

**Sexualities, Identities and Spaces: A Study of Male Sex Workers in
Mumbai**

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the partial fulfilment of the requirements
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled "Sexualities, Identities and Spaces: A Study of Male Sex Workers in Mumbai" submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the result of original research and has not been previously submitted for any other degree to this or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
FSW	Female Sex Worker
GPA	Global Programme on AIDS
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HRG	High-risk group
ICTC	Integrated Counseling and Testing centre
IPC	Indian Penal Code
MSM	Men Who Have Sex with Men
MSW	Male Sex Worker
NACO	National AIDS Control Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSWP	Global Network of Sex Work Projects
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme for HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Sexualities, Identities and Spaces: A Study of Male Sex Workers in Mumbai

Introduction

“To be is to be perceived” (esse est percipi).

George Berkley

This research places the life of male sex workers in contrast with the foregoing epistemological remark because male sex workers are there, but they are still not perceived. This unperceived status despite their existence amounts to ‘epistemic exclusion’ and therefore leads to ‘epistemic violence’ (Kristie Dotson 2011:236-257). This epistemic exclusion also results from the lack of recognition of them as individuals in their own right. Absence consequent upon lack of recognition ought not to be equated with non-existence. It is the equation of the absence with the principle of non-existence that has resulted in gaps in knowledge of male sex workers. This research is an attempt to address this gap through their narratives that embody their existence by providing them materiality.

Commercial sex work is generally associated with female sex workers. It is important to move beyond this general association and acknowledge that there are also men in the domain who sell sex albeit they remain invisible in both official and popular discourse. Male sex workers are part of our social reality but they do not exist for many of us. This research aims to explore and understand these male sex workers. All debates, laws, policies and data are disseminated keeping in mind that sex work is about ‘sexual gratification provided by a woman to a man for cash or kind’. But this constitutes a fraction of the reality. There is a need to unravel a larger picture of sex work in India. While discussing my doctoral research with others, I have been asked if male sex workers exist in India. So, why this invisibility? Invisibility is rooted in heteronormative assumptions where male-to-male relation presents an aberration. Coupled with this dominant dis-

course is anti-sodomy law¹ which haunts same-sex sexualities making same-sex expressions illegal and hence invisible. Thus men selling sex predominantly to men, in this cultural context, is nothing less than a taboo.

It is in this context that a decision was taken to examine the domain of male sex workers who are invisible to the general masses. It was while working with Family Health International that I, for the first time, came in touch with male sex workers. In the course of the work and survey, I also came to discover that they have not been studied as individuals in their own rights and are marginalised and excluded with a high level of precarity. So many typologies, fluidity of identity, the ongoing threat of HIV/AIDS, victimisation and criminalisation by society; and male sex workers find themselves cruising through all this. They are leading a vulnerable life but hardly any attempt has been made to understand them. Whatever the few efforts that have been made, male sex workers have been studied predominantly as a vector of HIV infection especially in India (Scott 2003; Morse, Simon, Osofsky, Balson, & Gaumer 1991)

Lack of research has been attributed to a range of factors of which combination of two marginalities i.e. homosexuality and sex work are seen as the main reason for lack of academic research (Minichiello and Scott 2014:180). Further, male sex work is one of the most clandestine of activities and therefore getting to know people who sell sex is difficult (Browne & Minichiello 1996:48). The stigma associated with homosexuality and sex work especially male sex work in India makes it difficult to know and understand them and their social reality. However, in past decades change in debates around sexuality and the boom in telecommunication have turned out to be important factors for the recent change in the structure and organisation of male sex work. Male sex work is not such an insignificant social phenomenon as the paucity of research on the topic suggests.

¹Section 377 of Indian Penal Code, since its enactment, has been a constant source of discrimination and victimisation of sexual minorities in India. There has been a long battle to read down or strike this colonial instrument of 1861. The movement to strike it down started when AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) and Naz Foundation approached the apex court in 2001 (Mishra, 2009). Since then there were many highs and lows but 2018 verdict by Apex court has finally decriminalised homosexuality in India.

The first question which comes to mind is who is a male sex worker? It is commonly understood that male sex workers are males who offer sexual services to both men and women in exchange for money or something in kind and they mostly operate from various cruising spots like public toilets, parks, railway stations, places of worship, cafes and restaurants. Nowadays many male sex workers also operate through various internet sites and smart-phone applications (Ditmore 2006:xxv). Male sex work has been broadly categorised into two kinds– Street-based and non-street based. Street-based male sex workers generally have low education levels, indulge in alcohol and drugs on a regular basis, have poor economic status, do not follow health directives of HIV and STI testing and most are victims of abuse and violence. Non-street based male sex workers, on the other hand, are more educated, have a better financial condition and generally do not view sex work as permanent work. They are mostly independent sex workers, escorts or part-time television and film extras (FHI 2010:3).

Sex work has been viewed as an outcome of economic necessity and in the same context, sex workers are considered passive victims of situations who have been forced into sex work (Bimbi 2007:12; Scott 2003:185). Though both male and female sex workers sell sex due to economic necessity there are many points of departure when we compare the two. Compared to female sex work, male sex work has been viewed as less exploitative because both buyer and seller are men and therefore there is some kind of equality (Altman 1999:xiv). Similarly, in comparison to female sex workers, male sex workers have been presented as more active. Another point of difference is that male-to-male sex work has not been regulated as female sex work since male sex work has been closely associated with regulations and legal framing associated with homosexuality (Weeks 1981:116). Scott (2003:180) argued that male sex work has been problematised in a manner that it is understood as a moral problem associated with gender deviation and the outcome of this kind of problematisation was that the regulatory practices associated with homosexuality were tied to male sex work.

One is very likely to conceive of male sex worker as a homogenous category. Contrary to such likelihood, community of male sex workers is heterogeneous in light of the fact that there are various typologies. Male sex workers in India have multiple sexual identi-

ties. In private they identify as gay, bisexual, kothi, top², bottom³, versatile⁴ or just no identity. When male sex worker is in service of his client, he takes on different roles according to demands. He may be a feminised *Kothi*⁵ dressed up like a woman playing a passive receptive sexual role. With another client same MSW may take on the role of a *Panthi*⁶, the active insertive masculine partner. In yet another situation the same MSW may take both the above mentioned role with same client where he is referred to as *Double Decker*.⁷ Male sex workers then switch role to play a devoted son, a doting father and a husband with family. Although there are multitudes of sexual identities but most of these identities are private identities and there are very few cases of disclosure and display of identities in public (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001:708) In context of male sex work, sexuality is culturally produced in multiple ways and male sex workers constantly negotiate these culturally determined sexual scripts.

Male sex workers have been identified as one of the high-risk groups for HIV/AIDS. MSWs were 6.7 times more likely to acquire HIV than female sex workers and 2.5 times more likely to transmit infection than their female counterparts (Dandona et al. 2006:2). Male sex workers who face societal pressure, stigma and discrimination remain invisible and often ignored population and therefore at an increased risk of HIV and STI compared to the broader MSM population (Biello et al. 2016:1). A group of studies have found out that various factors related to sex work like fear and stigma, financial incen-

² Top is the penetrative partner in a sexual act (Minichiello and Scott 2014:116).

³Bottom is a receptive sexual positioning in a sexual act (Minichiello and Scott 2014:116).

⁴ “Versatile” male sex worker is someone who will play top and bottom role both but often have a preference. Thus they often describe themselves as versatile tops or versatile bottoms; this denotes a preference for one activity but a willingness to participate in the other. Versatile tops and versatile bottoms have been coded as “versatile (Minichiello and Scott 2014:144).

⁵ Kothis describe a wide continuum of sexualities but are generally men who display effeminate characteristics. These men are mostly receptive partners for anal sex. Many *kothis* have bisexual concurrent partnerships and are often married to women (Boyce 2007:177).

⁶ Panthi is the term that is used to describe men who have a masculine identity and who have a predominant sexual orientation towards women. Transient and irregular visitors of cruising areas and sexual meeting places, panthi are usually the insertive partner in anal or oral sex (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001:715).

⁷ “*Double-deckers*” are men who are sexually inclined towards other men and for whom sexual object choice is a key determinant of sexual identity. Their gender identity may be masculine or neutral. Regulars in the cruising areas, they take both active and passive roles in oral and anal sex, and depending upon their gender identity and demeanour, can have relations with any four groups of MSM (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001:715).

tives for heightened riskier behaviour and poor access to prevention services all add up to this increased HIV prevalence among MSW compared to MSM and other high-risk groups (Biello, Colby, Closson, & Mimiaga 2014:1264-1265; Chakrapani, Shunmugam, Newman, Kershaw, & Dubrow 2015:31; Shinde, Setia, Row- Kavi, Anand, & Jerajani 2009:43). The homophobic society where they function increases the vulnerability of MSWs to threats, such as harassment by local police and physical violence by clients and goons. This entirely pushes them to the margins making them essentially obscure and stigmatised population (FHI 2010:31). From a public health perspective, the criminalisation of same-sex sexualities and sex work delay the improved health outcomes for MSWs. Criminalisation of sex work not only builds a space rife for violence and sexual health risk (Shannon and Csete 2010:573) but it also hampers the execution of health and safety schemes. There have been instances where carrying condoms have been used as a ground to harass male sex workers. It is very natural on their part to evade such social restrictions. Consequently, such an attempt on the part of male sex workers pushes them into hiding, which becomes a big challenge for working around disease surveillance and outreach programmes (Shannon and Montaner 2012:501).

Statement of Problem

*Mai waisa hi roop le leta hu jaisa samne wala chahata hai.*⁸

So how do male sex workers present themselves to others? Which aspects of their identities are actually projected to significant others? Erving Goffman notes that in our everyday lives social actors present themselves to others keeping in mind their knowledge and understanding of their culture and social expectations. This helps to win approval and acceptance from others and deal with the impressions of ourselves that we present to others and act as an artist of a role (Goffman 1959). The interactional strategies that male sex workers in India engage in with their families, peer, neighbours, clients and larger society demonstrate this process in action.

⁸ I take my role as per the demands of others. Source: Extract of an interview with my respondent Sameer, this was in response to my question about how he identifies himself. on June 24th, 2016 at 4:30 Pm at Gaurav office in Juhu Koliwada, Mumbai

The fluidity of sexual identities that male sex workers articulate and the extent to which they go in order to present themselves as either sexually conforming or as asexual in the front stage is worth probing. While interacting with male sex workers, I encountered instances of multiple identities among them. Male sex workers predominantly provide sexual services to male clients, so they have same-sex sexual relations with clients. At the same time, some were married, had children and were leading a family life. They have two distinct identities opposite of each other. So the question arises as to which is the true representation of self? Is it possible for someone to have such distinct identities so different from each other? How do they manage this situation especially when they are engaged in work which is linked with shame, guilt and stigma? Sex work is often linked with many of society's traditional 'taboos' such as illicit sex, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, alcohol abuse and other dark criminal activities. The question arises here as to how this multiple identities impact them. Do multiple identities create confusion and affect their well being? How do they resolve this conflict of identities?

Below is an excerpt from Rao and Sarma (2009:28) which brings out the above discussed-diversity:

Though married, I see myself as a homosexual, not an MSM or anything else... I am a female acting as a male in marriage, and a male acting as a female in my homosexual life. I agree this may cause an identity crisis... Maybe it amounts to playing a role? Our Hindu gods had multiple gender identities- they switched from one to another with ease. There's the obvious example of Ardhanareshwara .

Male sex workers thus display a sexual identity that is fluid and there is a multitude of sexualities in them. This fluidity of sexualities is the most essential feature of male sex workers who project different identities in different social circumstances. Is this fluidity of sexuality so fluid in reality? In one of my interviews with Rishi, a versatile male sex worker, when I asked him how he manages this role play and multiple identities, he replied:

I am entangled between friends, family, boyfriend and clients. I have now stopped thinking. Initially, I used to feel guilty but now there are no feelings left in me. Everything is mechanical. I have no emotions left in me.⁹

⁹ Source: Extract of an interview with my respondent Rishi on June 26th, 2016 at 2:00 Pm at Gaurav office in Juhu Koliwada, Mumbai

Male sex workers negotiate with social and cultural forces, political and legal barriers, friends and family to survive in this homophobic society. It may appear mechanical and fluid but a person undergoes enormous tension which is invisible. We only see the outcome of this constant pressure when they perform in a given way. They are into drugs and alcohol, they yield to unsafe sexual practices, they experience depression and anxiety, do not go for regular health checkups, and ignore health directives. Anand Chandrani, Chairman of Sarathi Trust an organisation that works for the Lesbians Gays Bisexuals and Transgender in Nagpur, informed me that in the last one year 8 members of the community have committed suicide in Nagpur district. There are numerous cases of depression among MSM groups in the Nagpur region. This situation is no different in Mumbai or any other parts of India. Talking about rising cases of depression among male sex workers, one of my respondents recounted his own experience:

I did not join sex work at once. I was in a committed relationship with a man. I had a dream of having a loving boyfriend and spending my life with him. But he was cheating on me. He was my only hope in this gloomy dark world. No one accepts us. There is pressure from all corners. I joined sex work and started taking drugs and alcohol to ease this pain.¹⁰

It all begins with a particular kind of sexual identity which is considered to be unnatural and abnormal by the larger society. Since childhood, these young boys have been ridiculed by their caregivers, stigmatised among peer group and by society and have been abused by relatives and older friends. They are mocked with various terms like *Gud*, *chhakka*, *hijra*, *maamu*, *chikna*, *gaandu* and many more. A complete lack of social support and empathy to understand them pushed them to the margins. The homosexual identity is so crucial that it supersedes all other aspects of their personality. With stigma and discrimination attached to this identity, it is difficult to imagine how male sex workers sustain themselves under such a dilemma? The answer lies in having multiple identities so that every single person gets what he wants. It is in this context that I decided to concentrate the focus of this research on various identities which male sex workers keep on assuming to survive in this homophobic society. These identities are constantly negotiated and contested so that they may survive.

¹⁰ *ibid*

Review of literature

Male sex work has so far not received adequate attention from academic quarters. This is one reality that has been getting overlooked for a long time in India. This may be due to the fear of legitimising a profession that has been highly stigmatised so far. Further, there is a lack of accessibility when it comes to male sex workers in India. They are difficult to reach population and therefore carrying out scientific research is restricted. Sexual transactions between men have been studied looking at individuals, the context in which they work and more recently the focus has shifted to socio-political dynamics. While studying contextual issues, the focus has been the relationship between MSWs and their clients and how power influences this relationship. The socio-political perspectives have placed sex work in the social context to understand how it is influenced by anti-sodomy and anti-sex work laws and policies. The early works around male sex work have utilised the discourse of deviance and social control to explain and understand sex work. Under the deviance model, both sex work and homosexuality have been viewed as deviant universally and therefore most of the early studies have projected male sex workers as 'abnormal'. The deviance in male sex workers has been explained using three popular viewpoints: bio-psychological, interactionist and structural perspectives.

The early studies predominantly used the bio-psychological perspective to explain male sex work. Here the researchers largely focussed on developing an understanding of the psychopathological nature of male sex workers. The focus here was to bring out factors that predisposed these young men to sex work. By the 1970s, the deviant theory gives way to the interactionist approach where the focus was to understand how these acts are labelled and processed by larger society (Aggleton 1987). The key focus here was to understand and explain how identities are constructed and reproduced in social settings and what meanings do these identities hold for male sex workers. Luckenbill (1986:295) used the interactionist perspective to understand sex work as a 'deviant career' and how male sex workers negotiate this career. Trends in career mobility were found to be dependent on the perception of male sex workers about their role. The structural perspective, on the other hand, looked at the notion of power and how it varies with one's gender, class, age and ethnicity (Aggleton 1987). Both interactionist and structural perspec-

tives to explain male sex work are exceptional and very limited research has been reported.

