desires are based around discharge and specific sex acts (and perhaps gendered sexual object choice), perceiving themselves as 'manly' and 'normal men'. Such males come from the general male population. It could be any 'manly' male given the right situation and context.

The frameworks of male-to-male sex, often substantially divergent, usually involve males who self-identify primarily as *kothi* who are generally penetrated and primarily reflect the visible face of male-to-male sex, along with the more invisible males who take on the penetrating role in male-to-male sex (known as *giryas* and *panthis* by *kothis*). Males who are penetrated are usually perceived by *giryas* and

*panthis* to be "not-men", which enables a *giryā* or *panthi* to maintain his sense of manliness and be seen as a part of the normative male society.

Male-to-male sex work is also a significant factor in many South Asian cities and towns (and perhaps villages also). A broad range of frameworks also exists here. *Hijras*, *kothis*, massage boys and men, male youth, and other males will sell sex to other males because of poverty and unemployment. Without a welfare system, and with significant levels of unemployment or low level incomes, male sex work can be a way out in terms of supporting the self and family. This is not to imply that males involved in sex work do not enjoy the sex with other males. Often they will also have a regular male or female partner.

While there are substantial networks of *kothis* in urban centres, from the very feminised and cross-dressing ones, to those who have moustaches and dress in shirt and trousers, their sexual partners could well be any masculine male, who tended to go unnoticed.

## MSM, vulnerability and stigma

It needs to be recognised that the male being anally penetrated by another male is highly stigmatised, both by the penetrator, as well as general society, and those who are perceived to be recipients of penetration are usually treated with contempt. A *giryā/panthi* or any man/male that is sexually penetrated, orally or anally, will make extensive efforts to hide his practice and/or desire, both from his friends as well as from *kothis/hijras* and others in their sexual networks to avoid such stigmatisation. It cannot be assumed that gendered sex roles are exclusively maintained at all times.

It further needs to be recognised that a similar crossing of "gendered" boundaries exists amongst *kothis*. It is also not unknown for some *kothi*-identified males to penetrate other males. But like the penetrated *giryā*, this behaviour would also be kept secret from other *kothis*.

Such stigmatisation around feminisation produces a range of human rights abuses, blackmail, violence, and male-on-male rape by local men, thugs and local police.

Not only does poverty, class and education levels stigmatise individuals along with the fact of HIV infection, but also the specific gendered role and identity that some MSM identify with. Thus are doubly stigmatised because as biological males they are sexually penetrated - and thus not perceived as men. Their feminisation, their crossing of the gender roles and barriers accepted as social norms, reinforces the stigmatisation, leading to exclusion and denial of access to services and to the social compact. This often results in such males who are living with HIV/AIDS to be stigmatised by others who are also living with HIV/AIDS but whose routes of infection are deemed "normal".

On the other hand, the masculine partners of *kothis* easily merge into the general normative male society, their sense of masculinity maintained because they are the penetrators, not of other men, but of "not-men".

Power inequality dynamics arising from South Asian constructions of masculinity, social attitudes towards feminised males and their sexual practices, sexual abuse, assault and rape, stigmatisation and poverty, discrimination and disempowerment, all configure the lives of most *kothis*. As a consequence they play a significant role in the emotional, sexual, physical and economic exploitation of feminised males, and give rise to a range of physical, psychological, and emotional problems, which further increase vulnerability and disempowerment. This disempowerment creates significant levels of suicidal impulses and self-damage, which are expressions of self-hatred and despair. And this of course leads to significant increases to risks of STI/HIV as well as impeding successful implementation of risk reduction strategies.

Many *kothis* not only face harassment, sexual violence and rape from law enforcement agents, but also from those whom they have called friends in schools and colleges, from those in positions of trust such as relatives, neighbourhood elders, elder friends, and teachers. Gang rape is not uncommon. And of

course such forced sex is always unsafe and often results in serious physical injury such as a ruptured rectum, internal haemorrhage and so on.

One of the central issues that have arisen from NFI research and understanding is that often it is effeminacy and not the factual knowledge of male-to-male sexual behaviour that leads to harassment and violence. This harassment and sexual violence results from the fact that many *kothis* do not live up to the expected normative standards of masculine behaviour. It is this belief that leads to the notion that those who are feminised can be exploited and abused and that being feminised somehow weakens the person, a notion often harboured by the *kothis* themselves.

Accepted notions around effeminacy are therefore one of the major factors that lead to disempowerment and opens *kothis* to abuse and assault and to a refusal of service provision. The fact that *kothis* themselves have internalised these notions so strongly, means that specific tools will need to be developed for *kothi* in order to empower them to start valuing their lives and enhancing their self respect so as to reduce their risks for HIV infection.



## Socio-economic data

**Table 2: Age of respondents**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
18-20	3	0	2	3	8
21-25	4	6	6	5	21
26-30	3	4	3	6	16
31-35	0	5	3	2	10
36-40	2	3	1	0	6
Don't know	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 3: Years of education**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=58
No schooling	0	6	3	0	9
1 – 4 years	2	1	3	2	8
5 – 8 years	4	4	3	5	16
9 – 10 years	1	0	5	4	10
More than 10	5	7	1	5	18

**Table 4: Education**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=12	Hyderabad N=12	Dhaka N=16	Total N=52
Primary	6	4	6	7	23
Secondary	4	4	5	3	16
Higher	0	1	0	1	2
College	2	3	1	5	11

**Table 5: Living with immediate family**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	12	15	14	10	51
No	0	3	1	6	10
No response	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 6: Employment status**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	10	13	10	16	49
No	2	5	5	0	12
No response	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 7: Source of income if unemployed**

	Lucknow N=7	Delhi N=2	Hyderabad N=6	Dhaka N=0	Total N=16
Family	1	0	1		2
Friends	0	0	0		0
Sex work	7	2	5		14
I don't	0	0	0		0
No response	0	0	0		0

Note: some respondents give multiple answers, so that seven who reported regular employment, also stated that they did sex work.

**Table 8: Monthly income**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Less than 1000	2	1	1	1	5
1000-2000	3	2	7	5	17
2000-3000	4	8	2	10	24
3000-5000	2	6	5	0	13
More than 5000	1	0	0	0	1
No response	0	1	0	0	1

**Table 9: Marital status**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	2	8	3	2	15
No	10	10	12	14	46
No response	0	0	0	0	0

## Knowledge of Islam

All participants identified themselves as practising Muslims. 59 participants (97% - 59/61) reported that Islam was very important in their lives, where 35 participants reported doing *namaz* at least once a week, while 4 stated that they did *namaz* 5 times a day. Along with this, 36 respondents (59% - 36/61) stated they went to the mosque only on Fridays, 7 reported going to the mosque every day.

**Table 10: Practising Muslim**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	12	18	15	16	61
No	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0

While most of the study participants believed that they had a good knowledge of Islam, its beliefs and teachings, it was clear that this belief very much depended on what they meant by the word knowledge. What they defined as knowledge was more in terms of actual religious practices along with what they have been told or taught by religious teachers, respected elders, and family elders. Actual knowledge of content and meaning was low.

**Table 11: Reading the *Quran***

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	4	10	9	15	38
No	8	8	6	1	23
No response	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 12: What language?**

	Lucknow N=4	Delhi N=10	Hyderabad N=9	Dhaka N=15	Total N=38
Vernacular	1	2	1	4	8
Arabic	3	9	9	11	32
No response	0	0	0	1	1

**Table 13: Reading of the *Sharia***

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	4	6	0	13	23
No	8	11	15	3	37
No response	0	1	0	0	1

**Table 14: Reading the *Hadith***

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	6	9	2	11	28
No	6	9	13	5	33
No response	0	0	0	0	0

Thus 62% (38/61) stated that they had read the *Quran*, only 8 participants had read it in their own language, while the remaining 30 had read it in Arabic. But reading in Arabic does not mean that one

understands what one reads, since the traditional method of teaching the *Quran* is to learn the Arabic text in the *Quran* itself, and not Arabic as a language. Similar issues were expressed in terms of reading the texts on the *Sharia* and the *Hadith*.

**Table 15: Teaching of the *Quran***

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Father	3	14	7	15	39
Mother	8	13	8	16	45
Uncle	1	2	2	0	5
Religious teacher	6	8	6	0	20
No-one	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0

The primary source of information on Islam was through the mother (78% - 45/61), followed by the father (64% - 39/61), and a religious teacher (33% - 20/61).

Further there appeared to be a great deal of misunderstandings and misinformation regarding the differences (and similarities) between Sunni and Shia Muslims. As one Sunni respondent stated, “Shi’ites go to Durgah which is against Islam”, or as another said “ Shia’s religion ask them to hurt Sunnis. I have heard that.” Such differences could easily lead to significant tensions between these two systems of Islamic practice, something that does occur across the Muslim world, where Sunnis and Shias regular attack each other violently.

## Islam, masculinity, and sexuality

All participants expressed normative gender and gender differences between men and women as understood in South Asia, that is gender being defined by clothing, mannerisms, space, biology, language, sex roles, and performance. According to participants these differences were biologically and religiously ordained, as “being the will of Allah”.

Thus a man performs as a man. He is a leader, a penetrator, is the breadwinner, is masculine, wears manly clothes, walks and talks in a manly way, has a big penis, must get married and produce children, and looks after his family, while a woman is feminine, must get married, wear woman’s clothes, walks and talks in a womanly way, has a vagina, must obey her husband, father and brother, and looks after the house.