The existing studies in the West have been made by researchers with diverse academic backgrounds like criminologists (McNamara 1965), psychiatrists (Butts 1946; Craft 1966), sociologists (Ginsburg 1967; Ross 1959; Reiss 1961) and researchers associated with welfare agencies and the police (Jersild 1956) (Cited in Pieper 1979:240). On the contrary, in India majority of existing studies have been carried out by health and gay rights activists from NGOs across the country. Thus the nature of the information that we get from India is predominantly of one kind and that is related to HIV/AIDS and STI and its prevention and control among all 'high-risk groups' (HRG) including male sex workers. This review of existing literature firmly reflects this shortcoming.

Formal works on male sex work date back to the mid 1800s in France, and have emerged infrequently since then (Weeks 1981). Marked difference came post 1950 when research on various aspects of human sexuality emerged (For example, Kinsey et al. 1948). Most of the studies in the early 60s and 70s focussed on the individual, the male sex worker. Major themes of these studies have been typologies of male sex workers, their psychological makeup, forces responsible for their entry into sex work, sexual identity, use of drugs and alcohol among male sex workers, HIV and sexually transmitted infections and violence and discrimination faced by male sex workers. Multiple sexual identities, which is against the norm (heterosexuality), results in various kinds of censure and legal barrier. Therefore, legal barriers and criminalisation (Section 377 of IPC in India) have been dealt with by many Indian researchers. The aim here is to bring out all important existing literature, which will help to contextualise and problematise the key questions.

Typologies of Male Sex Workers

The first question which comes to us is who is a male sex worker. There is no single definition or category of male sex worker. Green (1992:5) defines male sex workers as someone who offers "sexual services in exchange for some sort of payment, such as money, drinks, drugs, other consumer goods or even a bed and a roof over one's head for the night". Similarly, there are varied typologies in male sex work and some of

common categories based on place of work and kind of service provided include street-based male sex workers, escorts, call men and masseurs (Allen 1980:401; Cates 1989:151). These typologies are organised in a hierarchy where escort or call men are better placed in terms of safety and security and earnings compared to street-based sex workers who are more likely to be victims of violence and abuse and who indulge in risky behaviour (Browne and Minichiello 1996:33; FHI 2010:32).

Further several studies have attempted to categorise male sex work based on the kind of sexual activity male sex workers engage in; the location of activity like a park, street or home and the amount of time they commit to sex work activity (Allen 1980:401; Fisher et al. 1982). All these studies show that there is extensive behavioural diversity among male sex workers but are of little value for understanding a psychological, social, or cultural basis for sex work. According to Bindumadhav V. Khire (2008:129-130), there are two main Categories of Male Sex Workers in India: street-based and non-street based. The former comprises male sex workers who solicit clients at various cruising spots (railway stations, public parks, public toilets and roads) whereas the other category consists of Masseur sex workers who provide services at home or massage parlours. The sex workers operating through internet sites and call boys also come under the second category.

Profile of Male Sex Workers

There is an agreement among most researchers regarding the basic demographic description of the typical male sex workers. The studies have reported an average age range of 15 to 23. More recent studies stated increased involvement of younger boys, sometimes as young as 12 (Deisher et al. 1969:936; Allen 1980:400; Fisher et al. 1982). Similarly in India, the age range of 14 to 40 has been reported with a majority in the range of 18 to 23 years (Lorway and Thomson et.al 2014:80; Reza-Paul and Lorway et.al 2012:98; Ramakrishna, Chandran and Pelto 2004:48). Researchers have concluded that young boys are more in demand than others and this is reflected in the modal range which is 14 to 24 years.

Research in the West has constructed the general profile of the male sex workers similar to other delinquent or criminal populations. Ackemark in his 1954's study found the

presence of mental diseases, brain damages, retardation and some other hereditary deficiencies in a large proportion of the boys, but he was not sure about the interaction of environment and heredity (cited in Pieper 1979:245). Pieper (1979:246) referred to the study of Redhardt (1954) who mentions a specific tendency for endocrine deficiencies and consequently physical and mental retardation. Even though these factors seem to be significant, they definitely constitute only dispositional factors and do not explain the larger part of the phenomenon. A majority of the male sex workers belonged to lower class families and grew up in big cities. Broken homes and impaired family conditions was another reality common in a majority of cases. Many adolescents in his study have stayed in welfare institution or reformatory. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of the subjects did not attend a school or have a job at the time of the interview. Pieper (1979:246) cited another study by Jersild (1956) who conducted his research with 300 male sex workers in Denmark maintained that 69 per cent of the population have an average IQ. It was also found that most male sex workers have a criminal record and many of them have spent terms in reformatories or jails. Sex workers have hardly appeared in court because of their work (sex work) though they have appeared in cases related to violence and robbery. Most of male sex workers in Jersild (1956) study identified themselves as heterosexual. Redhardt (1954) carried out his research with 45 adolescent MSWs and concluded that 10 of them have problems associated with the phase of puberty. This includes strong guilt feelings about their masturbation and frustrating heterosexual experiences which result in aversion against women. He classifies the same group of ten as bisexual and homosexual. Ginsburg (1967:180) while describing his subjects claims that: "The hustler has essentially never learned who he is because he has never been taught." This indicates the ill-treatment most sex workers experience in childhood and their distorted role behaviour. It also represents the impaired self-concept most sex workers have about themselves. The outcome of this distorted childhood and poor family environment reflects poor achievement motivation for any task both legal and illegal.

In India, a study by Humsafar Trust in Mumbai also tried to develop the profile of male sex workers with a sample of 75 MSWs. The mean age of the sample of male sex workers was reported to be 23.3 years. Close to 85 per cent of male sex workers were single

at the time of interview and approximately half of the total sample (55 per cent) were educated up to higher secondary school level (Shinde, Setia, Row-Kavi et.al 2009:41).

Entry in Sex Work

A lot of work in the West has dealt with entrance theories, that is, factors responsible for entry into sex work. One of the most important reasons which have been forwarded was opportunity theory. One of the most comprehensive works has been by Coombs (1974). Coombs(1974:783-786) found that 64 per cent of the boys he interviewed had experienced homosexual seduction at an average age of 6-9 years. He hypothesised that early homosexual seduction when combined with immediate reward was an antecedent to male sex work. Coombs relied on opportunity theory as an explanation for sex work involvement. He describes boys aged 10-12 who received the solicitation of an adult and valued the payment. For many boys, this led to sex work and for others a revisit to sex work when other modes of employment were ineffective. In the Indian scenario, the age of the first sexual encounter for the boys was at an average age of 7-10 years (Ramakrishna, Chandran and Peltó 2004:49-55; Khan 2001:100-101). Going by the experience of most *kothi*-identified males, it can be concluded that early sexual initiation usually between 6 to 14 years of age is common. In the case of as many as 25 per cent of respondents, it was found that their friends had sexually abused them. Having discussed about vulnerability, early initiation into sexual experience and abuse by close relatives and friends, it is still difficult to establish a conclusive link between early sexual experience and vulnerability to sex work.

Male Sex Workers and HIV/AIDS

Risky sexual behaviours along with substance abuse make male sex workers more prone to HIV infection. Simultaneously, they also become cause of transmission of HIV infection (Morse et al.1991:535). In recent times, male sex work has been viewed as a public health concern. The total number of people living with HIV has declined from 23.2 lakh in 2006 to 20.9 lakh in 2011. Thus there has been a significant fluctuation in the PLHIV (People living with HIV) population in India in the last decade (NACO 2014). The Indian HIV epidemic is difficult to classify due to its large size, the constant movement of high-risk groups, and geographic diversity along with the diversity of risk

factors (Deanna Kerrigan et al 2013:1938). Further, there are some groups with excessively high rates of HIV infection like transgender (TG), female sex workers (FSWs), MSM and intravenous drug users (IDUs) (NACO 2008). There has been a significantly large proportion of data and research on FSWs when it comes to HIV infection. Male sex workers, on the other hand, have been ignored and neglected in this regard. There is no data on male sex workers by any government agencies and what is available is data on MSM and TGs. Thus all studies just try to speculate the number of MSWs within the large 'MSM' category. Many researchers have tried to work out the number of MSWs within the total MSM population in India (Setia, Lindan et al. 2006; Hernandez, Lindan et al. 2006; Shinde, Setia et al. 2009). In one study by Humsafar Trust, it has been reported that one-third of the total sample were diagnosed with sexually transmitted infection at the time of interview. This piece of information needs to be viewed in light of another fact that 13 per cent of those interviewed never used condoms. The concern is further multiplied by a fact that 15 per cent of all interviewees were married to a woman or had a regular male partner. Of the total MSWs interviewed 45 per cent were HIV positive. The main reason for not using a condom was owing to non-availability of it (43 per cent). Second most important reason was refusal to use condom on the part of the partners (20 per cent). About 53 per cent of them were said to have used condom occasionally. However, over one-third of them were said to have always used condom. About 80 per cent of the population identified sex work as their primary occupation (Shinde, Setia, Row-Kavi et.al 2009:41).

Male Sex Workers and Sexual Identity

The primary question which comes to our mind is whether male sex workers have a distinct sexual identity. Since the majority of male sex workers are in same-sex relationship, it seems easy to conclude that they are homosexual. But it is not simple since behaviour, in general, maybe homosexual but identity is more obscure and baffling owing to complex typologies and cultural factors. However, in the Western world studies have remained preoccupied with heterosexuality versus homosexuality debate among male sex workers. In the Western society, same-sex behaviour is generally interpreted as a distinct gay identity but in the Indian scenario men who have sex with men may or may not have a homosexual identity in public and thus same-sex behaviour is not associated with a distinct gay identity in India (Asthana and Oostvogels, 2001:708-709). Rather,

their identities are outcome of person's role in the sexual act. Thus a *kothi* is a receptive-passive partner and *Panathi*, an insertive-active partner. But both *kothi* and *panthi* may be bisexual and married. Thus a MSM in India may identify himself as gay, or *kothi*, or *panthi* or a *double-decker*.

The high degree of complexity which renders it difficult to be conclusive on the matter of their identity is evident from the study by Kumta et al (2010:29-30) who undertook research with Eight hundred thirty-one MSMs. These MSMs reported a diverse sexual behaviour which included both insertive and receptive anal intercourse with male partners. They also reported to have engaged in anal sex with their wives. Almost 25 per cent of the total sample also communicated a bisexual behavioural pattern. In terms of preference, these men preferred insertive anal sex in the first place followed by vaginal sex. Since their sexual behaviour is very diverse, one cannot arrive at a conclusion about their sexual identity just based on examination of their sexual behaviour.

The studies in the West have primarily dealt with the question of sexual orientation of male sex workers and findings are often contradictory. Many studies have established a strong correlation between male sex work and homosexuality (Kinsey et al. 1948; Hooker 1967; Gagnon and Simon 1973; Plummer 1975; Masters and Johnson 1979). Jeffery Weeks (1981:113) argued that sex work and homosexuality have often been considered inseparable phenomena if not synonymous. There is also a counter-narrative which runs contrary to the above-mentioned finding. This can be found in several contemporary research findings which tend to disprove a homosexual identity among male sex workers. Reiss (1961:103), for example, described homosexual sex work among his sample as part of a prevalent delinquent model of lower-class gang behaviour. According to Reiss, the same-sex encounters of the gang members were a reflection of the increased sexual experience but did not say anything about self-definition as homosexual. Most of the researchers were opposed to the idea of a permanent homosexual identity among male sex workers. Coombs(1974:783) interviewed 41 male sex workers aged 12-28 and argued that seventy-two per cent of his respondents were heterosexual. Coombs was not sure for the remaining respondents. He states: "Actually he probably is not homosexual. Many subjects were super masculine in appearance...Only 6 per cent defined themselves as homosexual".

MacNamara (1965) studied 37 male sex workers and concluded that his boys are homosexual, but he attributes their sexual inclination to socio-economic factors. He called this 'homosexual neurosis'. Ginsburg (1967:183), on the other hand, does not view male sex work as a socio-economic phenomenon nor does he view individual sex workers as homosexual. Ginsburg argues that the male sex worker is motivated by psychological needs for identity, self-valuation, and interaction. And this needs, according to Ginsburg, can only be achieved through physical relationships to counterbalance pathological family setup. The religious, medical, legal, and scientific discourses, by and large, view homosexuality in a bad light. It is for this reason that one is compelled to consider the negative cultural valuation of homosexuality and it cannot be denied that researcher bias may have been projected into the studies. In the existing body of researches, heterosexual researchers might have communicated their biased attitude towards homosexuality. This becomes apparent from the understanding between respondents and researcher who agreed upon a mutual denial of homosexuality and reality. Thus, we are eventually left with questionable descriptions of who male sex workers are, their sexual identity, and the individual and cultural processes involved in male sex work. Thus, there still remains an incomplete understanding of the relationship of male sex work to homosexuality in this culture.

In more recent times, a large percentage of gay youth were reportedly identified as male sex workers (Allen 1980; Fisher et al. 1982). Studies done after 1980 suggest that male sex work is becoming "gayer" (Fisher et al. 1982). Fisher's (1982) study of 79 male sex workers indicated that they were largely gay-identified (only 16.5 per cent identified themselves as heterosexual). The findings indicate that desire for sex and the support of gay peer group are motivating factors for involvement in sex work for gay-identified males. Fisher et al. do not provide any theoretical discussion of these factors. Their report leads one to believe that sex work and need for the support from gay peer group play an important role for gay youth because it encourages them to come out in open with their true identity.

Stigma, Discrimination and Criminalisation of Male Sex Workers

Till 1973 the American Psychiatric Association had categorised homosexuality as a psychopathology. Though homosexuality is not treated as a mental illness but the general attitude is fundamentally still the same. Heterosexuality is still the norm. The term ‘homophobia’ is commonly described as “fear, disgust, anger, discomfort and aversion that individuals experience in dealing with gay people” (Hudson and Ricketts 1980:358). In broadest terms, it refers to “any belief system which supports negative myths and stereotypes about homosexual people” Morin and Garfinkle (1978:30), Herek (1990:552) called it as the unreasonable fear or revulsion towards homosexuals or homosexuality. This homophobia gets manifested at both individual and societal levels and often leads to violent attacks on homosexuals. Every day they are harassed by police, local goons, health staff and the larger society. In the majority of cases, this victimisation goes unreported. (ABVA 1991; PUCL 2001).

HIV/AIDS has further added to this homophobia. In India, AIDS is seen as the disease of sex workers, truck drivers and blood donors. Homosexuals have also been made the culprit for a high percentage of HIV positive in the country. Now male sex workers, in this context, are treated as one of the high-risk groups. The prejudice has pushed male sex workers completely underground and at the same time Government does not want to acknowledge them. National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) brings out regular data on HIV prevalence in India. They have various high-risk categories for HIV like Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Injecting Drug Users (IDU), Transgender, Single Male Migrants, Long Distance Truckers and Men who Have Sex With Men (MSM). But male sex workers do not figure in these high risk categories. They are counted within the MSM group. But all MSMs are not male sex workers. So why are we hiding MSWs within the MSM category? The upsetting part is that the discrimination does not stop here. This neglected and marginalised population experiences endless violence and harassment.

Several researchers have found that male sex workers face violence, harassment, and discrimination all over the world. Their findings also point to the fact that that structural violence—“stigma, discrimination, and violence widespread throughout society and its institutions”—are responsible for the vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Chakrapani et al.

(2007:351-356) who carried out in-depth interviews with 18 *kothis* identified MSM in Chennai, concluded that *kothis* face violence and aggressive behaviour from various quarters like family and friends. This becomes even more serious when *kothis* are dealing with healthcare and legal systems. In the same study HIV-Positive *kothis* reported a more aggravated form of violence and discrimination.

Meyer (2003:682) showed that hiding ones' sexual identity is a common cause of anxiety and stress among homosexual community. This is despite the fact that the aim behind the concealment is to protect them from victimisation. Concealing sexual orientation becomes a practical ground for male sex workers. This observation has been substantiated by Padilla et al. (2008:386) who studied 72 Dominican male sex workers on stigma, social inequality, and HIV risk. It becomes apparent from the explanation which gay and bisexual men extended that their economic need propels them to undertake sex work. The male sex workers in the study were married and had children. Hiding sexual identity was their attempt to avoid the stigma associated with non-normative sexuality. This is a 'safe' practice according to them because any disclosure will result in violence and coercion.

The frequent incidents of violence which sex workers—female, male, and Transgender (TG) — face in their daily life make them accept this as an unavoidable “part of the job” (Amin 2005). For instance, an international survey with 475 sex workers (female, male, and transgender) from South Africa, Zambia, the United States, Turkey and Thailand reported a high percentage (73 per cent) of abuse and violence including rape (Farley et al. 1998). In a similar kind of study in Cambodia with TG sex workers, a high percentage (58 per cent) of abuse and rape was reported. In the Cambodian study the perpetrators were mostly policemen (Jenkins 2006:5-6). In case of feminized persons, i.e. TG or *Kothi* who are passive partner, the act of discrimination and criminalisation assumes a more brutal form because they have to face double discrimination of being a sex worker and being feminine. Such incidents have been reported from many South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Thailand (Guadamuz et al. 2006). Hanish (2006) who studies male sex workers in Jamaica observed that they constantly avoid dressing up as women, though they like it because this will invite violence, abuse and rape (Hanish 2006). The *kothis* of India undergo a high degree of oppression at the

hands of health providers who insult them, refuse to serve them and breach the norms of confidentiality (Chakrapani et al. 2007:355). In many cases, if the police recover condoms from the possession of MSMs, they at once treat them as sex workers just on the basis of such possession and target them for harassment (Amnesty International 2004; Jayasree 2004).

The existing literature clearly shows a correlation between the past experience of violence and risky sexual behaviour by MSM and TG sex workers. Camargo et al. (2002) conducted a large survey with 1000 MSM in Brazil and reported a high incidence of high-risk sexual behaviour from those MSMs who have experienced abuse and violence in the past. Similarly Best (2005), in his study with 817 MSM in the Chicago area (United States) showed similar trends. Thus MSMs with previous experience of abuse and violence reported higher incidents of unprotected sex. Parallel findings have been reported from India, Brazil, Colombia, Kenya, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Section 377 and Male Sex Workers in India

Anti sodomy laws such as Section 377 have been discarded a long time back in the West. But this colonial hangover is still intact in many post-colonial countries in Asia and Africa with few exceptions like Nepal and South Africa. Britain, the biographer of the Indian Penal Code and Section 377, decriminalised homosexuality in 1967. In 2018, parts of Section 377 were struck down to decriminalise homosexuality in India. There has been a long battle to read down or strike this colonial instrument of 1861. The movement to strike it down started when AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) and Naz Foundation approached the apex court in 2001 (Mishra 2009). Since then there were many highs and lows but the 2018 verdict by the Apex court has finally decriminalised homosexuality in India.

The conviction under Section 377 has been very low in the view of the fact it is almost impossible or quite an uphill task to catch two people who are voluntarily carrying out sexual act in private space. Gupta (2002:9) reviewed judgements under Section 377 of IPC and found that one-third of the 50 reported cases related to sexual assault or abuse of minors and the remaining was non-consensual sex between adults. Thus, there was hardly any case of consensual sex between same-sex partners. Thus there remained less

fear of undergoing trial. In fact, much of the anxiety was due to the threat of possible arrest which haunted same-sex sexualities. Section 377 gave wide scope to the State and its agencies for discrimination against homosexuals and organisations concerned with their welfare.

Homosexuals felt pushed to the margins because of the draconian nature of Section 377. Likewise, male sex workers, who mostly carry out their work from parks or public places, underwent a similar experience. They all remained under constant fear of blackmail, penalty and prosecution at the hands of authorities. The only option left to them was to keep their identity a secret from families and society. Similarly, many NGOs working with same-sex sexualities were subjected to harassment from time to time. In a shocking incident, activists of Bharosa Trust and Naz Foundation International were charged under section 377 and thereafter, arrested in Lucknow and were accused of running a gay “sex club”. This happened despite the fact that both the organisations were recognised and approved by the state AIDS control agency and have been working with high-risk groups across India. They were arrested while they were distributing condoms and educational pamphlets among MSM groups. Following their arrest, there was a nationwide protest. However, the four men could only come out after 47 days of custody (Chatterjee 2006:805). In yet another incident in 2002, Sangama, an NGO working with sexual minorities in Bangalore, was victimised by the local police by stopping stakeholders from seeking services of Sangama. The police had also banned people from visiting the office of Sangama. In 1994, it was in response to such harassment and criminalisation, AIDS Bhedbhawe Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), a non-governmental group organised the landmark protest demonstration. Activists openly demanded gay rights outside the Delhi Police headquarter. Bringing forward the fact of double standard inherent in law, Kapur (2005:32) pointed out:

The criminalisation of some activities – such as rape, adultery, and sodomy – and the non-criminalisation of other activities – such as the rape of a woman by her husband – are marked by the idea that there are certain forms of sexuality that are private, culturally accepted, and exercised legitimately within the family.

Thus law becomes the guardian of values and morals which are considered ideal even though such values are irrational. For instance, a woman raped by her husband has no redressal to this non-consensual, forcible sex but a male sex worker having consensual

sex with his client is criminal in the eyes of law. Section 377 posed many problems to carry out HIV/AIDS intervention programme with high-risk groups in India. Criminalisation of homosexuality had heightened the stigma and homophobia against same-sex sexualities. Social stigma along with the threat of punishment pushed these vulnerable and high-risk groups underground.

In the famous case of Delhi prison in 1994 where a recommendation from a group of doctors asking to distribute condoms in Tihar jail among prisoners did not go well with prison authorities. They declined the request arguing that same-sex sexual relationship is a criminal offence under Section 377 of IPC and by distributing condoms the authorities will encourage a criminal act (Misra 2009:22). It is interesting to note that the Indian government has policies for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and at the same time there was law which prevented healthcare department from carrying out the intervention programmes. The Human Rights Watch report in 2002 categorically brought out this inconsistency by Government bodies. The report pointed out that the Indian government has two sets of rules which are contradictory to each other. So one set of dialogue talks about reaching out to marginalised and vulnerable groups in their public statements, but the stakeholders (NGOs) on which the government relied for implementation of its programmes, were often victimised by law enforcement agencies (Chatterjee 2006).

Gaps in Literature

It is evident from the review that researching male sex work is not easy. There are many methodological bottlenecks. MSWs are inaccessible population and therefore most of the studies have followed purposive sampling with snowball being the popular technique. Majority of these studies have focussed on street-based male sex workers. Many researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative research design but predominantly questionnaire method has been used to collect data. Consequently, interpersonal context of sex work and personal interpretation of sex workers have been missing in studies. Thus the subjective meaning which male sex workers give to their world has been overlooked. If we want answers to many of the problems of male sex workers then we need to understand how male sex workers think, articulate and handle their world. This will throw light on many issues which are exclusively associated with MSWS. So

the new focus should be the lived realities of male sex workers which will delve deeper to understand them as individuals in their own right.

The existing studies have focused on the discourse of deviance and social control. With the coming of HIV/AIDS, MSWs were seen as a vector of HIV. Studies in the West tried to examine the sexual identity of male sex workers but the aim was more to ascertain whether they are heterosexual or homosexual. None of these studies tried to transcend the line to see how these identities are articulated and negotiated in daily life. It is in this context that one has decided to undertake this research. The purpose of this research is to explain and understand the articulation of multiple identities by male sex workers. This research will identify various components of sexual and gender identity and how these are articulated. This research will explore their lives, desires, families, and politics of non-normative sex.

The following conceptual definition of male sex worker has been used for this research: Male Sex Workers are males who offer sexual services to men in exchange for money or something in kind. They operate from various cruising spots like a public toilet, parks, railway stations, places of worships, cafes and restaurants. Many male sex workers also operate through various internet sites and smart-phone applications. This will not include transsexual (*Hijra*). It will include *kothi* (receptive male partner in same-sex sexual encounters), *panthi* or *danga* (insertive male partner in same-sex sexual encounters) and “double-deckers” (men who play both insertive and receptive role in same-sex sexual encounters).

Research Questions

This research will address the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of male sex workers? How is male sex work spatially located? How do male sex workers operate across different spaces?
2. What constitutes the meaning of ‘having sex’ to male sex workers? How do male sex workers view sex work? Do they view sex work as work or as an expression of desire?
3. How do male sex workers construct various sexual identities? How are these sexual identities presented to others?

4. How are gender relations articulated by male sex workers in everyday life? How do male sex workers construct masculinity for themselves? How do homosexual (passive male sex worker) and heterosexual (active client) masculinity interact?
5. How do male sex workers perceive themselves as part of family and kinship units? How do male sex workers identify themselves as members of the family? Do male sex workers view family as a support system or as a barrier to their homosexual identity? Do MSWs feel stereotyped or stigmatised by family members?
6. How do male sex workers view marriage? How do MSWs negotiate the institution of compulsory marriage?
7. What are the challenges in the everyday life of male sex workers? How do male sex workers negotiate legal and social barriers including social stigma and discrimination? How do they view the use of alcohol and drugs?

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of my research:

1. To identify the essence of being a male sex worker
2. To understand the relationship between space and male sex work
3. To understand the fluidity of sexuality among male sex workers
4. To understand the construction of homosexual masculinity
5. To understand and locate male sex worker as a member of the family
6. To identify the challenges in the life of male sex workers

Chapter Plan

Chapter 1 deals with method and methodology and my reflections from the field.

Chapter 2 deals with the social aspects of being a male sex worker. The category “male sex worker” has been interrogated in the light of sociological theories of sex work. With desire being a key element of male sex work, how do MSWs perceive sex work? This

chapter will explore the meanings of commercial sex work for MSWs. The chapter captures the diversity of social meanings which a male sex worker ascribes to having sex, how they classify and identify their clients, safer sex dialogues in the wake of HIV infection and how it influences sexual behaviour.

Chapter 3 will understand the relationship between spaces and sex work. Urban planning has always aimed to control any kind of non-normative expression of desire in urban spaces. Hence this chapter aims to view and understand how legal and policy approach to sex work impact male sex workers operating in these urban spaces. Space has always been an important aspect of sex work and therefore this chapter will map the geographies of sex work in Mumbai City. The focus of this chapter has been the types of spaces that are used by male sex workers in Mumbai City to get a picture of “micro-spaces” for sex work. Study of spatial and temporal practices with the focus on how male sex workers experience and perceive space and time will unravel the nuances and complexities of urban spaces

Chapter 4 deals with the diversity of sexual behaviours and identities among MSWs. This diversity of sexual identities is one of the most astounding characters of male sex workers in India. Male sex workers who are MSM by behaviour have multiple identities. When the male sex worker is in service of his client, he takes on different roles as per the demands. In the context of male sex work, sexuality is culturally produced in multiple ways and male sex workers constantly negotiate these culturally determined sexual scripts. The chapter utilises the social constructionist framework and queer theory to understand the sexual identity of male sex workers. The second part of this chapter deals with gender relations as articulated by male sex workers in everyday life. The chapter explores non-normative sex and tensions about masculinity largely associated with male sex workers. Same-sex sexualities generally disengage themselves from hegemonic masculinities but are this disengagement true? Gay masculinities are subordinated and marginalised in society so that patriarchy can be reproduced through heterosexuality. This chapter explores if homosexuality is perceived as a weakness for male sex workers. Do male sex workers feel subordinated and marginalized because of their (lack of) masculinity? How do they respond to this lack of masculinity? Many male sex workers hold hegemonic ideals such as virility and bodybuilding as key to

their work. This creates a situation where some gay masculinities who do not ascribe to hegemonic norms become subordinate to those masculinities who are holding on to norms of hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter 5 will locate male sex workers in the family setup and will try to understand their ties with significant others in the family. This chapter will further explore the outcomes of compulsory marriage for male sex workers who are homosexual by behaviour. The chapter tries to find answers to some important questions like how do male sex workers perceive themselves as part of family and kinship units? How do male sex workers identify themselves as members of the family? Do male sex workers view family as a support system or as a barrier to their homosexual identity?

Chapter 6 will explore and understand various challenges in the lives of male sex workers. Male sex workers carrying out work which is closely associated with shame, guilt, stigma, criminalisation and AIDS, makes them vulnerable to abuse and victimisation. This chapter will try to understand the precarity of their existence.

The Conclusion will wrap up the main themes discussed in the thesis, and provide insights into the dimensions of looking at sexuality in a non-conformist ways, where MSM and MSW are incorporated through legal sanctions in social domains.

Sociological Significance of the Study

The present study places male sex workers at the centre of discussion. This initiative is very important in view of the fact that they have remained understudied which is evident from a very little body of literature on the subject particularly in the case of India. Given the understudied status of the subject, leaving it to its own course will amount to perpetuation of exclusion. A sound understanding of complex subject will not emerge unless greater degree of attention is paid to it. The effort is to gain a sociological understanding of the subject matter by mapping its interconnections within the complex social system.

Whatever literature is available from the Indian subcontinent is contribution of a few dedicated NGOs working with the MSM groups for HIV prevention and control. But these studies have predominantly addressed issues of HIV and STI and other health-re-

lated aspects. But a male sex worker is more than just a vector of HIV/AIDS. There are other vulnerabilities which are outcome of their work and the existing socio-cultural situations. Thus, there is an apparent need to go beyond the study of MSWs with fixated reference to HIV and AIDS. So this work, by addressing the gap in the literature through understanding the complex interplay of various factors, will address this gap and will try to view them from non-HIV and non-health standpoints. Further, it will also attempt to put an end to the myth that alternative sexuality is purely a western idea and concerns of 'erotic justice' are unfamiliar to Indian and South Asian cultures.

CHAPTER ONE

Methodology and Reflections from the Field

Chicago School emphasised the importance of viewing the world from the perspectives of those who have always been ignored and were seldom listened to—criminal, vagrant and immigrant. Thus according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007:10), they were “giving voice” to points of view of people marginalised in the society. This research stems from this conception. Male sex workers are non-existent for us. They do not exist in government records and policy plans. There is no such category as ‘male sex worker’ or ‘male prostitute’ in the health department or legal documents in India. So when I entered the field, it seemed pertinent to bring out their narratives. While writing about male sex workers, an effort has been made to understand them in their social context—family, kin, clients, friends and significant others. Since this research dwells upon the narratives of male sex workers, a little discussion is necessary here about the nature of narrative, especially narrative from the margin is essential. Narratives from the margin, (unlike dominant traditions of master narrative which are by far the most temporal, thematic, sequential, linear and totalising,) are disjointed, non-sequential, non-linear and unchronological. However, their narrative speaks of their mind and body. It also explains the paradoxical interplay of their connectedness and disconnectedness with the larger social order. One thus acknowledges the centrality of narrative especially when there is no alternative way to address the question of ‘absence despite presence’ in relation to the lives of male sex workers.