**Table 16: Gender differences (from FGDs)**

Male	Female	Kothis
Looks after his family. Earns money. Teaches his children right and wrong. Should have a beard. Dress like a man. Sexually penetrates. Gets married. Can have four wives. Pleases his wife. Performs heavy work. Needs to do sex regularly. Can’t control sex drive. Has a penis. Can last a long time in sex. Has short hair. Is a good Muslim and does <i>namaz</i> regularly.	Has breasts and vagina. Wears women’s clothes. Is sexually penetrated. Wears beautiful clothes. Is obedient to her husband. Pleases her husband. Listens to her husband. Does all the housework. Has long hair. Should do <i>pardah</i> . Is a good Muslim and wears <i>burkah</i> . Does not smoke or drink. Can only have one husband.	Biologically male but feminine personality. Talks and walks like a woman. Is sexually penetrated. At times wears women’s clothes. Likes manly men. Mixes mainly with women. Has a penis but is ashamed of it. Less vigorous than a man. Plays feminine role. Prefers not to marry but is forced to.

It is difficult to separate out religious values and socio-cultural ideas in regard to gender and gender differences here. Both are intertwined in mutually reinforcing systems expressed by religious teachers, family members and other socialising agents. From other studies, such gendered differences are internalised and accepted as the natural order of things by an early age.

**Table 17: Self-labelling**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Kothi	7	15	14	12	48
Panthi	0	0	0	3	3
Double decker	5	3	1	1	10
Heterosexual	0	0	0	0	0
Homosexual	0	0	0	0	0
Gay	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0

For *kothi*-identified participants, their sense of self is primarily identified with the feminine, thus they do not perceive themselves as men or manly but as persons to be sexually penetrated. Several of these participants also expressed a range of other concepts in regard to understanding themselves as

biological males and their *kothi* identity, which ranged from “socially we are a man, but personally we are *kothis*,” to “we are men at home, but *kothis* outside”.

For men identified as a *panthi* (this is the *kothi* term for “real man”) there is no difference between their sense of being a normative male and their sexual practice. They penetrate and therefore they are a man. The sex of the object of penetration is not relevant. That person is not a man.

In regard to the term *double-decker*, this is a recently emerging label for an identity that is based on sexual practice that is mutually exchangeable. Thus the person who penetrates can also be penetrated. *Kothis* tend to denigrate this label, and insist such persons are really *kothis*, but do not want to admit this, as it is a stigmatising label.

All participants agreed that a man having sex with another man, whether penetrating or being penetrated, was against Islamic teachings, sinful, and is strongly condemned. Some respondents believed that either act was equally sinful, while others stated that being penetrated was more sinful, and others stated that the person penetrating is committing the bigger sin. All participants also agreed that being a *kothi* was against the natural order of things and unIslamic. In the teachings there is only men and women, who should behave in the proper way that their biological sex determines. Men should be masculine, women feminine.

**Table 18: Conflict between being a Muslim and having sex with another male**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	10	17	14	16	57
No	2	1	1	0	4
No response	0	0	0	0	0

Male-to-male sex is shameful, but being penetrated, whether anally or orally is even more shameful. Giving oral sex was seen as highly shameful because the mouth is used to pray and recite the *Quran*. Thus those who do these acts expressed strong feelings of sinfulness and shame as receivers, more than those who penetrate. There was a belief that their lives have been spoilt.

Further, both the penis and anus are considered shameful parts of the body, as unclean. Thus to take the penis in one’s mouth is to defile oneself. It would be less shameful to take the penis in the anus since both organs are shameful.

Along with this several *kothi*-identified participants expressed a preference of having sex with a Muslim rather than a non-Muslim. This was because they believed it was less sinful. A further reason was because they believed Muslims were cleaner around the penis because they were circumcised.

Participants stated that they obtained this knowledge from religious leaders and books.

Thus all participants expressed negative feelings of shame and guilt about their sexual acts and desires, while many stated that they were too “addicted” to this for them to stop. They expressed a range of ways of trying to deal with this sense of uncleanliness, such as the need to take a bathe, offer *namaz*, make sure their sex partner was ‘clean’, preferring anal sex to oral sex, and learning to cope with their sense of shame.

To many *kothi*-identified participants, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections were a punishment from Allah that was deserved since they were breaking Allah’s laws. This led to the idea that since they deserved to be punished, they should not use condoms to protect themselves.

## Islam and the sexual self

While male-to-male sexual debut of participants ranged from 8 years to 22, with those who were *kothi*-identified tended towards the earlier ages of this spectrum (see under Socio-economic status above), this range also expressed itself in terms of the age of realisation of self-definition as a *kothi*, as well as self-realisation of desire for sex with another male. For those identified as *panthi*, and some who identified as *double-deckers*, desire for sex and availability were more the factors concerns. For these males, other males were usually easier to sexually access than females, and often more convenient.

**Table 19: Age at sexual debut**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Less than 10	2	0	1	0	3
10-12	5	2	6	5	18
13-14	3	4	2	4	13
15-16	2	4	5	4	15
17-18	0	3	1	1	5
19-20	0	2	0	0	2
More than 20	0	3	0	2	5

Here one can see the significantly early age that many boys were being sexually accessed. From other studies conducted by NFI (see *The Formulation of Sexual and Reproductive Health Behaviour Among Young Men in Bangladesh*, 2002, Khan, Khan, Hollerbach), *kothis* believed that it was because they behaved in a feminine way at an early age.

**Table 20: First sexual partner**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Uncle	0	0	0	1	1
Brother	2	2	2	4	10
Brother-in-law	0	0	0	0	0
Neighbour	3	5	3	8	19
Friend	5	6	7	0	18
Other	2	5	3	3	13
No response	0	0	0	0	0

We can see from this table that the first sexual partners tended to be people they knew, relatives and neighbours, with a surprisingly high number of brothers accessing their young brothers. It should be noted that single room accommodation is unusually in low-income families, so many brothers share beds. This sexual behaviour amongst males in shared beds has been noted in a range of NFI studies.

**Table 21: First sexual act**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Anal (penetrate)	1	3	2	0	6
Anal (being penetrated)	3	10	8	7	28
Oral (give)	3	1	0	1	5
Oral (receive)	3	1	0	1	5
Masturbation	2	2	2	2	8
Thigh sex	3	4	3	6	16
Other	2	1	0	0	3
No response	0	0	0	0	0

We notice here that a significant proportion of the young males were being anally penetrated in their sexual debut. Combined with a growing sense of femininity, this eventually brings about a conflation regarding desire, sense of self, and identity. For *kothi* participants, the age of recognising their desire was between 8 years to 19 years with a similar spectrum of age range for self-realisation as a *kothi*.

**Table 22: Feelings about first sexual act**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Good	11	8	10	5	34
Bad	1	9	3	3	16
Not so bad	0	1	2	8	11
Don't know	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0

Dowsett (Dowsett, G., *Practicing Desire - homosexual sex in the era of AIDS*, 1996) explores this concept very well, and indicates that desire for specific sexual acts is constructed to a significant extent, arising from practice. This is borne out in testimony from participants in this study and in others. "Practice makes perfect," they say.

**Table 23: Frequency of sex**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Every day	0	0	4	0	4
More than once in a week	8	9	8	14	39
More than once in a month	3	7	3	0	13
Less than once in a month	1	2	0	1	4
No response	0	0	0	1	1

With significant frequency of sex acts, the relatively high level of male sex work (23% - 14/61) as a survival strategy, and anal penetration being the most common (and preferred) sex act, there is a situation of high risk and vulnerability.

**Table 24: Number of self-estimated sex acts**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Week	33	17	118	23	191
Month	41	74	633	115	863
No response	1	1	0	0	2

**Table 25: Normal sexual practice**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Anal (penetrate)	2	7	0	9	18
Anal (being penetrated)	12	17	14	11	54
Oral (give)	4	8	14	2	28
Oral (receive)	9	4	0	1	14
Other	1	0	0	0	1
No response	0	0	0	0	0

As practising Muslims, participants felt "very bad", concerned about what would happen after their deaths in terms of Allah's judgement, and whether they would be punished and go to hell. Several said that Allah made them like this, and therefore they could not help themselves, and as long as they do their religious duties, Allah would forgive them. Others felt that by getting married and having

children would make things easier, because then their family will take care of them when they get old, and their son would read the *Quran* over them when they die.

Similarly most *kothi*-identified participants expressed feeling bad about being a *kothi*, and that this was against the *Sharia*, sinful and would be punished after death, while a few did feel bad about their *kothi* sense of self as they believed they were made this way.

*We are born as a Muslim and we are like this. We have a complaint against Allah. Why He made us so? At first we feel good. We'll have a very bad death. There will be nobody to take care of us. Who will read the Quran for us after our death. Kothi who is married is very lucky, and will be forgiven but what about us. Nobody will be there to take care of us. We can be forgiven because of our children.*

According to the principal investigator, (who is also a practising Muslim and a gay-identified man), the intensity of feelings of shame, guilt, and fear of the consequences of their desires, identity and sexual practice, particularly amongst *kothi*-identified participants, was very high.

All *kothi*-identified respondents also reported high levels of abuse, condemnation and stigma by others because they were *kothis*. Thus they constantly yearn for love, a regular partner, perhaps to live with a man who loves them. But there was also recognition that such love would always be disrupted because of the need for their partner, if not themselves, to get married as family and society demands.

In regard to seeking knowledge of Islam's attitudes towards male-to-male sex, 26 participants (43%) asked another person regarding this and of these participants, 19 (73%) stated they were unhappy with the response.