I interviewed 34 male sex workers who sell sex to men, in Mumbai, and sometimes to clients in nearby cities. The chief aim of this work has been to understand how men sell sex, how they organise their work and their interactions with their clients, family, peers, health providers and other significant people. The work has further looked at various meanings male sex workers associate with sex, work and sex work. My focus is to understand male sex workers in their social context. Thus, the focus of this research is to know male sex workers i.e. their biography in the social context. Bogdan and Biklen (2007:9) pointed out that Chicago sociologists in the 1920s highlighted “the intersection

of social context and biography” that lies at “the roots of contemporary descriptions of qualitative research as holistic”.

This study is designed within a qualitative framework and is ethnographic in orientation. The review of literature shows that majority of the studies have utilised traditional empirical analytical paradigm to research male sex workers and thus questionnaires were the most popular technique to collect data. Though this approach has provided us with data on male sex work, the interpersonal and socio-political context of sex as work has not been captured. Similarly, the social meanings and interpretations of male sex workers are missing in most of the research. Therefore in-depth narrative interviews have been used to understand male sex workers and their context in a better light. Ethnography has commonly been summarised as ‘description, albeit description in context, but not exactly theory’ (Nader 2011:211). Doing ethnography entails living with people and getting to know them by talking to them and through careful observation to begin understanding their world and worldview. Writing ethnography has always been considered complicated. There are various issues. Are we able to record what people say about their everyday life? How do we see and perceive their everydayness? How do they want us to see their everyday life? Ethnography is thus not a mere description. It is also theoretical in its mode of description. Indeed, ethnography is a theory of description.

My research was planned to understand male sex workers in their context but there was a serious problem. Male sex workers are a hidden population and it is difficult to know them. Searching for them and fetching information from them about them has been an archaeological exercise of excavation in a metaphorical sense. It is here that GAURAV, a community-based organisation working with male sex workers in Mumbai came out in support of my research. Walby’s (2012) research with male escorts resonated with similar dilemmas of the researcher. Walby opined that there is always a limitation to knowing utilising interviews and narratives. However, “certain projects and certain sites of research do not lend themselves to knowing subjects, but rather knowing only their narratives,” (Walby 2012:57). Ethnography using participant observation begins with entry into the field and establishing a relationship with the community the researcher wants to study. Slowly the researcher works with the people by living with

them and tries to understand the world of those who are being studied by the researcher (Bryman 2006:101). For sex work research, this kind of participant observation is nearly impossible for many reasons ranging from ethical to moral and many more.

Initially, I made requests to visit cruising spots with the staff of GAURAV but entry was denied to me. According to GAURAV, KP (key population is the term used to refer to people GAURAV is working for) will never come out for testing and health checkups if they see an unfamiliar face with them. The closest I could come to observe them was while visiting GAURAV's office at Juhu Koliwada. Thus I decided to offer my services to GAURAV for three months, in the initial days of my fieldwork, for work related to the organisation. This helped me familiarise myself with male sex workers visiting GAURAV. After three months of volunteering for GAURAV, I formally started my fieldwork.

Due to the marginalisation of sex workers, heightened moral and political discourse, and general public ignorance, sex work research is already “at the boundaries” (Dawthorne 2015:34). Therefore, interviewing respondents, with open-ended questionnaires, seemed ethical in this situation. There were times of constant re-engagement and constant questioning of my assumptions about male sex workers and their world. I tried to be upfront and open about my position, background and attitude towards sex work, homosexuality and lives on the margins. As I am a trained social worker, my orientations were already subjectively defined in relation to the objective analyses of sex work as a profession. I had to carefully work with any bias that would be immediately noticeable to my respondents.

Interviewing for Narrative Reconstruction

At the planning stage of my research, I had planned in-depth interviews with my informants. During pilot testing, I conducted 4 interviews. My first interview changed my way of looking at interviews. I was sitting in a small room with my first informant and I asked him to tell me about himself. There was no stopping, stories kept flowing out about his life, family, space, sex work, clients, friends, violence, drugs, partners and more. Probably there were just two instances when I had to ask him to elaborate and explain. My interview schedule kept lying in my bag next to me. This is how I entered

into narrative-based interviewing for my research. One of the most useful definitions of narratives is by Hinchman and Hinchman (1997: xvi) where narratives are described as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it.

Thus going by the above definition, narratives are chronological, meaningful and social in nature (Elliott 2005:4). Laboy and Waletzky (1967:12) have defined narratives as “a method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred”. The notion of ‘stories’ or ‘narratives’ has been of crucial importance to our research (Plummer 1995:5). Through narratives, individuals give meaning to their lives, affirm their identities, and present their relationships as viable and valid. While I was preparing my interview schedule initially there was an emphasis on the difficult life of male sex workers, stigma, guilt and broken homes but when stories were told there were narrative about hope, aspirations, future plans along with everything which was planned. Thus narratives bring out more than a researcher can plan. They are wholesome. Walby's (2012) research with male escorts utilised narrative form of interviewing and opined that narrative interviewing allows respondents to provide a thick description of their relations with others. In a narrative style of interviewing, any interjection is only made when interviewee goes completely off-track. Otherwise, any story shared by the respondent has something to tell us about his life.

Since there is a lack of research on male sex workers in India, narrative interviewing helped me gain access to stories located at deeper terrains. In narrative interviewing it is the informant who leads the interview. For instance, if an informant starts describing intimacy and emotions instead of responding straight to my questions about his relationship with clients then my next question will be re-oriented to know more about intimacy and emotions. At the outset, I had a preconceived view about their relationship with clients since I had assumed their relations with their clients to be violent and abusive. Contrary to my preconception, it turned out that informant–client relationship is about negotiation on equal footing. Walby (2012) opined that narrative interviewing requires an interviewer who is listening to the respondent and reflexively building the dialogue. Plummer (1995) also points out this interactive nature of narrative interviewing or ‘sto-

rytelling' as he would describe it. For Plummer, these stories are 'joint actions' where two actors interact and one is the storyteller and the other plays the role of coxer who would guide the storyteller to tell his/her story in a particular way. Thus, Plummer (1995:21) opined that an interviewer can play a very crucial role in moulding the nature of stories that will be told. For my research, I utilised the methodology of narrative and unstructured interviews wherein I would just start the interview by asking them to "speak about yourself". Informants told their stories and decided for themselves as to which parts were more important than others. As they feel comfortable they shared intimate details.

The Field

The study is located in Mumbai, the commercial capital of India. For this study, I approached GAURAV, a community-based organisation of MSM (men who have sex with men) and MSW (male sex workers). It is located in Juhu Koliwada, a working-class neighbourhood in the fisher community colony. GAURAV has a two-room office where MSM and MSW drop in to seek medical assistance, medicines, condoms and some 'togetherness'. *Gaurav* is run by MSM and MSW from the community. GAURAV stands for Greater Action of Unity Rights Advocacy and Visibility and is a non-profitable Community-Based Organisation (CBO) registered with the Charity Commission in Mumbai in 2010. According to Kumar Shetty, the president of the CBO, GAURAV works for "promotion, protection, and enhancement of health and rights of men and trans women engaged in sex work, male having sex with male, and Transgender community members since 2010". In recent years Gaurav has extended its services to Nagpur and Aurangabad districts of Maharashtra. GAURAV is working in five tehsils (administrative unit) out of nine in Aurangabad District and there are 17 sites in Nagpur Urban Area where health services are being offered to MSM under the targeted intervention project.

There is a history and historical context as to how *Gaurav* came into being. It all started in 2004 when Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) funded a project called the *Aastha* Project to fight HIV and AIDS among sex workers of various typologies in Mumbai and Thane districts of Maharashtra. The project was steered by Family Health International - 360 which was working with 15 non-profit organisations as partners of

this project. These organisations were located across Mumbai and Thane districts. These 15 organisations were directly working with sex workers. Humsafar Trust (HST) was one of the 15 non-profit organisations which were partner of this consortium of organisations. In the later period, these 15 organisations facilitated the formulation of community-based organisations, under their care and support, of sex workers of different typologies. Since HST was working with MSM and gay people so it facilitated the formation of GAURAV, a community-based organisation of MSM and MSW. In 2010 Gaurav was formally registered as a non-profit community-based organisation. The seven committee members of GAURAV have been instrumental in establishing this organisation as a place where MSM and MSW can walk in without any hesitation. GAURAV has partnered with various networks of organisations including Aastha Parivaar (Federation of Sex Workers Organisations in Mumbai and Thane), INFOSEM (India Network for Sexual Minorities), NSWP (Global Network of Sex Workers Project), CONNECT (Network of Community-Based Organizations in India responds to health and human rights of Sexual Minorities), APCOM (Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health, and APNSW (Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers). It has indeed been phenomenal progress for GAURAV in few years. They operate from a small office space but have managed to tie up with such a vast network of organisations. It points towards their effort and dedication to the cause of MSM and MSW in Mumbai.

GAURAV's intervention aims to promote safe sex practices and reduction in high-risk sexual behaviour among the community members. They disburse IEC (information, education and communication) materials among their population and work towards increasing the accessibility of voluntary counselling and testing including STI (sexually transmitted infections) testing. GAURAV has created a safe space for MSW where they can come anytime with their problems. It fosters a healthier sexual attitude and behaviour among the key population. GAURAV also works towards providing access to support groups and services for the MSM population who are living with HIV/AIDS. Since the time of its inception, GAURAV has consistently worked towards increasing awareness, through advocacy and networking, to reduce stigma and discrimination against MSM. GAURAV believe that there has always been a lack of understanding about the issues of MSM and MSW and members of the MSW community are often stigmatised and discriminated. In the same context, a lack of acceptance from their fam-

ilies and society further enhances their vulnerability to contracting STIs and increases their risk-taking behaviour.

Besides having taken good care of the targeted population, GAURAV has, through its intervention programs for male sex workers, reached several sites in Mumbai where MSM and MSW groups were not served earlier. There were approximately 37 hotspots between Churchgate to Chembur and Andheri to Mahim where health services were not available for community members. GAURAV soon started addressing this concern by taking a particular view of these left out 37 hotspots. GAURAV has been providing services to community people at identified hotspots with funds from the Mumbai District AIDS Control Society (MDACS) along with other funding national and international bodies.

Entry into the Field

There has been a long tryst with the 'field' for this research. I planned my pilot study in the winter of 2015. Initially, I had planned to carry out this research in Delhi. So, I started approaching NGOs working with MSM (men who have sex with men) and MSWs (male sex workers) in Delhi. Knowing the limitations of availability and accessibility to male sex workers in the Indian context, it was important to explore these pertinent questions about male sex workers in Delhi. I utilised contacts of NGOs working with the MSM population and the first contact I made was with a friend from the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO). But this meeting turned out to be disheartening. The programme officer who has been looking after MSM at NACO for many years denied access to any records on male sex workers and even went to the extent of saying that there are no MSWs in Delhi. With HIV/AIDS, there has emerged a new politics of aid for HIV intervention programmes. Owing to various socio-cultural exclusions in the view of stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS, funding for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in the MSM sector in south Asia has not been forthcoming. Both Governments and funding agencies are cautious about supporting programmes with 'gay' ideology. Gay activists have started the debates on gender and sexuality, sexual behaviour and health at various national and international platforms and supported national AIDS programmes, insisting that government and NGOs should invest in the 'MSM sector'. If there is so much resistance and caution among Government and fund-

ing agencies about who is to be assisted financially, one can very well imagine the plight of male sex workers. Thus NACO does not recognise male sex workers as one of the high-risk groups in India but rather uses the term 'MSM' for all typologies of same-sex sexualities. Therefore those organisations which get their funding from NACO will not identify the category 'MSW' even when an MSM worker is into commercial transactional sex.

I also established contact in Delhi with an organisation named Aids Healthcare Foundation (AHF) in Sarvodaya Enclave in Delhi. AHF Federation is a consortium of AIDS Service Organisations (ASOs) and community groups committed to HIV/AIDS education, prevention, advocacy, medical treatment and support for the LGBTQI population across the nation. I met Bismaya Raulo in April 2016 to discuss my research and to find out if AHF can support me in my research endeavour. After listening to me patiently, Bismaya told me clearly that most of the organisations in Delhi use the term MSM and even if MSM are into transactional sex they still identify them as MSMs and not as MSWs. It is here that I realised that if the population I was going to work with for the following three years was to be a "hidden population" under the umbrella of MSM, it would not be possible to complete this research. I, therefore, decided to shift my research to Mumbai. In the process of networking with these organisations, I learnt a lot about the politics of funding and aid in this sector.

The pilot study was carried out in the months of June and July 2016 in Mumbai. Since my association with Astha Parivaar and GAURAV dates back to 2009, both provided me with easier access to GAURAV. I had Joined Family Health International-360 as a Manager for Aastha Parivaar, a consortium of 15 community-based organisations of sex workers of different typologies in 2009. GAURAV was also part of this consortium. Between 2009 and 2011, I interacted with functionaries of GAURAV on regular basis on various issues. In 2016 I contacted Seema Sayyad, manager of Aastha Parivaar who introduced me to the new governing body members of GAURAV.

My first contact was Kumar Shetty, president of GAURAV. Kumar invited me to visit GAURAV and he, in turn, introduced me to Dhanush, who became my mentor and guide at GAURAV for the next 3 years. Thus I got my entry into GAURAV as a re-

searcher. Initially, I spent three months visiting GAURAV, to become familiar with the working of the community-based organisation. In 2011, GAURAV was a small group with no funding and was dependent on Aastha Parivaar for funds to run their everyday functions. In the next 5 years, GAURAV created a niche for itself. It became the space for MSM and MSW. They managed to get funds from district and state AIDS control organisations as well as funds from many international bodies including Global Funds to make a difference in the lives of their community members.

Sampling

The only criterion for selecting the 34 participants, all of whom were MSW, living and working in Mumbai, was their personal experience of working as a male sex worker. So keeping the methodology in mind, a sample size of 30 was planned at the initial stage but later I managed to conduct a few more interviews hence the sample size of this research was 34. I was well aware of the fact that male sex workers are most clandestine and I will not have easy access to the population. Therefore, it was a purposive sampling method with the snowball technique. Initial interviews were arranged by my contact in the field, Dhanush, and then respondents helped me by recommending their friends. However, getting an interview with a male sex worker was challenging. Very often scheduled interviews would not materialise despite confirmation from my prospective respondents. They were very reluctant to talk to a stranger. They were comfortable talking about HIV, condoms, sexually transmitted infections (STI) and GAURAV but the moment the focus shifted to them, they were uncomfortable. There were interviews where respondents later denied what they had previously said in the audio recording of the interviews.

For the pilot study, I had conducted 4 in-depth interviews. Truly, as I discovered for myself, life is very precarious for people on the street, especially during monsoon. I had planned for 30 interviews and I finished my 30 interviews in December 2018. But a particular question kept troubling me—all my informants were associated with GAURAV. I wanted to interview some male sex workers who were not associated with any organisation. I got a breakthrough when I got a call from one of my informants who informed me that he has two friends who are ready to be interviewed. Initially, I tried conducting telephonic interviews with these two young men but telephonic conversation remained

far from smooth due to frequent call drops and uneasiness in informants to answer such intimate details about their sexuality and work. They feared being overheard by others. They, therefore, needed a secure and private space to share their narratives. It eventually led me to meet them in person. I, therefore, revisited Mumbai for my last 4 interviews in the month of May 2019. The last four interviews were carried out from a cafe in Juhu near the beach.