**Table 26: Have you ever asked anyone about Islam and having sex with another male?**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	4	5	6	11	26
No	8	13	8	5	34
No response	0	0	1	0	1

**Table 27: If yes, were you happy with the response?**

	Lucknow N=4	Delhi N=5	Hyderabad N=6	Dhaka N=11	Total N=26
Yes	1	2	1	2	6
No	3	3	5	8	19
No response	0	0	0	1	1

Most *kothi*-identified participants believed that Allah had made them the way they were in terms of sexual desire and gender choice. They felt it was impossible to change to “become a normal man”, and for them the question they always asked was “Why did Allah make me this way?”

Finally, in response to what participants felt was more important to them, being a *kothi* or being a Muslim, only 2 stated that both were equally important, while the remainder believed that being a Muslim was more important. For many participants, expressing a Muslim identity was also a political statement where in India, Muslims are a minority, and where in other regions Muslims feel under threat from what they deem a “global conspiracy” against them. Thus feeling vulnerable as Muslims, expressing themselves as Muslims allows them to become a part of a larger community.



## Religious, family, and cultural expectations

Religious, family and cultural expectations were seen as a whole and reflected the community-based framework of Islam. Thus for men, expectations were based on normative gender role and performance as a man, often in opposition to that for women. *Kothis*, of course, have no social role or space.

Thus a man should fulfil his duties and obligations, act like a man, marry and give his children a good education, financially support his family, take care of his parents and his wife, and be a good Muslim. As a part of his religious duties he has an obligation to give his children good Islamic knowledge and teach them how to behave as good Muslims, as well as help them to get married.

*Father should teach child about Islam, all good and bad things, look after them and get them married. Door of paradise is beneath his feet. Mother breast feed child. She does not want her child to be hurt, the paradise is beneath her feet. Son should follow Islam. Look after parents.*  
*Interview*

In Islam, reinforced by cultural values, gender boundaries should be kept strictly enforced. Females are to be socially policed and inaccessible from other males after reaching menarche except to their male relatives, until marriage. Islam also teaching different family and social roles for husband and wife where the man's duties tend to be focused on external relations and ensuring that children learn and understand their moral obligations according to their gender, while the wife is responsible for domestic arrangements.

One's wife should behave well towards her husband, obedient to his wishes, listen carefully to what he wants, and looks after the house and family needs. The wife must be respectful of her husband's wishes. The husband's duties is to ensure that there is sufficient money for the household, make sure that the children get a good education, look for a wife for his son, follow religious traditions, and look after his wife and children well.

In defining what makes a good husband or wife, the consensus was that both should follow the expected gender and social roles as demanded by Islam. Being faithful, behaving well towards each other, respecting each other, and not being violent to each other.

Marriage is both socially and religiously compulsory. It is the duty of the parents to make sure that their children are married, and it is the children's duty to obey their parents in their wishes, and to take care of them in their old age. By refusing to get married a person is not being a good Muslim. Marriage therefore is duty to Allah, duty to family, and duty to society. Choice is not an issue.

With regard to the married respondents, all stated that they had a good relationship with their wives, fulfilled their duties and obligations, including their sexual duty. However, it was also noted that as far as the respondents were concerned, none of their wives knew about the sexual practices outside the marriage.

At the same time, these respondents also believed that being married enhanced their standing within society, getting respect and treated as elders. It also enhanced one's sense of manhood, both personally and socially.

*My status has increased in the society. It is reply to those who thought that I am not a real man.*  
*Interview*

When asked about any violence, including sexual violence, being targeted at *kothis*, respondents stated that this was significant, and that it occurred because no one respected *kothis*, or liked them, except as potential sex objects to be penetrated. There was nothing they could do about it. It was a part of their lives, and a result of being a *kothi*.

*Kothis are looked down in society and they are not understood in the society. Psycho people do violence against them.*  
*Interview*

## Impact of knowledge

All participants stated that being a Muslim was extremely important to them, more important in many ways than being *kothi*-identified. Identifying as a Muslim, and practising one's faith places one in a community context and gives one respect. Others would respect you as well.

Pride in being a Muslim was strongly expressed by all participants, which provided a central context to their lives, despite all the challenges they face in terms of the sexual and gender choices and practices.

Much of what being a Muslim meant following rituals and traditions, such as offering *namaz*, going to the mosque regularly, fasting when one is supposed, celebrating the range of festivals, and going on *Haj*. In that sense being a Muslim is around observing and performing one's religious duties and obligations as laid out in the *Quran*, *Sharia* and *Hadith*. It is also being observed by others and Allah in fulfilling these duties. One doesn't question, one accepts.

Good and bad Muslims were defined by how one fulfilled religious obligations and avoided sinfulness. Sinfulness often was related to what was deemed shameful acts. Thus good and bad characteristics reflected observing ritual and behaving well and following one's duty.

The majority of participants expressed deep concern regarding what would happen to them after they died and Allah would judge their lives and behaviours. Islamic concepts of heaven and hell were a felt reality in their lives, and at times created considerable tension and fear.

While all participants were happy about being a Muslim, most stated that they often felt depressed about their sexual and gender practices. *Kothi*-identified participants would like to change, but felt they could not, and believed that they were in a constant state of sinfulness, which they try to alleviate through fulfilling their religious obligations, such as offering daily *namaz*.

Another significant concern from the *kothi*-identified participants was when relationships break up, usually because when their partner gets married.

All *kothi*-identified participants expressed feelings of guilt, shame and depression, but felt trapped. They perceived their lives as an either or situation and as a constantly losing proposition. Either they stop their sexual practices and behaviours and become a "proper Muslim", or they stop being a Muslim. For them there was no way out.

With 42% (26/61) of participants having thought of suicide, and 15% (9/61) admitting that they had tried to kill themselves, while 39% (24/61) having tried self-damage (either through stubbing our cigarettes on their bodies, slashing their wrists with a razor blade, or cutting other parts of their bodies), self hatred was very apparent. There appeared to be very few positive feelings about being a *kothi*. While *kothis* primarily formed social and friendship networks with other *kothis*, loneliness, the yearning for a lover, to have an opportunity to "marry a man" and be "a good wife to him" seemed common feelings. Much of the depression and self-damage appeared to arise from losing a "husband" when he got married to a woman. And also fear of the *kothi*'s future, the need to marry as a social and family duty, and what would happen when the *kothi* got old and becomes unattractive to *panthis*.

**Table 28: Self damage**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	4	4	5	11	24
No	8	14	10	5	37
No response	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 29: Have you ever felt suicidal, or tried to commit suicide?**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Yes	4	5	6	11	26
No	8	13	9	5	35
No response	0	0	0	0	0

Participants would like to have more information on Islam on what it says regarding masculinities, sexualities and same-sex behaviours, being careful to recognise the differing interpretations of the texts. Further they would also like to have positive examples that are meaningful to them, perhaps of historical figures from Muslim history.

**Table 30: Emotional support**

	Lucknow N=12	Delhi N=18	Hyderabad N=15	Dhaka N=16	Total N=61
Kothi friends	6	13	13	14	46
Panthi friends	0	0	1	0	1
Parik friends	0	0	0	0	0
Other friends	4	4	1	2	11
Family	1	0	1	0	2
NGO	1	0	0	0	1
Others	1	2	0	0	3
No response	1	1	0	0	2

A further expressed need was that of being able to access counselling specific to their religious needs. Most participants would have liked the opportunity to speak with knowledgeable persons who would respect them as they were, and not judge them.

## Final comments

In this study belief in Islam provided a source of validation for most participants and was considered crucial by many *kothi*-identified males, despite the experience of inner contradictions between behaviour and practice with this belief and acceptance of Islamic teachings and practices. These two frameworks of being and experience are almost in opposition to each other, as *kothis* understand Islam and themselves.

Thus for most Muslim *kothis*, their lives are a constant contradiction between what is expected of them as biological males, and their own lived experiences. There is no balance, no resolution, but an experience of denial - denial of themselves as Muslims, and denial of themselves as men. An external experience of abuse, violence, stigmatisation, along with social exclusion, constantly reinforces an inner experience of denial, self-stigmatisation, and disempowerment.

It is clear that for most *kothi*-identified males, these beliefs and experiences, along with the conflicts between their inner feelings and emotions with the religious, family, and cultural compulsions that face them, rapidly became a source of pain, loneliness, shame and fear, bringing social exclusion, marginalisation, suicidal tendencies, and a sense of hopelessness. School dropout for young feminised males is a common experience. *Kothi*-identified males believe that often they are more handicapped than women because they have no social role. These feelings can only increase their vulnerability to sexual violence and HIV/STI infections.

And of course, as this study showed, if there is a belief that being a *kothi* in terms of desire, behaviour, and practice is sinful and deserve punishment, and that disease is seen as punishment, this has enormous implications for promoting safer sex behaviours amongst them and reduce their risk for becoming infected and passing on infections to their partners, both male and female. With no place in the world that gives them meaning and significance, then they only way that *kothis* can affirm themselves is through their sexual practices, along with performing Islamic worship and hope that Allah will forgive them on Judgement Day.

*Kothis* are performing identities, not only in terms of body language, at times dress, mannerisms, language and preferred sexual practice that are at odds with the way religion, culture and society determine how men should behave. They are less than men, and Islam reflects a central belief in a strong gender division of function and place, with rules that define each person based on biological sex. Further, it is a religion that is based on the function and stability of the community as a whole, and not so much on a personalised belief and relationship with Allah. Thus how you behave and how you are perceived intertwine into a complex whole which then defines you as a Muslim.

For *kothi*-identified males, this is an enormous challenge, and the response to this often becomes sexual, with high-risk activities, multiple partners, and unprotected sex.

Unless a way can be found to reconcile these two apparently contradictory systems of thought and lived experience, to find a way to reduce self-hatred and denial, to enable empowering processes that affirm their well-being, righteousness, and humanity, to provide a way that will allow them to accept themselves as sexual beings with alternate choices, and as Muslims, it will be extraordinary difficult to promote well-being and sexual health amongst males who have sex with males who are also practising Muslims, particularly those who self-identify as *kothis*.

Due to logistical problems, this study could not be conducted in Lahore, Pakistan. However, NFI has done other work with Muslim *zenanas* (the equivalent term to *kothis*) in Pakistan, which required considerable interaction and discussion. Part of these discussions also explored religious belief, personal feelings of self-worth, and sexual practices. From field notes and anecdotal evidence there does not appear to be any significant differences that would tell a different story from that reported above.



## Recommendations

It is highly risky to make appropriate recommendations to resolve the conflicts that Muslim *kothi*-identified males in particular, find themselves involved with, along with other Muslim MSM.

With the current turmoil across the world that is often perceived as a conflict between a Christian and Hindu world against the Muslim world, where Muslims are involved in a range of conflicts that often reflect a conservative and traditional ideology with strict interpretations of the *Quran*, *Sharia* and *Hadith*, one hesitates.

However, there is a clearly identified need that the study makes visible. It is clear that it is not enough just to promote risk reduction strategies amongst Muslim MSM. There needs to be considerable work around developing self-worth, empowerment, and love of oneself that would enable *kothis* to be a practising Muslim and *kothi*-identified.

The following recommendations have been made to address some of these issues:

- To increase knowledge of the Islamic texts and to provide access to the range of interpretations of these texts, particularly in reference to differing masculinities and sexualities. This would require ensuring that a range of documents is produced in local languages that contain such material.
- To ensure that appropriate counsellors are available to MSM sexual health programmes who work with Muslims that are skilled in psycho-social-religious issues and have a good knowledge of Islamic teachings and the range of interpretations of Islamic texts.
- To ensure that “hotlines” are available which can provide telephone counselling not only on issues of HIV/AIDS and sexual health, but also on a range of psycho-social and religious concerns which can also provide emotional support in times of emotional crisis.
- To ensure that advocacy programmes are adequately and appropriately conducted where Muslims who are MSM abide, which can address the violence, abuse and harassment that so many face, particularly among those who are *kothi*-identified



## Further reading

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# Annex 1: Informed consent for FGD participants

Naz Foundation International

## FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES

A pilot study on the impact of Islamic beliefs, customs and practices on Muslim-identified males who have sex with males.

*NOTE: All participants are above 18 years of age*

### Signed Informed Consent for Participants in Focus Groups

**Principal Investigator:** Arif Jafar, Executive Director, Naz Foundation International, Regional Office, Lucknow, India  
Telephone no: + 91 (0) 522 2205781

**Name of Study:** Faith, culture, masculinities and sexualities

I am Arif Jafar of Naz Foundation International, which provides technical assistance and support to a range of networks, groups, and collectivities of males who have sex with males across South Asia to deliver HIV/AIDS and sexual health services.

The purpose of the study is to explore your understanding of Islam as a Muslim, what you think you know, what you do not know, and how your religious beliefs, customs and practices affect you psychologically and socially as a person who has sex with another male.

This information will help us to understand your needs as a Muslim MSM, as well as enable us to respond more effectively to those needs. In doing so, NFI can work towards creating a more enabling environment for you, a key response to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

We would like to ask you whether you would like to take part in a group discussion with a trained leader. The group will have about ten Muslim men, of varying ages. This group discussion will last about two hours. In the group, you and the others will be asked to participate in group discussions and activities. You will be asked to provide information on questions, such as:

- What do you know about Islam, *Sharia* and *Hadith*
- How much you practice Islam
- How does your understanding of Islam affect you psychologically
- What are the usual sources of information on these issues?
- How does this information affect your behaviour

Your participation in the group is voluntary. You may decide not to participate. You may also decide not to answer specific questions or to leave the discussion group at any time. There is no penalty for refusing to take part.

While there may be questions on sexual behaviours and practices, all of the information will be anonymous and confidential. Note takers will write down opinions and what the group thinks during the discussion. Your name or other personal things about you will not be written down during the group discussion. If the results of this research are published, your name will not be shown.

We ask that you not talk about what you may have heard in the group. However, we cannot promise that other young men in the group will not talk.



## Annex 2: Informed consent forms for interviewees

Naz Foundation International

### **FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES**

**A pilot study on the impact of Islamic beliefs, customs and practices on Muslim-identified males who have sex with males.**

*NOTE: All participants are above 18 years of age*

### **Signed Informed Consent for Participants in Interviews**

**Principal Investigator:** Arif Jafar, Executive Director, Naz Foundation International, Regional Office, Lucknow, India  
Telephone no: + 91 (0) 522 2205781

**Name of Study:** Faith, culture, masculinities and sexualities

I am Arif Jafar of Naz Foundation International, which provides technical assistance and support to a range of networks, groups, and collectivities of males who have sex with males across South Asia to deliver HIV/AIDS and sexual health services.

The purpose of the study is to explore your understanding of Islam as a Muslim, what you think you know, what you do not know, and how your religious beliefs, customs and practices affect you psychologically and socially as a person who has sex with another male.

This information will help us to understand your needs as a Muslim MSM, as well as enable us to respond more effectively to those needs. In doing so, NFI can work towards creating a more enabling environment for you, a key response to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

We would like to ask you whether you would like to be interviewed by a trained person. About 5 other Muslim MSM will also be interviewed individually. The interview will last about two hours, and will, with your permission be tape-recorded. This will make it easier for the interviewer to record your impressions. You will be asked to provide information on questions, such as:

- What do you know about Islam, *Sharia* and *Hadith*
- How much you practice Islam
- How does your understanding of Islam affect you psychologically
- What are the usual sources of information on these issues?
- How does this information affect your behaviour

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You may decide not to participate. You may also decide not to answer specific questions or stop the interview at any time. There is no penalty for refusing to take part.

While there may be questions on sexual behaviours and practices, all of the information will be anonymous and confidential. Only the person taking the interview will know your name. The interview will be audio taped. The tape recording with your responses will have a code number, instead of a name. The tape will be kept in a secure place for transcription onto computer. When the project is completed all tapes will be destroyed. If the results of this research are published, your name will not be shown.



## ANNEX 3: Guide to focus group discussions

### FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES

A pilot study of the impact of Islamic beliefs, traditions and customs on Muslim males who have sex with males.

This study does not seek expert opinion from religious teachers, but rather what the average male person who considers himself a Muslim who is also involved in male-to-male sex, thinks, especially those with gendered identities, such as *kothis* and *zenanas*.

In particular this study seeks to explore what Muslim beliefs, customs and practices are accepted and are called Islamic, and how this affects the person's life and how he would deal with any contradictions that may occur between belief and practice, particularly in the context of gender, sexuality and sexual practices. Further to this, we seek to understand the psychological, sexual and social impact of such knowledge on males who have sex with males, and who are also Muslim-identified.

NFI considers that it is essential that the facilitator and reporter must have a full understanding, knowledge and experience of Islam, of being a Muslim, as well as the gendered framework of sexualities. He should have experience of working closely with *kothi*-identified persons.

#### The information we are seeking:

- Differences between religion and culture (if any)
- Knowledge of Islam
- Islamic and Muslim beliefs about gender, sexuality and sexual behaviour
- Sources of this knowledge
- How this knowledge affects you psychologically, socially and sexually
- Coping skills with the difference between what Islam says and your actual behaviour and gender identity (if any).
- What would be needed to alleviate any distress that may be experienced (if any)
- Sexual practices, cleanliness and health

#### Questions that we would like to be answered:

- What do you believe are the concepts about men and women in Islam?
- What do you think Islam say about sex in general and male-to-male sex in particular?
- From what sources was this knowledge gained?
- Is there a difference between religion and culture?
- As an MSM how does this knowledge affect your sense of self and self-esteem?
- How does this knowledge shape your thinking/feeling/behaviour in regard to your actual sexual behaviours and practices?
- What coping skills have you developed to manage any psychological and social distress caused by your gender identity and sexual practices?
- What do you believe are the psychological, emotional and social needs for Muslim identified males who also sex with other males?
- What does body cleanliness mean to you in relation to sexual practice?

## THEMES

### 1. Knowledge of Islam

- Do you define yourself as Sunni, Shi'ite, or Sufi Muslim (or any other)?
- What do you know about Islam?
- Where did you get your knowledge of Islam?
- What is your knowledge of the *Quran*, *Hadith* and *Sharia*?
- Did you or do you read the *Quran*? In Arabic? In another language?
- Did you try to find any non – Muslim writer's translation of *Quran*?
- Have you gone through the *Sharia*? The *Hadith*?

### 2.

- What do you think Islam has to say about:
  - Being a man/Being a woman
  - Being a *kothi*/Being a *panthi*
  - How do you perceive yourself as a man?
- What is the difference between being penetrated and penetrating according to what you know Islam says?
- What do you think about Islam and sex between men? Between a *kothi* and a man?
- What are considered shameful body parts in Islam
- What do you consider unclean sexually?
- What does Islam say about sexual practices and cleanliness?
- Where did you get this knowledge?
- Where did you get this knowledge?