Even though I interviewed four male sex workers who were not associated with GAURAV yet since the majority of my informants are associated with GAURAV, findings based on my sample is very likely to be characterised by some sense of commonality. All of them were exposed to a minimum level of awareness about HIV/AIDS, STI, and health. They were familiar with the advocacy efforts of GAURAV and LGBT rights. They were vocal about their problems but the moment discussion about personal and familial life was initiated there were many awkward moments and pauses. Many of them refused to record their interviews. Out of 34 informants, 6 refused audio recording of interviews. Therefore, there are voice recordings of 28 interviews and for six interviews I relied on 'recall and write after the interview'. One interview was lost due to the failure of the recorder but field notes were available. Besides 34 interviews of male sex workers, I also interacted with 10 female sex workers and 2 TG sex workers through a focussed group discussion at Aastha Parivaar's office in Kurla, Mumbai. I also interacted with two consultants of MDACS, the manager of Aastha Parivaar, and two programme staff of Aastha Parivaar. These interviews with female and TG sex workers were carried out to know their understanding of male sex work and how they interact with male sex workers when they share the space while working. To understand the question of space in Mumbai, I visited 10 hotspots where GAURAV provides services to male sex workers. I visited these places on my own like a regular person on the road. Most of these visits took place during late evenings. I was accompanied by a male friend during these visits.¹¹The table below describes the demographic details of 34 male sex workers. All names and other markers of identities have been changed to maintain confidentiality and to protect the identity of respondents.

¹¹ Chapter three provides more details about these visits where I enquired about relationship between sex work and space in Mumbai.

Table 1: The Sample

	Pseu- donym	Age	Educa- tion	Sexual identity	Number of years in Sex work	Place of origin	Kind of Sex work
R1	Rishi	24	12th	Versatile	3 years	Gujarat	Escort
R2	Samay	24	11th pass	Kothi	8 years	Hyder- abad	Street based and app based
R3	Aiba	25	10th pass	Kothi	7 years	Mumbai	Street based
R4	Ishi	23	12th pass	Kothi	10 years	Nasik	Street based and app based
R5	Akki	21	BMS	Bisexual	4 years	Tamil Nadu	App based and escort
R6	Amitesh	38	12 pass	Gay/Di- vorced	17 years	Gujarat	Escort
R7	satyam	26	12th pass	Versatile	2 yers	Gujarat	Escort
R8	Aapaa	37	12th pass	Kothi	10 years	Hyder- abad	Street based
R9	Dhanush	31	PhD	Bisexual	7 years	Gujarat	Left sex work
R10	Nikunj	30	12 pass	bisexual/ Married	7 years	Maha- rashtra	Escort
R11	Neel	30	10th pss	Gay	12 years	Rajasthan	App based and escort
R12	Devo	23 yers	12th pass	Bisexual	4 years	Hyder- abad	Escort
R13	Noor	30	12th pass	Bisexual	9 years	Lucknow	Escort
R14	Krushal	35	12th pass	bisexual/ Married	14	Mumbai	Left sex work
R15	Manoj	28	12th pass	Bisexual	8 years	Ratlam	App based
R16	Garry	29	Bcom	Gay	7	Kerala	App based and escort
R17	Samuel	19	10th pass	Gay	5	Hyder- abad	App based and escort
R18	Chintan	30	12th pass	Bisexual	5	Beed, Maha- rashtra	App based and escort
R19	Nikunj	28	12th pass	Gay	3 years	Nasik	App based

	Pseu- donym	Age	Educa- tion	Sexual identity	Number of years in Sex work	Place of origin	Kind of Sex work
R20	Durg	19	BBA 2nd year	Gay	7	Maha- rashtra	App based and street based
R21	Utpal	35	10th pass	Bisexual	18 years	Ahmed- abad	Pimp and app based escort
R22	Samay	24	12 pass	Bisexuak	4 years	Kerala	App based and escort
R23	Arnav	28	12th pass	Bisexual	8 years	Ahmad- abad	App based and escort
R24	Aslam	42	10th pass	Bisexual / Married	18yeras	Uttar Pradesh	Street based and app based
R25	Krishna	30	10th pass	Kothi	10 years	Uttar Pradesh	Street based
R26	Sandeep	35	12th pass	Bisexual/ Married	16 yeras	Mumbai	Pimp and app based escort
R27	Asif	30	10th pass	Gay	10 years	Mumbai	App based and escort
R28	Vijay	38	12th pass	Gay	14 years	Maha- rashtra	App based and escort
R29	Karun	21	12 pass	Bisexual	4 years	Mumbai	Escort
R30	Jeet	25	BA	Bisexual	7 years	Hyder- abad	App based and escort
R31	Aditya	31	10th pass	Gay	10 years	Nagpur	Street based and app based
R32	Surendar	28	12th pass	Bisexual	7 years	Rajasthan	App based
R33	Ankit	34	12th pass	Versatile	10 years	Valsad	App based
R34	Suresh	19	10th pass	Gay	4 years	Mumbai	App based

Of the 34 male sex workers, 17 identify themselves as bisexual, 9 as gay, 5 as kothi and 3 as versatile. The youngest informant was 19 years old and the oldest was 42 years old. The median age of the sample was 26 years. All 34 male sex workers were educated where 18 were 12th pass, 3 graduates, one PhD and rest 12 were 10th pass. After data has been collected, the onus to prove the soundness of one's claims depends on the analytical process of data collected. Smith (2005:135) called the research encounters between a researcher and informant 'data dialogues'. There are many levels of such data dialogues—the primary data dialogues are the preliminary interaction between the researcher and people interviewed. The secondary data dialogues are between the researcher and the transcript of recorded interviews. I have utilised content analysis of interviews to bring out social and cultural meanings and emphasise which male sex workers added to their narratives and stories. Schreier (2012:21) identifies certain features of qualitative content analysis like interpretive, naturalistic, situational, reflexive, having emergent flexibility, inductive, case-oriented, and putting emphasis on validity. The research aimed to bring out the point of view of male sex workers and the social and cultural situation in which they live. Further, there was an attempt to retrace the historical contours of their life on the basis of details related to their past experiences and situations which were useful in dealing with the social and cultural conditions of male sex workers.

After transcription of interviews in a verbatim manner with a focus on pauses, rhythm and hesitations, I began with reading and re-reading transcripts. After several readings of transcripts, themes emerged and data was further analysed to look for the thematic patterns in the text. Thematic patterns were then studied in light of existing theoretical works. Altheide and Schneider (2013:5) view ethnographic content analysis as a blend of objective content analysis and classical participant observation that is intended to reveal "how a researcher interacts with documentary materials". My presence in the field was legitimised as a social worker seeking to translate their narratives into a comprehensive sociological narrative, objectively stated in terms accessible to medical social workers, and to policy framers and governmental organisations. Agrawal (2008) took a similar role to understand the Bedia women in sex work in parts of India. She acknowledges taking up the roles of a social worker and teacher for gaining greater access to members of the community. Agrawal (2008:17) further held that "although I

never hid my intentions from the members of the community, it was also clear to me that making them too obvious might prove detrimental to my desire to win their confidence”.

Situating Reflexivity

Reflexivity has become an important component of doing research, especially when we deal closely with people’s lives. Thus research with qualitative methods where subjectivity does become part of the process and reflexivity is the tool to transform this subjectivity into an opportunity. The etymological meaning of the word ‘reflexive’ is to bend back upon oneself (Finlay and Gough 2003:x). Thus the researcher will analyse the dynamics of the research process where the researcher and researched are constantly negotiating their position and power. Reflexivity assumes critical self-reflection by the researcher about his/her role in the research process. It may range from one's social background, age, gender to behaviour and attitude towards subject matters. Therefore it requires acknowledgement of how as researchers we co-construct our research findings. As researchers, we must highlight our motives, attitudes and interests, which impact the research process and the research findings or narratives. Recognising ones’ personal dimensions is considered enriching and informative in qualitative research. In other words, the question is that of research integrity in the epistemic process wherein the researcher gets entangled into three clear layers of the process before he or she formulates a specific or general claim. The first layer involves interaction with the field and the respondents. One descends upon the surface of the second layer as soon as one has completed the fieldwork. At the second level, the interaction is with the data which undoubtedly keeps taking the researcher back into the field through nostalgic recollection. The final layer is the inescapable cycle of the objective process of analysis and subjective process of reflection and interpretation. Thinking beyond this circuitous cycle remains a matter of concern.

The edited collection by Clifford and Marcus (1986) *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* marked a turning point in the anthropological literature. The authors moved towards a postmodern stance which cast doubt that any method, theory or tradition had a privileged claim to authoritative knowledge. It pushed qualitative researchers into a ‘new paradigm, placing reflexivity at the centre of methodological

thinking' (Seale 1999:160). Postmodern researchers offered a more nuanced and radical form of reflexivity where they focused on the negotiated, relative and socially constructed nature of the research process. Clifford and Marcuse critiqued the privileged position of the researcher and offered a new kind of relationship between the researcher and the researched where power relations and boundaries are blurred. This unbalanced power relation between researcher and researched was also highlighted by Hertz who urged researchers to be aware of their power position. She argues that researchers are imposed at all stages of the research process — from the questions they ask to those they ignore, from who they study to who they ignore, from problem formulation to analysis, representation and writing — to produce less distorted accounts of the social world (Hertz 1997:viii).

Clifford pointed out that all descriptions by researchers are "partial truths" and inevitably subjective and incomplete. Thus there is no way of getting at the "complete truth" behind these narratives (Clifford 1986:19). But reflexivity extends beyond the personal domain. Wilkinson (1988:494) discussed 'functional reflexivity' *viz.*, one's role as a researcher and the effects this might have on the research process. It focuses attention on the different identities presented within the research and the interactions between the researcher and participants. Here, the principal concern is the distribution of power and status within the research process. Although many qualitative researchers are committed to democratic forms of inquiry where the voices of participants are encouraged and respected, it is virtually impossible to escape researcher-participant relationships structured by inequalities (Parker 1992). After all, it is the researcher who generally develops an idea, formulates the research questions and organises the format of the research. For many qualitative researchers, such taken-for-granted ideas and professional routines should be destabilised as far as possible (Taylor & White 2000).

We have also seen a surge of interest in writing processes and innovative styles. Writers (for instance, Geertz 1988) now favour less authoritative and more self-critical texts which explicitly acknowledge that research findings are partial, partisan and fundamentally anchored in the social context. Self-reflexive experimental writing forms (for instance Tyler 1987 and Ashmore 1989), replete with parody, irony and scepticism, are

favoured as being more in tune with our postmodern world. Creative and evocative representations are also seen to enable researchers to relate differently to their material.

The very first problem I encountered was during my pilot interview with one kothi-identified male sex worker who was using many terms and terminologies which I was unable to understand. Upon enquiry, I found that some male sex workers use *ulti* language used by Transgender and Hijra community where they use different terms and terminologies to address a person viz., sex work is called *pann* and TG who dresses up like a woman is called *saatlewali*. Initially, I was not familiar with this coded language and when one of the informants asked me if I understand their lingo. I requested him to familiarise me with the frequently used terms and words. It helped me immensely for my later interviews. My mother tongue is Hindi and besides this, I read, write and speak English. 15 male sex workers were from different parts of Maharashtra and many others have spent significant time in Mumbai and therefore all informal communication at GAURAV would take place in Marathi. Since I had stayed in Mumbai for four years in 2008-11, I was a little familiar with the language. But I always felt that if Marathi would have been my mother tongue I would have had more detailed narratives and stories because such stories never form part of the formal interview process but are part of their banters, jokes in informal gatherings which I would be part of but would not understand the joke.

Sabine Grenz (2005) while studying the power relation between researcher and researched cite the work of Mies (1978) and opined that feminist social research believes in bringing out the voices of the marginalised. This kind of research that brings out knowledge from below has been considered important since it provides knowledge that brings about social change (Harding 1993). Haraway (1990) held that in this kind of social research, researchers are considered more dominant and powerful than the subject matter which is being studied. This perspective has helped in the sensitisation of researchers about their respondents. As I have described above that I as a researcher used narrative style of interviewing which was an interactive process yet when I look back I realised that my interviews made use of some asymmetrical power relation with my respondents. While my participants were talking and narrating to me about their lives including their sexual lives, I was just listening to them. Many feminist researchers have

criticised this methodology because in research on marginalised groups it is a way to establish a hierarchy between researchers and researched since participants give information while researchers remain silent (Oakley 1997; Finch 1993). Further, I gave very little information about my own private life in order to keep the distance which might have had a tangible influence on some of the interviews, as I sometimes felt participants' curiosity, and, certainly, the fact that I did not have anything to confess to them marked my power position.

It is in this context that I would bring in the story of one of my informants. He is one of the founding members of GAURAV and I know him since 2009 through my work at FHI. I will call him Mayank (pseudonym). We were always comfortable with each other (I thought so). In the coming years when GAURAV established itself as an organisation for MSM and started functioning smoothly and started getting projects and funds, this particular informant of mine left sex work. On my second visit to Mumbai for fieldwork, I expressed my desire to interview him. Mayank happily consented to the interview. He asked me about the nature of the interview. We started and for a long time, he talked about GAURAV's achievements and what all they have been doing to make it a successful change-maker in the lives of male sex workers and MSM. It was a detailed story about GAURAV and how they encountered problems from the mother organisation and funding sources. Afterwards, when I changed the nature of the interview to talk about his personal life and family he told me to stop the interview as there was something important to attend. After this, I kept requesting him to finish the interview but for the next two years, I could not manage to complete the interview. Of late, I realised in the process that he was not willing to share his personal life. I knew him for many years and there was an image I had of him. Probably, he also did not want to shatter that image. Probably there were too many uncomfortable memories and incidents which he did not want to share with me. Thus, there is a balancing of this unbalanced power equation where the interviewee can exercise his position and may refuse to participate or do not share the information. Even the refusal to participate or hesitation in answering some particular kinds of question points towards some life experience which the interviewee does not want to share. Later while conducting a focused group discussion with female sex workers I came to know that Mayank was born in Kamathipura where his mother was a sex worker.

After this incident, I did not interview anyone whom I knew previously. Thus all my informants were unknown to me. Mine knowing them would have made them uncomfortable. But Mayank is the reason that I decided to take upon this particular research. While I was working with FHI-360 sometime in 2009, one day he came to my office for a meeting of stakeholders and looked very tired and stressed. I asked him if everything is fine and he responded:

M: I am very stressed.

R: Why, what happened?

M: I broke with my boyfriend last week. I have not slept since then... (a long pause) ...do you know someone in X school (naming a prominent catholic school in Mumbai).

R: No, but why?

M: I have to get my son admitted, he is already three and a half years old.

R: Oh! You have a son! (I did not know that he was married till this point).

M: Yes

This duality of his existence was a surprise to me as in my role as a social worker, which I used to project myself into the field, I was working towards reducing and preventing HIV and failed to see beyond my work — the standard operating procedures (SOPs), the training manuals and guides and deadlines. But this conversation kept flashing in my mind and when I was planning my research proposal I wrote two different proposals but in the end, I decided to delve deeper to understand the lives and struggles of male sex workers.

Sexuality: Female Researcher Interviewing Men Who Sell Sex

This research was not just a process where a female researcher interviewed male participants. There were many uncomfortable details. The female researcher was interviewing males who sell sex and they do not identify as heterosexual males (at least to me). I think it was not easy for them to come out to a 'stranger' woman researcher. Grenz (2005:2093) while interviewing heterosexual male clients of female sex workers experienced a different kind of power relation where she stressed the privileged position of her participants who could buy sex. She further noticed that "participants would not only talk about their needs but would actually project them onto me. This, in turn, made me, as a woman and a potential object of their desire, potentially vulnerable". In my case I was interviewing gay and bisexual males and since homosexuality is constructed

in opposition to heterosexuality, therefore what Queen (1997) articulated about sexuality in general, and with it, male sexuality, being oppressed holds true to an extent.