### 3. Islam and the sexual self

- How did you feel about your first sexual experiences?
- At what age did first realised that you desired to have sex with a man?
- At what age did you realise you were a *kothi*?
- How do you feel about being a Muslim and having sex with a man
- As a *kothi*?
- Who knows about your identity? About your sexual behaviour?
- How do they respond to you?
- What does love mean to you?
- Which is more important to you: being a Muslim or being a *kothi*?

### 4. Religious, family and cultural expectations

- What do believe Islam expects of you as a man? As a *kothi*?
- What do you think about marriage? Do you want to get married? Why?
- According to Islam what are the roles of:
  - d. Father
  - e. Mother
  - f. Son
- Where did you get this understanding
- How should a husband behave towards his wife, according to Islam?
- How should a wife behave towards her husband?
- What is the importance of marriage in Islam?
- What makes a good man? A good husband?
- Why do you think there is so much violence against *kothis*?
- What is your relationship with your father? Mother? Brothers? Sisters
- If married, what is your relationship with your wife? Children?
- How does your marriage affect your standing in the society?

## 5. Impact of Knowledge

- How important is Islam in your life? Why?
- How does Islam affect the lives of Muslims?
- How much do you follow Islam in your life? What do you do?
- Who is a good Muslim? Who is a bad Muslim? Why?
- What does a Muslim identity mean to you?
- As Muslim, how do you feel about yourself?
- Do you feel ashamed or guilty about being who you are
- Has these feelings affected your sexual behaviour?
- Have you ever felt suicidal because of your religious beliefs
- What do you pray to Allah for?
- Do you look for positive examples in Islam/Quran that support your identity/sexuality?
- What information do you need? Who can you get this from?
- What information would you like to have on alternate sexualities in concern with Islam?
- How can positive information about alternate sexualities affect other Muslim's lives?

### BEGINNING

Beginnings are extremely important and set the whole tone, responsiveness and content of any interview. Setting the scene by ensuring an appropriate environment which reduces the level of distractions, focus attention on the process, bringing the discussion back to the matter at hand should it stray, the body language and attentiveness of the facilitator, are all centrally important.

Each FGD will last approximately 2 hours. There will be both a Facilitator and a Reporter for each group.

The number of participants will be ten. All participants will be Muslim identified as well as *kothi*-identified.

It is important to ensure that accurate records are kept of each FGD, including comments made by participants, any stories they may tell, and so on.

At the end of the session, both Facilitator and Report will prepare a complete report of the discussion which will include any notes, stories, comments from the participants, as well as those written on flip-charts, and a description of all activities and results. This report must follow the theme sequence.

The group number will be identified by city.

### SETTING THE SCENE

Participants should feel comfortable in the group setting. It is wise to ensure that participants do not know each other, or at least not be friends with each other. They should be encouraged to relax, be comfortable with each other, and be trustful.

Each participant is encouraged to use a "made-up" name, which will be written on a label, which they should wear. These names should be entered into the FGD attendance sheet along with the Group Number.

Ensure that you have all the necessary papers and pens before you start.

Begin by introducing yourself and your co-worker.

Ask general feelings of the participants. How they feel, what sort of day they had, what enjoyable things they did before coming to the group. Then provide a brief description of the study and the reason why they are there.

## **Example**

*Naz Foundation International wants to find out how being a Muslim and a kothi affects how you feel about yourself. We want to know what you know about Islam, where you got your knowledge from, and how you feel being a Muslim and a kothi. It is hoped that with your knowledge we can design better programmes to assist people like you have a better understanding of Islam and sexuality.*

*We are going to ask you all a number of questions about these things, and we will note down all your answers. We ask each group member to keep what is said here strictly confidential and not discuss this outside the group. Do you agree?*

*We are doing the same thing with Muslim kothis in other cities in South Asia. We don't want your names, and if anything personal is said, we will keep it secret. Here you can say anything you want, and we won't tell anybody.*

*We want you to be completely honest in your answers. We will not ask about your personal life, but about what you know about other boys and young men. We would also like to know where you get your information from, who gives you this information, and what you think of it.*

*Is this all right with everybody? Do you have questions before we start?*

Develop a series of ground-rules that govern the session. These need to include, respect, truthfulness, listening, and so on.

Initiate the process through an ice-breaker game. Several good examples are provided in the Alliance manual: *100 ways to energise groups – games to use in workshops, meetings and the community.*

Also, the facilitator can use such games to re-energise the group.

The Guide uses a question and response methodology along with group discussion for the FGD process. The facilitator can consider exploring the use of participatory processes such as time-lines, drawings, role-play and other methods to obtain responses to the questions being asked.

NOTE: Facilitators will need to answer any questions. If they relate to the themes to be explored, inform the participants that these will be discussed later.

Refreshments will be served at the end of the session.

The facilitator should endeavour to keep the activities and discussions light-hearted. They should make no judgments, nor should they criticize any statements made.

## **CLOSING**

At the end of the session, the facilitator may need to provide accurate information sexual health issues. Ensure that you have the correct information. Referrals may be made to local partner organisation who is assisting NFI in this study in the city.

Thank all the participants in the group for their honesty, openness, and for their information and knowledge.

Reimburse participants for the travel costs.

## **FACILITATOR NOTES**

The Facilitator should use appropriate humour throughout the process to enable a more relaxed environment throughout the FGD.

While this Guide uses specific questions and group/individual responses as a methodology, a variety of games and group process could be used also.

For example, at the beginning of the session, an ice-breaking game could be used to breakdown communication barriers.

At the end of the FGD, the facilitator should reflect on the FGD and write additional notes. These should include:

- The space used for the FGD
- Any distractions during the FGD
- Body language of the participants
- The 'mood' of the FGD
- Which issues appeared to cause the most difficulties in responsiveness and any tensions?

## **1. Knowledge of Islam**

This theme explores what knowledge participants have about Islam as Muslims.

**Question:**                    **Are you a practising Muslim?**

**Probing question:**        What does this mean? How do they practice? Discuss frequency of namaz, and attending a mosque. What does it mean to participants to be a practicing Muslim? What benefits do they get?

**Question:**                    **What do you know about Islam, its beliefs, customs and practices?**

On flipchart paper divided into 3 columns headed ISLAM, BELIEF, and PRACTICES. Write responses.

**Probing Questions:**        What is the difference (if any) between Sunni, Shi'ite and Sufi Muslims?

**Question:**                    **What do you know of the *Quran*, *Sharia* and *Hadith*?**

**Probing Question:**        Have you read the *Quran* and/or books on the *Sharia* and *Hadith*?

Did participants read the *Quran* in Arabic or in the vernacular?

Did they study Muslim teachings? Where did they study? Who taught them?

If not, where did you get your knowledge of Islam?

### **FACILITATOR NOTES**

Explore the level and content of general knowledge that participants have of the *Quran*, *Hadith*, and *Sharia*.

## **2. Islam, masculinity and sexuality**

This theme explores participants' knowledge of how Islam defines masculinity and sexuality.

**Question:**        **How do you define a MAN, a WOMAN, a KOTHI, and a PANTHI?**

On flipchart paper with four columns headed with these categories, list participants' responses.

**Probing question:** How do you perceive yourself as a man?  
How do you define yourself? Why?  
In your opinion what is the difference between a KOTHI and a MAN?

**Question: What does Islam say about sex, sexuality and masculinity?**

**Probing question:** According to Islam what is the difference between being penetrated sexually and penetrating sexually?  
What does Islam say about sex between men? Between men and kothis?  
Where did you get this knowledge?

**Question: What does Islam say about shamefulness and sex?**

**Probing Questions:** What is considered the shameful parts of the body?  
What about the unclean parts of the body?  
What do you consider shameful sex acts? Unclean sex acts?  
Do you do these acts? How do you feel about doing such acts?

### **3. Islam and the sexual self**

This theme explores participants' sense of sexual self in conjunction with their Muslim beliefs.

**Question: How did you feel about your first sexual experiences?**

**Probing Question:** At what age did you first realise that you were different from other boys?  
How did you feel and how did you deal with this? Did you talk to anyone about this?  
At what age did you first realise that you desired to have sex with another male? How did you feel? Why?  
At what age did you realise that you were a kothi? How did you feel? Why?

**Question: As a Muslim, how do you feel about having sex with a man?**

**Probing question:** As a kothi how do you feel?  
Why these feelings?

**Question: Who knows about your identity and behaviour?**

**Probing Question:** What is the response?  
If family knew what would the response be?

If the Iman knew what would the response be?

**Question: What is more important to you: Being a Muslim, or being a kothi?**

Probing question: Why?

### **FACILITATOR NOTES**

The first part of this section can also be done as group exercise through a timeline exercise.

Break the participants into two groups of five. Give each group a large flipchart paper, and ask them to draw a straight line lengthwise across the paper. The left hand end of the line is their birth and the right end of the line is where they are now.

On this line, each participant marks the following questions as distinct ages:

- At what age did participants notice they felt different from other boys their own age?
- At what age did they first felt a desire to have sex with another male?
- At what age did they leave their parental home?
- What was their age when they first experienced sex?

Facilitator can add further questions about marriage, children, and so on.

## **4. Religious, family and cultural expectations**

This theme explores participants' understanding of their family religious and cultural expectations of them as males/men.

**Question: What are your religious, family and cultural expectations of you as a man?**

On flipchart paper, under three columns headed by each of these categories, list responses.

**Question: What are your beliefs about marriage and having a son?**

Probing question: Why do have these beliefs. From where did you get this knowledge?

Do you want to get married? Why?

**Question: According to Islam what are the roles of:**

Father  
Mother  
Son

Probing question: How do you perceive yourself in this regard?

**Question: How important is marriage in Islam?**

Probing Question: How do you feel about this?

**Question: According to Islam, how should a husband behave towards his wife? How should a wife behave towards her bus band?**

Probing Question: What makes a good husband? A good wife?

How do you personally feel about these issues?

**Question:** What is your relationship with your father? Your mother? Your brothers and sisters?

**Question:** If you are married, what is your relationship to your wife and any children?

**Probing question:** What about sexually? Are you happy? Is she happy?

How does your marriage affect your standing in your society?

## **5. Impact of knowledge**

This these explores participants' response to being a practising Muslim and how they cope with being a Muslim and an MSM, particularly if they are kothi-identified?

**Question:** How important is Islam in your life?

**Probing Question:** Why?

How much do you follow Islam in your life? What do you do?

How does Islam affect the lives of Muslims?

What does it mean being a Muslim?

**Question:** What makes a good Muslim? A bad Muslim?

**Probing Question:** Why? Where did you get this understanding?

**Question:** As a Muslim, how do you feel about yourself?

**Probing Question:** Have you ever felt happy about yourself? Why?

Have you ever felt sad, ashamed or guilty about your desires and practices? Why? What is the difference?

Have you ever felt severely depressed because of your desires, feelings and practices?

Have you ever felt suicidal or even tried to commit suicide because of these desires and practices?

**Question:** How do you cope with any negative feelings?

**Probing questions:** Whom do you talk to when you feel sad?

Do you wish things could be changed or different? What could be changed? Why?

**Question:** Do you ever pray to Allah?

**Probing question:** What do you generally pray for?

**Question:** What do you think you need as a Muslim and as a kothi?

**Probing Question:** Have you ever looked for positive examples in Islam/Quran that can support your sense of self?  
Have ever discussed this with anyone? Who?  
  
In what way could things be different? Why?

**Question: What sort of support do you think you need?**

**Probing Question:** Whom would you like to talk too about your problems, if any?  
  
What knowledge and information do you think you need that can be supportive?  
  
What are the main concerns for people like you?



# ANNEX 4: Guide for interviews

## FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES

A pilot study of the impact of Islamic beliefs, traditions and customs on Muslim males who have sex with males.

This study does not seek expert opinion from religious teachers, but rather what the average male person who considers himself a Muslim who is also involved in male-to-male sex, thinks, especially those with gendered identities, such as *kothis* and *zenanas*.

In particular this study seeks to explore what Muslim beliefs, customs and practices are accepted and are called Islamic, and how this affects the person's life and how he would deal with any contradictions that may occur between belief and practice, particularly in the context of gender, sexuality and sexual practices. Further to this, we seek to understand the psychological, sexual and social impact of such knowledge on males who have sex with males, and who are also Muslim-identified.

NFI considers that it is essential that the facilitator and reporter must have a full understanding, knowledge and experience of Islam, of being a Muslim, as well as the gendered framework of sexualities. He should have experience of working closely with kothi-identified persons.

### The information we are seeking:

- Differences between religion and culture (if any)
- Knowledge of Islam
- Islamic and Muslim beliefs about gender, sexuality and sexual behaviour
- Sources of this knowledge
- How this knowledge affects you psychologically, socially and sexually
- Coping skills with the difference between what Islam says and your actual behaviour and gender identity (if any).
- What would be needed to alleviate any distress that may be experienced (if any)
- Sexual practices, cleanliness and health

### Questions that we would like to be answered:

- What do you believe are the concepts about men and women in Islam?
- What do you think Islam say about sex in general and male-to-male sex in particular?
- From what sources was this knowledge gained?
- Is there a difference between religion and culture?
- As an MSM how does this knowledge affect your sense of self and self-esteem?
- How does this knowledge shape your thinking/feeling/behaviour in regard to your actual sexual behaviours and practices?
- What coping skills have you developed to manage any psychological and social distress caused by your gender identity and sexual practices?
- What do you believe are the psychological, emotional and social needs for Muslim identified males who also sex with other males?
- What does body cleanliness mean to you in relation to sexual practice?

## THEMES

### 1. Knowledge of Islam

- Do you define yourself as Sunni, Shi'ite, or Sufi Muslim (or any other)?
- What do you know about Islam?
- Where did you get your knowledge of Islam?
- What is your knowledge of the *Quran*, *Hadith* and *Sharia*?
- Did you or do you read the *Quran* yourself? In Arabic? In another language?
- Did you try to find any non – Muslim writer's translation of *Quran*?
- Have you gone through the *Sharia*? The *Hadith*?

### 2. Islam, masculinity and sexuality

- What do you think Islam has to say about:  
Being a man/Being a woman  
Being a *kothi*/Being a *panthi*
- How do you perceive yourself as a man?
- What is the difference between being penetrated and penetrating according to what you know Islam says?
- What do you about Islam and sex between men? Between a *kothi* and a man?
- What are considered shameful body parts in Islam
- What do you consider unclean sexually?
- What does Islam say about sexual practices and cleanliness?
- Where did you get this knowledge?
- Where did you get this knowledge?

### 3. Islam and the sexual self

- How did you feel about your first sexual experiences?
- At what age did first realised that you desired to have sex with a man?
- At what age did you realise you were a *kothi*?
- How do you feel about being a Muslim and having sex with a man
- As a *kothi*?
- Who knows about your identity? About your sexual behaviour?
- How do they respond to you?
- What does love mean to you?
- Which is more important to you: being a Muslim or being a *kothi*?

### 4. Religious, family and cultural expectations

- What do believe Islam expects of you as a man? As a *kothi*?
- What do you think about marriage? Do you want to get married? Why?
- According to Islam what are the roles of:
  - g. Father
  - h. Mother
  - i. Son
- Where did you get this understanding
- How should a husband behave towards his wife, according to Islam?
- How should a wife behave towards her husband?
- What is the importance of marriage in Islam?
- What makes a good man? A good husband?
- Why do you think there is so much violence against *kothis*?
- What is your relationship with your father? Mother? Brothers? Sisters
- If married, what is your relationship with your wife? Children?
- How does your marriage affect your standing in the society?

## 5. Impact of Knowledge

- How important is Islam in your life? Why?
- How does Islam affect the lives of Muslims?
- How much do you follow Islam in your life? What do you do?
- Who is a good Muslim? Who is a bad Muslim? Why?
- What does a Muslim identity mean to you?
- As Muslim, how do you feel about yourself?
- Do you feel ashamed or guilty about being who you are
- Has these feelings affected your sexual behaviour?
- Have you ever felt suicidal because of your religious beliefs
- What do you pray to Allah for?
- Do you look for positive examples in Islam/Quran that support your identity/sexuality?
- What information do you need? Who can you get this from?
- What information would you like to have on alternate sexualities in concern with Islam?
- How can positive information about alternate sexualities affect other Muslim's lives?

### **BEGINNING**

Beginnings are extremely important and set the whole tone, responsiveness and content of any interview. Setting the scene by ensuring an appropriate environment which reduces the level of distractions, focus attention on the interviewee by the interviewer, bringing the interview back to the matter at hand should it stray, the body language and attentiveness of the interviewer, are all centrally important.

Each Interview will last approximately 90 minutes. Timing is not rigid though. Interviews may be longer, or shorter.

The number of interviews in each city will be five. All interviewees will be Muslim and kothi-identified.

Interviews will be tape-recorded. The taping should be clear so that both the interviewer and interviewee can be heard clearly. The interviewer should make every attempt to minimise any background noise.

Along with each taped conversation, the interviewer should also produce a short briefing report regarding the interview, what difficulties he had (if any), how the interviewees responded to the process, what issues of concern were expressed through facial and body language, and so on.

Code numbers will be used for each interview. Thus for those interviews in Lucknow, the code numbers would be LW1 – LW5.

### **SETTING THE SCENE**

All interviewees must sign the informed consent form before being interviewed.

The interviewee should be made to feel comfortable and relaxed, and an appropriate environment should be selected that aids this. It needs to be noted that there are no transportation costs for interviewees, so all attempted should be made to interview the respondent near to their residence or the drop-in centre of the local partner project, or wherever he will feel comfortable and secure.

Interviews, while semi-structured, should also be informal.

Introduce yourself, and then ask a few general questions about how the interviewee feels. What sort of day they have had, what they will do afterwards, and so on. This will help in building a relaxing and conversational environment.

The interviewer will then provide a brief description of the study and the reason why the respondent is being interviewed. Reassure the interviewee that all information provided is strictly confidential. Briefly repeat the informed consent procedure as a way of building reassurance and trust.

Following this process of trust building, ask the interviewee if the interview can be tape-recorded. Explain that this makes it easier for you to focus on what the interviewee says, rather than having to take notes all the time. Explain that there will be no identification marks on the audiocassette and the recording will be destroyed once the study is finished.

After obtaining permission for tape-recording, set up the recorder so that both the interviewer and the interviewee can be clearly heard. Test this with some information questions to begin with and play back the tape for the interviewee to hear himself. When both are satisfied, proceed with the interview.