On various occasions, during the fieldwork, I realised that my being a female, my gender, also played role in the outcome of the research to some extent. I felt that four interviews of kothi-identified male sex workers were very detailed and one of the longest ones. They were comfortable talking about everything. Questions of sexuality did not fluster them. In fact, there were so many details that I got flustered on my first interview with one of the four kothi-identified male sex workers. I felt uncomfortable with the language and descriptions. I spoke to few friends and the best advice I received was “but this is what you want to hear... details... so train yourself”. On the other hand, while I was interviewing bisexual male sex workers, they did not seem very comfortable talking about sex and sexuality at the beginning. In the later interviews, I had trained myself and almost nothing (shared during the interview) would unsettle me. But I feel that there were few facts which were not shared with me because I was a woman researcher. Stories about sexuality and sexual experience were not as detailed as narrated by Kothi-identified male sex workers. There was some amount of discomfort. I requested many times for the visit to the cruising spot along with outreach workers and peer educators of GAURAV. I was told that people from the community (MSM and MSW) will not be comfortable. Therefore, all visits to the cruising spots were carried out by me like any other regular visitor. Moreover, I could not stay late at the cruising spot, beyond 10:00 pm. I did not feel comfortable beyond this time. GAURAV runs from 2:30 pm to 8:00 pm from Monday to Saturday. But I would not conduct interviews beyond 7:00 pm. I never pester any informant to take me to the cruising spot they visit. Once I was denied by the staff of GAURAV I made it a point not to transcend that line. On all these occasions I felt that a male researcher would have gone deeper in revealing the question of space and male sex work in Mumbai.

While in the field, I always told myself that I have to be strong and firm. But, why? Probably that is my training as a migrant female student in Delhi. We were told by our seniors and friends to be vigilant all the time and be firm so that no one can harm us. Since Delhi was always perceived by us as an unsafe place for girls, we were always told to be careful. Carrying a pepper spray was normal. That training stayed with you.

Initially while at GAURAV, I was firm and would read every word and sentence uttered very surgically. That troubled me a lot. I used to be fine till 6 pm but post darkness I used to be edgy and uncomfortable. There was one female staff at GAURAV who would leave around 7 pm and I would want to leave around the same time. Although I never experienced any uncomfortable incidents, my training was playing its role in my mind. I still feel that if a male researcher had been at my place, he could have stayed beyond office hours and might have been part of informal interactions of male sex workers. But then I also feel that a heterosexual identity of a male researcher interacting with men who sell sex to men would have had some different dilemmas and outcomes.

Place

Sabine Grenz (2005) when she interviewed heterosexual male clients of female sex workers in Berlin (Germany) encountered dilemmas about the place from where the interviews will be conducted. Grenz cited Deborah Lee (1997), who researched sexual harassment, discusses problems very similar to those Grenz encountered. Lee (1997) conducted all her interviews in public places because of the dangers her research entailed. Grenz observed that this was not possible for her because she recorded all the interviews and wanted participants to talk openly about their sexuality, which would have been difficult in a public space. Feminist researchers like Finch (1993) opine that conducting interviews in respondents' home is the most prioritised place. Grenz conducted all her interviews in friends' private offices.

As far as my case is concerned, all my interviews took place in GAURAV's office where I was introduced to my informants. As discussed earlier I was keen to interview a few male sex workers who were not associated with any NGO and in December 2018, one of my informants introduced me to his friend who was a fellow sex worker and was not associated with GAURAV. I was very keen to do this particular interview. It took me one week to fix a place for this interview to take place. Initially, I tried telephonic interview with this informant but poor mobile network and lack of comfort on part of the informant compelled me to shelve this idea. We then tried a cafe in Juhu in the afternoon around 2 pm. This arrangement did not work well either because of the noisy milieu and recordings were scratchy. At long last, I had to resort to pen and paper. Researching such a tabooed subject is always difficult and if GAURAV had not provided

me with this space in their office I do not know if I would have been able to finish my research. Moreover, GAURAV was the most familiar, secure and home-like space for all the informants where they did not hesitate to share their personal stories.

The Sensitivity of Sex Work

Social science research lays particular emphasis on confidentiality as one of the key principles of research. And when the research matter is sex work and people associated with it, it becomes a more sensitive research area. The participants of the research want to be assured of their anonymity and confidentiality as far as possible. We have witnessed the clandestine nature of male sex work in the Indian context. This is crucial when sex work is a social taboo and where male to male sex work is largely unimaginable. Therefore, the persons who are selling sex do not feel comfortable coming out to others about their involvement in sex work. I spent many months in Delhi exploring organisations working with the MSM population. Many of them were into sex work but none of them was ready to come out and speak about it or even admit it. In that situation, it was not possible to carry out this research. It is precisely this reason why I shifted this research to Mumbai. Even in Mumbai, despite all the support of GAURAV, I had to persuade men selling sex to talk about themselves. In many interviews, I was told by my informant that “I used to sell sex earlier but I no longer do it” or “it is very infrequent, I do not like this work”. Akash, a bisexual male sex worker, informed me at the beginning of the interview that he has left sex work six months back. But I carried out the interview. It went for around 150 minutes. Somewhere towards the end, Akash shared that though he has a boyfriend who does not like his involvement in sex work but sometimes when Akash gets some lucrative offers he would go for it without telling his boyfriend. Then he shared about his encounter during the previous week where a client offered him 10 thousand Rupees for a few hours and he could not resist this offer. But this piece of information can be interpreted in many ways. Maybe since Akash does not carry out sex work on a regular basis, it may not count as sex work or work for him. It is also possible that he does not feel comfortable sharing this piece of information to a female researcher. There were another group of informants who revealed that sex work is infrequent. It is very likely that they are concerned to protect their image because in society any kind of involvement in sex work – being both seller and buyer is taboo.

Satyam, a bisexual male sex worker remarked that “all MSM are sex workers it is just lack of opportunity”.

There were certain points in my research process where I felt helpless and as if I was losing control as a researcher. One such incident took place when I was interviewing Sam, a 19-year-old male sex worker. He lost both parents at a young age and was raised in an orphanage. He had three sisters who were worried about him. Sam has experienced violence and rape by clients and has tried to commit suicide on six occasions. When this interview was happening I could not control my emotions because this young man sounded so depressed and lonely and I felt like helping him. I spoke to the counsellor of GAURAV and he informed me that he has taken a few sessions with Sam but according to the counsellor he needed help. Then I got in touch with an organisation working on mental health issues and suggested to Sam to get in touch with them. While I was in Mumbai, Sam went for a couple of sessions but then I had to leave Mumbai. There were several such interviews where I almost lost control of the objective situation required for sociological analyses and felt like helping them.

Female Researcher Male Respondent: The Power Game

Michael Schwalbe and Michelle Wolkomir (2001:92) analysed men’s behaviour in interview situations and concluded that, for male participants, an interview is not only “an opportunity for signifying masculinity” but also “a peculiar type of encounter in which masculinity is threatened” because a stranger asks questions. Being looked at, investigated, makes one feel uncomfortable. One suddenly becomes different, special. One observation worth sharing here is whenever I was doing an interview at GAURAV I would use the small room generally used by the counsellor for counselling. Whenever an informant will walk out from that room after finishing his interview, everyone else in the office (male sex workers or MSM who are there to get some services) will be very keen to know about the interview. Everyone treated this person as important because he gave a very long interview of some 150 minutes. But many did not agree to be interviewed. They said that they were not comfortable. So there was a keenness to know what went inside that room but there was some kind of fear about the nature of the interview. Once, one of my informants, when asked about his interview by a fellow sex worker, stated: “Oh! This one is very different like never before and I am sure you will enjoy”.

Since these young men are associated with GAURAV, there are frequent surveys by funding agencies about the outcomes from time to time and there are certain stereotypical kinds of questions about HIV/STI and prevention.

Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) argue that an interview is a site where masculinity can be reproduced. This is very intriguing when linked to Plummer's contention as follows:

No longer do people simply tell their sexual stories to reveal the truth of their sexual lives; instead they turn themselves into *socially organised biographical objects*. They construct . . . tales of the intimate self, which may or may not bear a relationship to a truth. (Plummer 1995:34)

Thus, masculinity is not to be seen as the "real" or "inner" truth of the interviewees but as something constantly reproduced in the interview setting through the content of their stories as well as through our interaction. Thus, there were instances when informants tried to present themselves as more virile and masculine than others. Since male sex workers have diverse sexual identities ranging from gay to bisexual to kothi-identified. Thus bisexuals behave more like heterosexual male when compared to those identified as kothi (Kapur 2005:85). Sometimes these differences get reflected in their attitude and behaviour with other male sex workers. Like in one interview, Noor, a versatile male sex worker, called gay looking feminine male sex workers as 'hile dule sarkar' (someone displaying feminine gestures and body language). Similarly, Utpal, a bisexual male sex worker, would elaborate his encounter with his female clients focusing on his prowess to satisfy his female clients. It is important to note that majority of his clients are male whom he caters to regularly but such descriptions were never used to describe his work. However, when describing female clients there was an emphasis on 'satisfaction' which I felt was an emphasis on his masculinity.

Ethical Consideration for the Study

One is fully aware of the confidentiality of the data in this research. Most of the male sex workers operate clandestinely and are uncomfortable with the disclosure of identity. For this research following ethical guidelines were followed.

I ensured that this research will not harm any of the informants and organisations who participated in the study. I tried to be a neutral observer in this study. The goal of this research was to understand male sex workers as individuals, working within social groups and collectivities and I consciously made efforts not to judge them in any manner.

1. All interviews were accompanied by informed consent from informants as well as organisation, in this case, *GAURAV*. The informants were voluntary participants and their privacy was maintained. All interviews took place in the councillor's room at *GAURAV*'s office. The informed consent also included the goals and procedure of this research and who will be subject of this research.
2. I maintained the privacy and confidentiality of the male sex workers who participated in this research. Thus I kept the identities of all respondents secret. All files and interviews were saved using pseudonyms. Even while writing chapters efforts have been made to ensure that no identifiable information is shared. Wherever such information was needed, suitable changes have been made so that they may not get identified.
3. This research will further try to report accurately and completely all research findings. All research findings will also be reported to the organisation participating in this research.

This chapter has provided the reader with the details of methods and techniques used in data collection. As this is an area which has not received attention from Sociologists, the concern was with foregrounding the sensitive nature of the data collected, and the difficulties in using individual cases to understand hidden communities. In the next chapter, I will locate male sex workers in the larger debate and discourse of sex, sexuality and sex work. The next chapter will further explore the meanings of commercial sex work for male sex workers in trying to capture the diversity of social meanings which male sex workers ascribe to having sex, how they classify and identify their clients, safer sex dialogues in the wake of HIV infection and how it influences their sexual behaviour.

CHAPTER TWO

Sex as Sin, Sex as Work: Meanings of Sex, Sexuality and Sex Work for Male Sex Workers

In the previous chapter I dealt with methodology and my dilemmas as a social researcher in my pursuit to understand male sex workers. Having drawn attention to the silence around hidden communities of homosexual men and their narratives, this chapter proceeds to locate male sex workers in the larger debate and discourse of sex, sexuality and sex work. Since sex work has primarily remained female centric, becoming familiar with various strands of feminists' debates is useful to understand the issues, for instance the problematisation of female prostitution in light of their demand for recognition of 'prostitution' as work. It then tries to see whether a parallel between female sex work and male sex work can be drawn despite major differences between two categories in order to understand the debates of sex work. From here, I move on to interrogate the term "male sex work" in the light of sociological theories of sex work. Desire being a key element of male sex work, the attempt is to understand how do male sex workers perceive sex work. This chapter further explores the meanings of commercial sex work for male sex workers in trying to capture the diversity of social meanings which a male sex worker ascribes to having sex, how they classify and identify their clients, safer sex dialogues in the wake of HIV infection and how it influences their sexual behaviour. Dealing with meanings of sex per se is important because sex has remained unspeakable and forbidden matter because of taboo. Going further, this chapter brings into discussion the history of male sex work through mapping instances of male sex work across times and places under different vocabularies in order to show a socio-historical trajectory of male sex work identity development. Second part of the chapter brings out the narratives of male sex workers to understand the nature of their work and issues related with male sex work.

It is evident that male sex workers' presence has remained obscure and eclipsed in larger debate of sex work and homosexuality. Even in time when there are several enumerative practices, there is no statistical figure on male sex workers in India. National Aids

Control Organisation's Annual report of 2016-17 gives an estimate of 206007 MSM, 29325 transgender and 603236 female sex workers in India. Tamil Nadu tops the chart with 31000 MSM and Maharashtra occupies second place with 22000 MSM. These agencies are silent about the number of male sex workers (MSW) operating in India. This happens for two reasons — enumerative bodies do not have a separate category of 'male sex worker' to account for their number under an independent rubric and many times male sex workers do not wish to disclose their work identity because of fear of stigma and discrimination associated with male sex work. This silence is despite the fact that there are certain works which make reference to male brothels in Asia especially in undivided India. Such references date as far back as mid nineteenth century. Richard F. Burton's Karachi Report is important in this regard (Arondekar 2009:4). Similarly, male-male sexual relation in exchange for cash or kind was known in other Asian countries like China and Japan (Leupp 2007; Wang 2016). However, when it comes to a statistical figure on the number of MSM and MSW in present time, there remains an enormous degree of ambiguities. For instance, Kong (2014) acquaints us with ambivalent figure in case of MSM operating in China which is said to be between two to twenty million and it is assumed that five to twenty four per cent of the MSMs are likely to be male sex workers. Such ambiguities and obscurities could be explained through a historical discussion of the subject.

History of Male Sex Work in the World

The obscurity which characterised and still characterises the existence of male sex workers is also evident from the fragmented history and dispersed discussion of such practices under different vocabularies. Discussion brings out how it operated across places like city streets, army barracks, navy, lavatories, public parks and other places. A brief historical glance also familiarises with extent of male sex work in the major cities of world work albeit under nebulous terminologies and adverse circumstances. Friedman (2014:7-8) gives instances from the fifteenth century Florence, Greek, and Japan. In the fifteenth-century in Florence, young boys in the age group of 12-20 years were in long-term sexual relations with their rich patrons. Similarly in mid- 17th century in Japan "kabuki wakashu" male actors were often sex workers. They were in demand by both male and female clients mainly for their good looks. It was also very frequent for Buddhist and samurai warriors to have sex with their young male apprentices. Similar

practice was found among Greek noblemen who were allowed to have sex with the youth they were teaching and mentoring – provided the relationship was educational, not entirely sexual.

Magnus Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis drew attention to the practice of cross-dressing biological males in nineteenth century Europe and United States. These males were called “fairies” who would conduct their business from all fairy brothels, saloons, streets, semi-segregated or “mixed cruising zones”. Many of them operated on individual basis at brothels that were otherwise devoted to female sex workers. There were several instances where they passed themselves off as biological women under the disguise of female attire. Although Magnus Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis termed this entire affair as male prostitution, there soon emerged an alternative range of texts for this group of people like “trans-sexuality”, “trans-prostitution”, and non-biological forms of “female prostitution”. Chauncey (1994:122-123) had reluctance in classifying such incidences of 1800s and 1900s under “male prostitution”.