## **Example**

*Naz Foundation International wants to find out how being a Muslim and a kothi affects how you feel about yourself. We want to know what you know about Islam, where you got your knowledge from, and how you feel being a Muslim and a kothi. It is hoped that with your knowledge we can design better programmes to assist people like you have a better understanding of Islam and sexuality.*

*We are going to interview several people like you in this city on these issues. Everything you say will be kept strictly secret, and no one except myself will know that it is you who has said anything. We would like you to be honest and open with your responses. If you are uncomfortable in answering any of the questions, you may refuse to answer them.*

*We would like to have your permission to tape-record the conversation to ensure that I record your answers correctly. Is this all right with you? Do you have any questions before we start?*

NOTE: The interviewer will need to answer any questions. If they relate to the themes to be explored, inform the interviewee that these will be discussed later.

Also, interviewers should not try to interpret the interviewee's answers. If the answer is unclear, the interviewer should ask, "Can you explain to me in greater detail, what you mean," or repeat the answer to the interviewees to verify, and ask for clarity.

A refreshment fund of 25Rps is available for each interview.

The interviewer should endeavour to keep the discussions light-hearted and interesting. They should make no judgments, nor should they criticize any statements made.

## **CLOSING**

At the end of the session, the interviewer may need to provide accurate information sexual health issues. Ensure that you have the correct information. Referrals may be made to local partner organisation that is assisting NFI in this study in the city.

Thank interviewee for this honesty, openness, and for their information and knowledge.

## **INTERVIEWER NOTES**

At the end of the interview, the interviewer should reflect on the interview and write additional notes. These should include:

- The space used for the interview
- Any distractions during the interview
- Body language of the interviewee
- The 'mood' of the interviewee
- Which issues appeared to cause the most difficulties in responsiveness and any tensions?

## 1. Knowledge of Islam

This theme explores what knowledge participants have about Islam.

**Question:**            **Are you a practising Muslim?**

**Probing questions:**    What does this mean? How do they practice? Discuss frequency of namaz, and attending a mosque.  
What does it mean to participants to be a practicing Muslim? What benefits do they get?

**Question:**    **What do you know about Islam, its beliefs, customs and practices?**

**Probing Questions:**    What is the difference (if any) between Sunni, Shi'ite and Sufi Muslims?

**Question:**            **What do you know of the *Quran*, *Sharia* and *Hadith*?**

**Probing Questions:**    Have you read the *Quran* and/or books on the *Sharia* and *Hadith*?  
  
Did participants read the *Quran* in Arabic or in the vernacular?  
  
Did they study Muslim teachings? Where did they study? Who taught them?  
  
If not, where did you get your knowledge of Islam?

### INTERVIEWER NOTES

Explore the level and content of general knowledge that participants have of the *Quran*, *Hadith*, and *Sharia*.

## 2. Islam, masculinity and sexuality

This theme explores participants' knowledge of how Islam defines masculinity and sexuality.

**Question:**    **How do you define a MAN, a WOMAN, a KOTHI, and a PANTHI?**

On flipchart paper with four columns headed with these categories, list participants' responses.

**Probing questions:**    How do you perceive yourself as a man?  
  
How do you define yourself? Why?  
  
In your opinion what is the difference between a KOTHI and a MAN?

**Question:**    **What does Islam say about sex, sexuality and masculinity?**

**Probing questions:**    According to Islam what is the difference between being penetrated sexually and penetrating sexually? Oral sex? Anal sex?  
  
What does Islam say about sex between men? Between men and kothis?  
  
Where did you get this knowledge?

**Question:**    **What does Islam say about shamefulness and sex?**

**Probing Questions:** What is considered the shameful parts of the body?  
What about the unclean parts of the body?  
What do you consider shameful sex acts? Unclean sex acts?  
Do you do these acts? How do you feel about doing such acts?

### **3. Islam and the sexual self**

This theme explores participants' sense of sexual self in conjunction with their Muslim beliefs.

**Question: How did you feel about your first sexual experiences?**

**Probing Questions:** At what age did you first realise that you were different from other boys?  
How did you feel and how did you deal with this? Did you talk to anyone about this?  
At what age did you first realise that you desired to have sex with another male? How did you feel? Why?  
At what age did you realise that you were a kothi? How did you feel? Why?

**Question: How do you feel about being a kothi now?**

**Probing Questions:** What feels good about being a kothi? What feels bad?  
What is negative about NOT being a 'man' in society?

**Question: As a Muslim, how do you feel about having sex with a man?**

**Probing questions:** As a kothi how do you feel?  
Why these feelings?

**Question: Who knows about your identity and behaviour?**

**Probing Questions:** What is the response?  
If family knew what would the response be?  
If the Iman knew what would the response be?

**Question: What is more important to you: Being a Muslim, or being a kothi?**

**Probing questions:** Why?

### **4. Religious, family and cultural expectations**

This theme explores participants' understanding of their family religious and cultural expectations of them as males/men.

**Question: What are your religious, family and cultural expectations of you as a man?**

**Probing Questions:** What do you think of these expectations?

Do you think you can fulfil them?

How do you feel about this?

**Question: What are your beliefs about marriage and having a son?**

**Probing question:** Why do you have these beliefs? From where did you get this knowledge?

Do you want to get married? Why?

**Question: According to Islam what are the roles of:**

Father  
Mother  
Son

**Probing question:** How do you perceive yourself in this regard?

**Question: How important is marriage in Islam?**

**Probing Question:** How do you feel about this?

**Question: According to Islam, how should a husband behave towards his wife? How should a wife behave towards her husband?**

**Probing Question:** What makes a good husband? A good wife?

How do you personally feel about these issues?

**Question: What is your relationship with your father? Your mother? Your brothers and sisters? Other relatives?**

**Question: If you are married, what is your relationship to your wife and any children?**

**Probing questions:** What about sexually? Are you happy? Is she happy?

How does your marriage affect your standing in your society?

## **5. Impact of knowledge**

This section explores participants' response to being a practising Muslim and how they cope with being a Muslim and an MSM, particularly if they are kothi-identified?

**Question: How important is Islam in your life?**

**Probing Question:** Why?

How much do you follow Islam in your life? What do you do?

How does Islam affect the lives of Muslims?

What does it mean being a Muslim?

**Question: What makes a good Muslim? A bad Muslim?**

Probing Question: Why? Where did you get this understanding?

**Question: As a Muslim, how do you feel about yourself?**

Probing Question: Have you ever felt happy about yourself? Why?

Have you ever felt sad, ashamed or guilty about your desires and practices?  
Why? What is the difference?

Have you ever felt severely depressed because of your desires, feelings and practices?

Have you ever felt suicidal or even tried to commit suicide because of these desires and practices?

**Question: How do you cope with any negative feelings?**

Probing questions: Who do you talk to when you feel sad?

Do you wish things could be changed or different? What could be changed?  
Why?

**Question: Do you ever pray to Allah?**

Probing question: What do you generally pray for?

**Question: What do you think you need as a Muslim and as a kothi?**

Probing Question: Have you ever looked for positive examples in Islam/Quran that can support your sense of self?

Have ever discussed this with anyone? Who?

In what way could things be different? Why?

**Question: What sort of support do you think you need?**

Probing Question: Whom would you like to talk too about your problems, if any?

What knowledge and information do you think you need that can be supportive?

What are the main concerns for people like you?

## **ANNEXE 5: The questionnaire**

### **FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

The following questions are designed to help both Naz Foundation International and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance to develop appropriate tools to address the issues of religious faith and men who have sex with men within HIV/AIDS and sexual health promotion.

#### **THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

The questions are structured to gather information on a broad range of issues.

Please try and answer all the questions honestly and openly. If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire please ask the interviewer.

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER:**

#### **CITY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

My name is Arif Jafar and I am working for Naz Foundation International provides technical assistance and support to local-based sexual health programmes for males who have sex with males. [Describe the purpose of this study].

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT**

Please read out the informed consent form to the interviewee and have it signed before proceeding any further.

#### **DATE**

**Naz Foundation International**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

**DATE:**

**CITY:**

**CODE NO:**

No	Questions	Coding	Move to
Q101	Are you a practicing Muslim?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99 CONTINUE END
Q102	How old are you?	YEARS DON'T KNOW NO RESPONSE	98 99
Q103	Have you ever attended school?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99 Q107
Q104	How many years of education have you received?	YEARS COMPLETED NO RESPONSE	99
Q105	What type of school did you go to?	PRIVATE GOVERNMENT MADRASSA NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 99
Q106	What was the highest level of education you finished?	PRIMARY SECONDARY HIGHER COLLEGE NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 99
Q107	Where are you originally from?	VILLAGE TOWN CITY STATE/DISTRICT NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 write 99
Q108	Do you live with your immediate family?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99 Q110
Q109	If no, do you currently live with?	ALONE WITH A MALE PARTNER WITH A FEMALE PARTNER WITH A RELATIVE OTHER (state) NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 99
Q110	How many brothers/sisters do you have?	BROTHERS SISTERS NONE NO RESPONSE	97 99 Q201
Q111	What is your position amongst your brothers and sisters?	FIRST SECOND THIRD OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 99

**Naz Foundation International**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

**DATE:**

**CITY:**

**CODE NO:**

<b>No</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Coding</b>		<b>Move to</b>
Q201	Are you employed?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99	Q203
Q202	If yes, what is your occupation?	Please state NO RESPONSE	99	
Q203	If no, how do you get money?	FAMILY FRIENDS SEX WORK I DON'T NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 99	
Q204	What is your income? (Circle response)	DAILY -50 50-100 100-150 ABOVE 150  MONTHLY Less than 1000 1000-2000 2000-3000 3000-5000 above 5000 NO RESPONSE	99	
Q205	What sort of accommodation do you have?	SINGLE ROOM SHARED ROOM HOSTEL FAMILY HOME OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 99	