The studies of homosexuality and male prostitution were intertwined and coincided. Weeks (1985: 113) maintains that the early studies of male prostitution were also the first major quantitative studies of homosexuality. Jeffery Weeks in his famous essay on the rise of contemporary male sex work during nineteenth century Europe refers to the simultaneous coming up of writing on both male sex work and homosexuality. Besides drawing attention to the comments of the sexologists like Havelock Ellis, Iwan Bloch, Magnus Hirschfeld and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, Jeffrey Weeks showed that male sex work was an issue of fear and unease owing to social circumstances. He has also discussed the conditions which led to the identification of “prostitution” as a practice in which men might engage. Ditmore (2006: 276) discusses how attention to the idea of male prostitution is the result of attention to rise of “homosexuality” as a social-psychological-sexual category. Ditmore discusses a famous case of 1860 in which the English policemen spotted two men – Ernest Boulton and Frederick William Park — dressed up as women gave an idea around a recognisable pattern of behaviour which could be associated with male prostitution. Although the letter which the policemen had discovered from the arrested men had clear mention of exchange of money with various clients, they were puzzled because they found it difficult to interpret this phenomenon.

However, by the turn of the twentieth century, the police no longer faced any difficulty in understanding such incidents and individuals.

There are many different labels when it comes to homosexuality and male prostitution, such as fairies, queers, homosexuals, deviants, hustlers, hoodlums and the like. Thus, various addressive, descriptive and classificatory terminologies emerged. Understanding these labels shows that the subject of homosexuality and male prostitution becomes increasingly complex over a period of time. The process of labelling and classification constitutes an important juncture in the historical trajectory which can be understood to have preceded statistical and enumerative practices. There were several implicit meanings in this development which George Chauncey (1994) has dealt with in his historical study of gay culture in New York during the period from 1840 to 1930. He maintains that the sexological dialogues and classifications of the medical professionals around homosexuality resulted in construction of various labels to describe the psycho-pathological behaviour of this population. However, its impact could not reach to the working-class world in which “fairies” and “queers” existed. In other words, such sexological classifications were only common within the middle-class. The working-class culture had a different system of sexual labelling. Homosexual ‘behaviour’ within working-class culture became key determinant for the labelling and self-identification of men as “queer”(Chauncey 1994:13). Even this came to general notice only during the middle of the twentieth century. Otherwise, in order for men to be labelled as homosexual, it was previously expected of men to exhibit behavioural departure besides assuming sexual roles ascribed to women. The shift from the classification of men into “fairies” and “normal men” to the classification of men into “homosexuals” and “heterosexuals,” based on the sex of their sexual partners became noticeable only in the 1930s and 1940s (ibid. 100). A challenge during 1970s was regarding the boundaries of homosexual identity in the light of the claim by some that most male sex workers were, in fact, not homosexual. Early gay activists expressed concern about borderline status of male sex workers and claimed that they were using sex work as a means of having sex with men while not coming to terms with their true homosexual nature(Chauncey 1994).

In the foregoing discussion, working class dimension figured. Involvement of people from working class gave a different meaning to the entire debate and discussion which

is useful in making a meaningful sense of male sex workers in contemporary India with particular respect to Mumbai. Hirschfeld (2000:791) throws light on interplay of industrialisation, workers' inadequate income and tendency towards sex work to make up for such inadequacy. In his discussion, he has spoken of pickup spots like public gardens, certain bars, river-walks, darkened movie theatres, and public lavatories. Among these gay cruising zones, the last two were the most notorious. There was no particular look or appearance that identified the sex worker. Many of the young poor and working class men were willing to participate in sex work. Sex work was in no way restricted to sub-culture that might be considered deviant. For example, in one incident a gay man sent telegrams to himself simply so as to contact random messenger boys, whom he then proposed with general success (Hirschfeld 2000: 822-3). Sex work was enormously widespread and in fact constituted a crucial means of sexual interaction for many gay men particularly those in the middle class or above. Some gay men from privileged backgrounds eroticised the "genuine manliness" of working-class men. Anglo-Irish playwright Oscar Wilde, for example, said that he preferred to be with working-class youths typically aged 16 to 20 because "their passion was all body and no soul"; He called it "feasting with panthers" (Weeks 1977: 40). Others, such as the early sexologist and gay rights activist Edward Carpenter, offered a less fetishised and more optimistic interpretation of such cross-class contact, arguing that "Eros is a great leveller." Interested adolescents openly shared information with each other regarding who were clients and what exactly they wanted (Weeks 1977: 41). Working-class parents did not necessarily approve of this behaviour, and at times they took action against the adult clients, particularly if a relationship was ongoing and deemed to be exploitative. Since Working-class boys were generally expected to contribute to the household income, parents sometimes, owing to need of additional income, overlooked their sons' activities. Thus economic conditions, accounted for the shift in the moral meter in favour of toleration.

In the 1930s, many working-class "straight" men remained willing to sell sex to "gay" men. Many men were pushed into sex work owing to adverse economic conditions during the Depression years. Straight-acting men adopted old effeminate style of street-walking and joined soldier sex work promenades. As a result, the fairy prostitutes were pushed to more marginalised locations. This transition was noticeable in New York City in 1932. It was found out that there were some straight men in the new generation of

male sex workers who were young and whose clients were mostly gay men. These “normally identified” working-class men and adolescents would only take “insertive” roles for the fear of being labelled themselves as “fairies.” This shows that despite their readiness to have sex with men, for some men, fear of being labelled as fairies made certain acts more acceptable than others. This fear was due to the stigma associated with gay identity (Chauncey 1994:66). The rise of gay culture added complexity to the whole dynamics of sexual relations between queer clients and straight identified male sex workers because some queer identified clients were not happy with just passive role. They also wanted to take insertive role which was not possible with straight identified male sex workers who did not want to be penetrated because of fear of being labelled gay. This gave rise to a new phenomenon of gay-identified male sex workers. Now with the coming of this new pattern, these queer-identified men preferred to buy sexual service from queer-identified men where role-switching was possible. But this pattern was prevalent only among a small minority. However, this resulted in decline of straight identified male sex workers from the scene (Weeks 1977). The literature concerning male sex work in the 1950s, 1960s, and even into the early 1970s, is packed with stories of “deviants” or “hoodlum types” who engaged in sex work in order to obtain spending money. “Delinquent” youth entered the domain of sex work along with many working-class youth like the messenger boys and newspaper sellers who used the cash they obtained from sex work to finance either their recreational activities or to support drug habits. The field was now clearly dominated by the teenaged “delinquent.” However, small number of cross-dressing fairies also continued (Reiss 1961:106-107).

Since there is a discussion of soldier sex work promenades while tracing the history of male sex work, it is important to give a brief account of such practice in military and naval services. This form of male sex work was called “barrack prostitution” which was evident around the same time. From the early 1700s well into the 20th century, instances of “normally identified” male soldiers who engaged in paid sex for a queer-identified male client gave rise to a new pattern of sex work. Military men had their own bars and “soldiers’ promenades” for the purpose of enhancing their insufficient wages (Weeks 1977: 35). This practice achieved such sub-cultural status that when new recruits joined the regiment, they were introduced to this activity by their officials. That is how the notion of “barrack prostitution” came which was established clearly for cash

transactions. There was an oversupply of workers throughout much of the history of this particular institution. In many cases, the soldiers looked out for long-term relations with their clients. An important aspect of these relations involved emotional intimacy between soldiers and clients. A few of these relationships would turn into domestic arrangements for addressing emotional needs in which the patron would play the role of wife and would take care of all domestic needs. But this arrangement was not permanent because this would come to an end with the transfer of the soldier (Hirschfeld 2000: 805). As regards example of male sex work on shipboards, Arthur N. Gilbert (1976) has given evidence based history of homosexual relations. What is evident from the discussion of history is that homosexuality was prevalent but lost in the background of heterosexuality as preferred sexual identity, but it gradually came to foreground to gain acceptance as separate identity. As this tracing of history shows, the practices associated with male sex work have changed dramatically in the course of the twentieth century.

History of Male Sex Work in India

After delineating the history of male sex work in the West, the most insightful thing to do would be to do a similar history of male sex work in India which would provide a context for understanding male sex workers in India. In ancient India, Vatsyayana's highly celebrated text *Kamasutra* is known for dealing with the formalisation of erotic desires. It is, however, silent on homoerotic desire. There are no documents or records which talk about male sex work historically in India. There are some passing references and anecdotes about some same-sex sexual relations. There are many instances of same-sex relationships in Indian history. For instance, paintings and poetries from 15th century and subsequent period explicitly show homoerotic depiction of men with men and women with women. Although relating all these fragmented evidences to male sex work would be untenable attempt, demand for young boys, eunuchs, castrated and effeminate men at court implies that they might have made their needed presence felt in return for some kind of favour either in kind or cash form or other. A famous Arab poet, namely, Abu Nuwas (c. 810) wrote—"Jealous people and slanders overwhelm me with sarcasm because my lover has started to shave I answer them: friends, how wrong you are! Since when has fuzz been a flaw? It enhances the splendour of his lips and teeth." (Khan 1996:173). Khan also mentions about an incident in which Sultan Ma-

hood Mirza (uncle of Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire in India) picked up beautiful boys of his noblemen and placed them into his 'boys' harem'. He would spend most of his time in the company of beautiful boys. Following him, many noblemen also started enjoying the company of beautiful boys which seemed to have gained acceptance throughout his kingdom (Khan 1996:174).

There are many visual cues, signs and symbols and characters but they do not say anything about male sex work. Our ancient scriptures have detailed accounts of terms for female sex workers like *Ganika* and *Devadasi* but when it comes to male, there is no record. This is perhaps some kind of politics of language where what will be public is controlled tenaciously. A written history of male sex work would have jeopardised the hegemonic status of men in India. The way male sex work has been conceived, it challenges the traditional gender construct which is hegemonic and discriminatory. It is pertinent to assert that men are not exclusive consumers of sex because their bodies can also be epitomised as a desirable commodity for others. Very little is known due to sparse literature about male sex workers in India. However, the presence of male sex workers in India, providing sexual services mostly to men, needs to be an established fact. The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (SITA) passed in 1956 did not recognise the existence of male sex work in India. But its amendment, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) passed in 1988 recognised that men can also be sexually abused and exploited for commercial purpose. This amendment in the law, for the first time, recognised that men may also be engaged for commercial sexual purpose as sex workers. A large number of boys and young men in India earn their livelihood by providing sexual services to men in parks, sea beaches, hotels and homes. There are anecdotal reports stating that some of them engage in homosexual relations with their clients for monetary gains (Nag 2001:4028).

We noticed in the previous part of this chapter that male sex workers have always been pushed under the carpet to such an extent that they remain invisible and do not seem to exist. It is important to get an idea of the subject through their representation in films and literatures. Their sporadic and ephemeral presence in cinema and literature reflects and reinforces their exclusion. There is hardly any mainstream Indian film where a male sex worker is the protagonist. Likewise, exclusion of male sex workers is also evident in

the field of literature in India. However, we come across writings about sexual minorities. Some prominent literatures are — Shakuntala Devi's *The World of Homosexuals* (1977); AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan conducted the path breaking survey, *Less than Gay* in 1991 depicting the state of homosexuals in India ; Arvind Kala *Invisible Minority* (1992); Giti Thadani wrote about lesbianism in the India in her book *Sakhiyani* (1996); and Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's *Same Sex Love in India* (2000). In 1999, Penguin published anthologies of gay and lesbian writing in India edited by Hoshang Merchant and Ashwini Sukthankar respectively (Narrain and Bhan 2005). Suniti Namjoshi, Shyam Selvadurai, and Firdaus Kanga are some of the noted fiction writers exploring issues of different sexualities. Thus all literatures cited above are portrayal of same-sex sexualities but male sex worker fails to get a space here. It is generally believed that male sex work is such a taboo that there are very few academic studies, as I have shown, on what is thought to be a domain of stigma and shame.

Undoubtedly, there is rich literature on same-sex sexuality and historically we have seen the growth of this from 1927 onwards. There was huge media hue and cry during 1927 over the release of *Chocolate* by Ugra which was a compilation of eight short stories in Hindi, dealing with homosexuality. According to Vanita (2001), this was probably the first public debate in the local Indian press on the topic. In the year 1942, Ismat Chughtai's short story titled *Lihaaf* was published in the journal *Adab-I-Latif*. Chughtai was accused of obscenity in 1944 for writing about sex between a neglected wife and her maidservant which was witnessed by a horrified girl child. The married woman's husband was only interested in boys (Shahani 2008:173). Many anthologies have been published on gay and lesbian themes in India in the 90s. *A Lotus of Another Colour: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* was first anthology which was published in the year 1993 by Rakesh Ratti. The book describes issues of south Asian LGBT residing in Western countries. The book aimed at enhancing the visibility of LGBT groups residing outside India. It consists of essays, poems, autobiographical and fictional short stories and interviews with South Asian celebrities. Later, in the year 1999 two books were published — *Yaarana: Gay Writing from India* and *Facing the Mirror: Lesbian Writing from India*. These anthologies followed similar formula. What is important to note here is that their representation is slowly improving especially in

the field of literature. How homosexuality is gaining acceptance on the plane of literature will be evident from the following references to more literary work on the subject.

R. Raj Rao has published many gay themed novels which depicts bleak lives of non-normative sexualities in India. *The Boyfriend* by Rao was published in 2003 became a popular book among LGBT readers. Authors like Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra and Firdaus Kanga had all written on gay themes, but Rao's work was the first to be fully pivoted around homosexuality. Undoubtedly, there is rich source of gay literature in India where self-identified upper class gay persons have written about their experience and lives. It all seems to privilege LGBTQ community which is not same as privileging MSWs. It hardly represents male sex workers. MSWs have their specificities and particularities. The situation of male sex workers is that of minority within minority. Absence of male sex workers in films and literature explains their social and class location. In other words, there exists class and work based hierarchy in which male sex workers figure at the lowest rung of the hierarchy. It is mainly to do with their social class and standing. The urban poor who sell sex for survival do not have their histories.

Sex, Sexuality and Male Sex Work

Male sex work in India is both organised as well as unaffiliated and there is great diversity – from highly paid escorts to street-based sex workers. The risk attached with this work varies accordingly – street-based male sex workers are exposed to greater risk as compared to male escorts who work in a safe and hygienic environments. Though we do not have a clear figure about the number of male sex workers working in Mumbai, or in India as a whole, yet according to many of informants male sex work is quite common though less reported. According to Satyam, a bisexual male sex worker, “given a chance any MSM can sell sex, it is all about an opportunity”.

While talking about sex work, the focus has overwhelmingly been on women sex workers. It is an established fact that female sex workers are far larger in number and have a long history of acknowledged existence. Male sex work in comparison is a more recent phenomenon. According to Scott one of the most striking development that took place in research around male sex work have been the expansion of the range of meanings to describe male sex workers. In the past 50 years it has become possible to explain male

sex workers “as both agents and victims, as dangerous and endangered, and even as lustful and frigid” (Scott 2003:180). The diversity of meanings to understand male sex workers gradually amplified its significance in socio-political debates. Scott suggests that, unlike female sex work, “male prostitution was not regarded as a significant social problem throughout the nineteenth century, despite its close association with gender deviation and social disorder” (ibid:179).