**Naz Foundation International**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

**DATE:**

**CITY:**

**CODE NO:**

No	Questions	Coding	Move to
Q301	Have you ever been married to a woman?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99
Q302	Are you currently	Married to a woman Unmarried Widowed/divorced Separated from wife Married and in a relationship with a woman Married and in a relationship with another male Married and sexually outside of marriage No married but in a relationship with a male NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 99
Q303	How do you think of yourself as	KOTHI PANTHI DOUBLE-DECKER HETEROSEXUAL HOMOSEXUAL GAY OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 99
Q304	How frequently do you have sex with another male?	EVERY DAY MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 99
Q305	Can you estimate how many times you have done sex with another male in the last? Give number	WEEK MONTH NO RESPONSE	99
Q306	What type of sex do you normally do? (Circle)	ANAL Penetrate Be penetrated ORAL Give Receive OTHER NO RESPONSE	9 99
Q307	At what age did you first start having sex with another male?	YEARS NO RESPONSE	99

**Naz Foundation International**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

**DATE:**

**CITY:**

**CODE NO:**

No	Questions	Coding		Move to
Q308	What was your first male sex partner?	UNCLE BROTHER BROTHER-IN-LAW NEIGHBOUR FRIEND OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 99	
Q309	What type of sex did you do?	ANAL (being penetrated) ANAL (penetrating) ORAL (giving) ORAL (receiving) MASTURBATION THIGH SEX OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 99	
Q310	How did you feel about this?	GOOD BAD NOT SO BAD DON'T KNOW NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 99	

**Naz Foundation International**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

**DATE:**

**CITY:**

**CODE NO:**

No	Questions	Coding	Move to
Q401	How important is Islam to you in your life?	VERY SOME LITTLE NO RESPONSE	
Q402	How frequently do you do namaz	FIVE TIMES EVERY DAY AT LEAST ONCE A DAY AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH SOMETIMES NEVER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 99
Q403	How frequently do you to the mosque for prayers	EVERY DAY ONLY FRIDAYS AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH SOMETIMES NEVER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 99
Q404	Have you ever read the Quran	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99
Q405	If you have read the Quran, in what language	VERNACULAR ARABIC NO RESPONSE	1 2 99
Q406	Have you read any books on the A. SHARIA  B. HADITH	YES NO NO RESPONSE  YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99  1 2 99
Q407	Who taught you about Islam and being a Muslim	FATHER MOTHER UNCLE RELIGIOUS TEACHER NO-ONE NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 99
Q408	Have you ever asked anyone Islam and having sex with another male	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99 Q30
Q409	If yes, were you happy with the response	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99

**Naz Foundation International**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: FAITH, CULTURE, MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES STUDY**

**DATE:**

**CITY:**

**CODE NO:**

No	Questions	Coding		Move to
Q501	Have you ever tried to hurt yourself?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99	Q503
Q502	If yes, what was the reason?	MY DESIRES BEING A KOTHI NO LOVER FAMILY PROBLEMS SEAPARATION FROM LOVER OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 99	
Q503	Have you ever felt suicidal, or tried to commit suicide?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99	Q505
Q504	If yes, what was the reason?	MY DESIRES BEING A KOTHI NO LOVER FAMILY PROBLEMS SEAPARATION FROM LOVER OTHER NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 5 6 99	
Q505	Do you believe that there is a conflict between a Muslim and having sex with another male?	YES NO NO RESPONSE	1 2 99	
Q506	Can you say what this conflict is?			
Q507	Who do you talk too when you have any problems you want to seek help with?	FRIENDS Who? FAMILY MEMBERS Who? OTHERS Who? NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 99	
Q508	Where do you get most of emotional support?	Friends KOTHI PANTHI PARIK OTHER FRIENDS NO RESPONSE  FAMILY NGO OTHERS NO RESPONSE	1 2 3 4 99  5 6 7 99	

Thank you for completing this questionnaire



## ANNEX 6: Sample themed analysis

Man/Woman	Kothi/panthi	Self-perception	Difference being penetrating/being penetrated according to Islam	Knowledge of Islamic teaching on sex between men Between kothis/man Between boys/men
<p>Man Looks after the house. Looks after the family. Show children the right path. Do work. Earn for family. Woman Looks after the house. Look after the family members Solve problems Give religious education to children. Tell them good and bad. Respect elders.</p>	<p>Islam does not say anything about Kothi /Panthi</p>	<p>Kothi</p>	<p>Not much. The participants had heard that being penetrated is a bigger sin, however both the cats are prohibited..</p>	<p>Sex between men, or male to male sex is prohibited in Islam. Islam condemns it and you would be punished by Allah if you do it.</p>
<p><b>MAN</b> - Who fucks - who has moustache one should have beard chest hairs - body should reflect should have heavy voice <b>WOMAN</b> - who puts dupatta - long hairs - beautiful body have breast - naturally face has quality - women should be in</p>	<p><b>KOTHI</b> - man who has the qualities of a woman - gets fucked - you can judge from the walk and way of talking -acts like a woman <b>PANTHI</b> - Real man - one who can fuck</p>	<p>I am a 90% man. I am 50 – 50. I am man from down and woman from top. 80% man Socially we are man but personally a kothi.</p>	<p>There is no direct mention of male to male sex. Only mention of Lut is there. Male to male sex is considered as a big sin. Getting penetrated and penetrating is equal.</p>	<p>Islam condemns male to male sex. It is bad and not permitted. There is no mention of male to kothi sex.</p>
<p><b>MAN</b> Should have beard -should dress like man -should have a cap -Use Atra, Misvaq, Lungi, sherwani <b>WOMAN</b> - Burqa</p>	<p><b>KOTHI</b> -Behaviour - long nails -use of eyes - dress - way of talking <b>PANTHI</b> -Jeans,Pant</p>	<p><b>Kothi</b> We are man too. We are man at home. We behave like a man otherwise it will bring shame to my family. We are borne as a man and later on become Gandu.</p>	<p>Getting fucked is haram. Your namaz is not accepted. One who fucks is more at fault and is a bigger sinner than who gets fucked. One who gets fucked is more at sin. We show wrong path to the fucker. We mislead him.</p>	<p>Islam says it is bad to have sex with other man. Woman is made to have sex. It is haram. It is a big sin. Sex between man and kothi is also same. It is haram. One should be burnt. Their houses should be burnt. People do not follow Islam these days. All bearded Maulanas come to us.</p>

-Lacha, shalwar necklace in neck - bichwa in foot - No nailpolish -by dress	- T shirt - Bike - Cigarette - one who drinks bear			
<p>MAN is: Should go to Masjid After becoming adult, should get married Man can marry four women. He has to marry a woman Offers Namaz Looks after the parents Go to Masjid to offer Namaz Ankles open for males during namaz Earn for the family Man fulfils wife's life and fulfils her demands.</p> <p>WOMAN is: Should do pardah Should be in House Marriage is compulsory Women can marry only man Woman cannot go to mosque Ankles lose for women Only eyes can be shown Loak after House Women cannot earn They can earn but they have to be in Purdah.</p>	<p>KOTHI is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strictly prohibited by Islam.</li> <li>• Is a man</li> <li>• Have females behaviour</li> <li>• Community language</li> </ul> <p>PANTHI is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strictly prohibited by Islam</li> <li>• Husband of kothi</li> <li>• Sex partner of kothi</li> <li>• Is a masculine man</li> </ul>	<p>I AM A MAN BECAUSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* I have penis</li> <li>* our behaviour</li> <li>* Our physical structure</li> <li>* We don't have breast</li> <li>* We have hairs</li> </ul> <p>I call myself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Kothi</li> <li>* Boy</li> </ul> <p>We are men, but because of our different behaviour we are kothis.</p>	Both kinds of sex between man and man and man and kothi are condemned by Islam.	Both kinds of sex between man and man and man and kothi are condemned by Islam. It is not good. It is sin. Sex between men and kothi is also condemned.

<b>Shameful parts of the body according to Islam</b>	<b>Definition of shame and shameful</b>	<b>Unclean What does this mean?</b>	<b>Sex practice and uncleanness</b>	<b>Source of knowledge</b>
Urinating organs and anus.	To hide it from others.	Penis, vagina and anus. You have to keep it clean.  Oral sex is unclean sexual act because it is sin. Mouth is pure. It is made to recite Quran. Allah gets angry if you take bad things into your mouth.	We do it because of our desires but we feel bad. Taking bath makes you clean.	Books and other learned people, Maulanas.
For man shameful part is below naval and up to knees. For woman full body is shameful.	Getting fucked and oral sex is shameful. Sex between man and a woman should also be in a cover. Any sex which differs from the normative behaviour is shameful.	Unclean parts is where urine or shit touches, urinating organ, anus is unclean Oral sex is a worse sin because mouth is used for good things and to recite the name of Allah.	Yes, we do it but feel bad about it.	Learned people, Maulvis and elders have told us
We should protect our shameful parts. In man penis is shameful. For woman whole body is shameful. Penis and anus. Front and back for woman.	Shameful sex is all sex. All kinds of sex is shameful.	Fucking vagina is not unclean. Waleema is Haram if you don't have vaginal sex. Anal sex and oral sex is unclean. Vaginal sex is natural. Oral sex is a bigger sin because we recite the Qalema, name of Allah and Quran from this mouth	We do it because we are addicted. We feel bad about it. We feel that we are doing sin. We ask for forgiveness. We pray to Allah not to give this life even to our enemies. We spoilt our own lives. Only Allah can forgive us.	We have heard this in mosques and our religious leaders have told us. Our parents have told us.