Sexology discovered male sex work around the same time it discovered homosexuality, in the nineteenth century. Young working-class men were involved in sex work across North America and Europe, choosing sex work over the industrial factory’s dangerous labour conditions. Middle-class men’s fetishisation of working-class bodies led to the creation of specialised brothels. Such late nineteenth-century London brothels (called “peg houses”), which offered young working-class men, were closed down as a result of moral hygiene campaigns. After World War II, views on male sex work changed: “It became possible to speak not only of ‘male prostitutes,’ but also of specific ‘types’ of male prostitute” (Scott 2003:187). Sexologists and psychoanalysts started attributing psychopathologies to male hustlers. Sociologists of deviance portrayed “hustlers” as engaged in deviant careers. Gay identity, however, was not yet fixed in the early twentieth century. It was not until the mid-century struggles for gay rights that the idea that there is one immutable identity we can refer to as gay was firmly established. Kaye (2003) who studied the history of male sex work along with the changing idea of homosexuality observed that “if the ideology of homosexuality brought difficult personal challenges for some hustlers, for others, the rise of gay liberation led toward an increasing acceptance of gay or bisexual self-identity” (Kaye 2003:32–33). In the 1960s there was a preference for heterosexual male sex workers who were popularly referred to as “straight trade” but with the emergence of gay identity, the sex work scene changed dramatically. Kaye captured this transformation:

The gay liberation era marked the first time that the majority of gay men began to buy sex from other gay men, rather than from straight outsiders who lived the bulk of their lives outside the gay world...the new social meanings which were applied to male prostitution in the 1960s and 1970s derived from the progressive integration of prostitution into the gay cultural orbit (Kaye 2003:34).

The Portrayal of males selling sex again changed in the 1980s with the advent of HIV/AIDS. Scott opined that “prior to the appearance of HIV/AIDS, male prostitution was

primarily understood as a criminal or welfare issue,” but in the late 1980s male sex work became objects of epidemiology and were described as the “reservoirs of disease and transmitters of infection from the gay population” (Scott 2003:193-194). The idea of sex workers as “risky” persists in public health agencies. Predominantly, male sex work is seen as deviant behaviour and purely as economic exchange. My work aims to take a leap from the deviant theory of sex work and understand sex work as a corporeal interaction and confession of the self. This part of the chapter will locate how male sex work is organised to understand work conditions, work tasks and sex workers’ relations with clients. Most of the male sex workers are self-employed who either use mobile applications like Grindr and PlanetRomeo to keep in contact with clients or they cruise from various hotspots popular across Mumbai. Few male sex workers operate through agencies which are being run by retired male sex workers. Male sex workers operating through these agencies generally fall in the higher price range and have elite clientele. Before I bring the narratives of male sex workers to understand their work and the meanings they associate with this work, it is pertinent to examine the key dimensions in the contemporary sex work debate. Majority of these debates view sex work as offered by women to men under the conditions of abuse and victimisation.

Sociology of Sex Work

Sex work is predominantly visualised as being sold by women and bought by men and therefore sociology of sex work has primarily followed this pathway. Male sex work is a more recent phenomenon and a far lesser number of men sell sex when compared to women sex workers, and therefore, understanding male sex work through the existing sociology of sex work is difficult (Bernstein 2005; Marlowe 1997). I wish to bring out key themes of the sociology of sex work to assess if male sex work can be understood and explained through the existing theoretical arguments around sex work. The popular understanding of sex work view is that it is an outcome of poor economic condition and individual pathological symptoms. This in turn creates an image of the sex worker as a victim who has been forced into sex work and is being exploited on a daily basis. Thus, the sex workers have no agency (Smith, Grov, Seal and McCall 2013:2; Bimbi 2007:8).

Radical feminists have highlighted the abuse and harm experienced by women selling sex and emphasised the inequalities due to differential gender roles. Thus Kate Millet

(1975), Kathleen Barry (1979, 1995), Carole Pateman (1983, 1988), Catherine MacKinnon (1987, 1989) and Andrea Dworkin (1987, 1989) studied 'prostitution' as a form of violence against women. This is inextricably linked with the hegemony of heterosexuality and patriarchy. Altman (1999:xiv) argued that compared to female sex work, male sex work is less exploitative as both seller and client belong to the same gender, and thus there is a certain amount of equality in this encounter. Commercial sex work between men is generally seen as deviant and abnormal and "the image of homosexual is one of distorted and exaggerated sexuality, of promiscuity and deviance" (Boyer 1989:176). This image was further reinforced with the emergence of the HIV epidemic especially among gay men. Thus, the very image of two men in a sexual encounter constructed a deviant and dangerous image of men. Further, if it was revealed that the encounter is transactional, they are doubly challenged and marginalised. This creates a very dismal and dangerous picture of men who sell sex to men. They are generally seen as alcoholic, violent, drug addicts, promiscuous, homeless and vectors of HIV infection.

Davis (1937) in his article in the *American Sociological Review*, presented a functionalist approach to sex work. As an institution, sex work serves a useful function, and therefore seen to be a necessary evil. Alongside this functionalist approach, yet another approach which was popular was the pathological approach developed by Lombroso and Ferrero (2004). *Criminal Woman* offers an approach as to the pathological aspects of why some women sell sex. Lombroso's theory (2004) of the atavistic offender, is that a criminal is born, not made, a throwback to earlier, to more primitive times, bearing the evidence on their bodies of small heads, heavy jaws and more body hair than their 'normal' counterparts. *Criminal Woman* was a key text, and still inspires some scholars of biological positivism. Mary McIntosh's (1978) work was the first to challenge the functional and pathological approaches to understand sex work. She extended a more meticulous sociological analysis demanding an answer to her key question — why do men demand sexual services and women provide them in these 'liberated times'. The answer lay in the sexual needs of men.

Various works look out for the cause and outcomes of sex work. Thus criminal sub-cultural milieu (Hoigard and Finstad 1992) and poor economic condition (McLeod 1982)

were seen as the chief push factors for entry into sex work. In the beginning, the feminist scholars explained sex work in a reductionist manner as a deviant activity and as sexual slavery (Barry 1979; Dworkin 1981; Jarvinen 1993). Later it has been treated as a response to the socio-economic need in the consumer culture which privileges male sexuality (Green et al. 1997; Hoigard and Finstad 1992; McIntosh 1978; O'Connell Davidson 1998; O'Neill 2001; Pheterson 1986; Phoenix 1999).

Sex work has been the subject of continuing debate among radical, socialist, liberal, neoliberal and postmodern feminists for many years. Despite differences, they all agreed to one thread of commonality which is the kinds of control and regulation which have been exercised on the bodies of women who sell sex to men (Walkowitz 1980; Bullough and Bullough 1987; Corbin 1987, 1990). Male sex workers and transgendered sex workers have not been problematised through these theoretical binaries that gender and power relations have been central to theoretical frameworks that attempt to understand sex work. It is the female body, and the use of a woman's sexuality and sexual body, that becomes the focus for theory and consequentially, policy. The radical feminist argues that sex work is sexual slavery and oppression of women. Barry defines sex work (prostitution) as sexual exploitation: "when the human being is reduced to a body, objectified to sexually service another, whether or not there is consent, violation of the human being has taken place" (Barry 1995:23). Similarly, Farley puts forward theoretical arguments that prostitution is always harmful to both the women who 'prostitute' themselves and women's position in society in general (Farley 2005:960-962.) More recently, Jeffreys targeted states which have legalised 'prostitution' or have made some provisions for regulation of 'prostitution'. The line of argument is popularly defined as the abolitionist or prohibitionist perspective (Jeffreys 2008:5-6). This perspective believes in complete eradication of prostitution and their arguments focus on the suffering and abuse of women who are into sex work. The abolitionist perspective further outlines that prostitution commodifies the women's body for use by men and there can be no true consent for such use of her body. Barry (1979) argues that such a reading of victimisation states that a woman can never be a 'sex worker' because she is turned into a 'sex object' by structural and power inequalities between men and women.

Shannon Bell (1994) in her book *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* has analysed the popular perspectives of the 1980s by Pateman and MacKinnon and concluded that these writings and perspectives have reproduced 'the prostitute body'. Bell further argues that such writings and perspectives have only made women voiceless and powerless and have completely denied any kind of agency to them. This in turn has reproduced the 'prostitute body' which is perceived as the slave of men without any agency. Equally, Lisa Maher (2000) in her powerful text *Sexed Work* took note of various prevalent works regarding prostitution and pointed out that such texts which sees women as victims and powerless without any control over their situations 'devoid of choice, responsibility, or accountability' only create victims without agencies. Thus slowly and gradually the victimhood perspective started getting interrogated and examined by authors.

Thus, the popular perspectives around prostitution were examined and with the coming of second-wave feminism there emerged the sex workers rights discourse. Sanders et al. (2009:9) point to this shift that, "the feminist rift that began between the radical feminists and the radical/cultural feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s found a new battlefield in prostitution discourse". Sanders (2009:9) traces the emergence of second-wave feminism which signalled the development of the sex worker rights discourse to counteract other arguments promoted by radical feminism. The new arguments spoke out against the 'victimisation' of sex workers' perspectives but instead put forward a perspective that was based on human rights, sexual freedom and diversity amongst women's experiences.

This ideological shift was observed in the use of the term 'sex worker' instead of 'prostitute'. The term 'prostitute' was problematic as it was a distinct category which separated women selling sex from all other categories of women and they are only identified by one identity tag that is 'prostitute'. The term 'prostitute' has also been used legally in all documents and policy papers and it indicates its association with crime, deviance and the need for reformation and rehabilitation. The term 'sex worker' was devised to consider selling of sex as a labour process and it is like any other work. Carol Leigh, a COY-OTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) member and a sex worker popularly called Scarlot Harlot coined the term 'sex work' in the 1980s to avoid the "connotations of

shame, unworthiness or wrongdoing' of the word *prostitute* and assert 'an alternative framing that is ironically both a radical sexual identity ... and a normalization of prostitutes as "service workers" and "care-giving professionals"' (Bernstein, 1999: 91).

This new coinage of term brought out the demand for their recognition as workers and therefore their entitlements as labour rights. As we have seen that by viewing women selling sex as mere victims and slaves of men for sexual gratification we completely deny any 'agency' to them and there was no question of free will or their right to choice – as to how they use their bodies or make decisions. The routes to which women enter into prostitution are varied, but recognising elements of consent and choice are essential to 'sex work' argument. Phoenix (2000: 38) argues that for some women sex work 'makes sense' within their limited resources and material conditions. The nuances of this argument are important as this theoretical position views sex work beyond the simple concept of 'free will'. Chapkis, for instance, explains how some women make an informed rational choice to work in prostitution, rather than a 'free choice', available to few individuals in a society that is structured hierarchically by race, sex and class (Chapkis 1997: 67). Kesler contends that women may not be presented with a free choice due to constraints of opportunity. But women who make the decision to enter into marriage or find employment may also have some kind of constraints due to patriarchal capitalist system. It is within these wider contexts of women making decisions about their circumstances and survival that some theorists move away from the radical feminist perspective that reduces prostitution to sexual exploitation and force (Kesler 2002: 223).

Many protagonists of the 'sex as work' and 'choice' perspectives have come from the sex work community and the testimonies of sex workers play an important part in these perspectives. Nagel and other feminists who worked as porn actresses, peep show workers, and sex providers recognised that their certain 'economic and racial privilege' meant that their participation in the sex trade was by choice, yet there were many women for whom this was not the case. It is the testimonies of sex workers that demonstrate that the diversity of experience was real. Testimonies range from exploitation, coercion, survival strategies, to women who place themselves somewhere along with the 'choice' spectrum (Nagel 1997: 2).

There has been a shift in the theoretical thinking about women engaged in sex work. This has become more evident through the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and advocacy groups. Law (2000) researched sex workers and the role of NGOs in South-East Asia in Bali, the Philippines and Thailand. Law saw a shift in the attitudes of NGOs working with women sex workers for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. NGOs do not view women sex workers as the victim after initiation of programmes to 'empower' women sex workers and to protect themselves from HIV infections and keep themselves safe. Such priorities have been attacked by those against the harm reduction perspective as taking a more 'agency-centred' approach to participatory education that has been viewed as encouraging prostitution by some who believe in the 'victimhood perspective' (Law 2000:117)

A Journey from viewing 'prostitution' as slavery, to sex work as a matter of 'choice', we have come a long way. Utilising these perspectives to understand male sex work is unfamiliar. If we view male sex work in its present form, it is a matter of 'choice' for them though ancillary factors like poor socio-economic status, no jobs due to homosexual identity also play its role. Thus male sex work is like another kind of informal labour where sex workers offer their services in exchange for money. These are survival tactics for those men who look effeminate and different and employers do not want to hire such 'queer' looking men at their workplace. With this understanding, we enter into the narratives of male sex workers to comprehend their understanding of 'sex work'.

Notion of Sex Work for Male Sex Workers

Weitzer defined "sex work" as a "generic term for commercial sexual services, performances, or products given in exchange for material compensation" (Weitzer 2000:3). How do male sex workers in Mumbai see it and what do they call it? In the course of dialogic interaction with 34 male sex workers, the most common term which emerged was 'dhandha' which means occupation, business, employment or a vocation. Therefore the majority of male sex workers were clear that it is a kind of work or occupation. Sam, a gay-identified male sex worker described sex work as 'dhandha' which is a compulsion for people like him.

R: What is sex work?

S: Dhandha is a compulsion, a kind of constraint

R: You do not have any other options?

S: For people like us we do not have many options. So even if we do not like something we have to do it.¹²

The most popular notion of sex work proposes that people in sex work (women, men and transgender people) ‘sell their bodies’ for survival. However, it is argued by supporters of sex workers’ rights movement that it is not the body that is sold rather it is the service that is sold because sex work is a form of labour (Jenness 1998). The term ‘body work’, largely developed by Carol Wolkowitz (2002, 2006), refers to work that ‘involves intimately bodily contact’ (Wolkowitz 2006:147). Twigg et al. (2011) define body work as work involving a direct focus on the body of a service-recipient. Therefore, it is clear that body work is a particular form of service work. Work where the focuses are the bodily desire and needs of customer or clients the worker will evolve a different kind of social and tactile relationship with their bodies (Wolkowitz et al. 2013:7).

Body work which includes sex work negotiate powerful social meaning attached with sexuality, body, physical intimacy and touch. Thus, there is a need for intense emotional labour by sex workers to deal with the bodily and emotional demands of clients and the worker’s own response to it. Body work including sex work involves physical interaction with clients at both bodily and communicative level (Toerien and Kitzinger 2007). Body work is predominantly invisible, especially sex work because it is generally performed away from the gaze behind closed doors. These places do not fit into the common understanding of ‘workplace’(Wolkowitz et al. 2013). In the case of sex work, workers manufacture an image where their bodies are sexualised and they construct this image through appropriate kind of dressing to produce a body image which is desirable. (Bretns and Jackson 2013; Pilcher, 2012). This sexualised presentation by a sex worker is nothing short of a ‘manufactured identity’ which is complex (Sanders 2005). Like Apaa, a gay-identified male sex worker becomes Vidhya Balan (a popular film actor in India) for some of his clients providing the clients a feminine representation. According to liberal thinkers, the work produced by a worker is his own and thus he/she has the

¹² Sex work kys hai?Dhandha ek majboori hai aur kuch nahi.Kya aur koi option nahi hai?Humare jaiso ke liye jaada option to nahi hai, hume agar koi cheeze nahi pasand hai tab bhi humko usme jana hi padega. (Date of Interview: 07/06/18 at GAURAV)

choice to sell it to anyone who pays them the value for their labour. Labour, in this context, is a kind of property and an object of trade which the owner has the right to use freely as he/she wishes (Wolkowitz 2006: 128).

The 'sex as work' discourse (Brewis and Linstead 2000) where the priority is labour, skill, emotional work and its physical presentation which sex workers do, has been utilised for legal and social change to view sex work as a legitimate form of labour. Progress has been made in few countries like Germany and New Zealand where employment rights and working conditions have been achieved. Yet there are many countries including the UK, where sex work is still criminalised and there is no recognition of rights for sex workers. In Indian scenario, "prostitution" is not illegal but then there are reasonable restrictions like prohibition of soliciting clients in public places, keeping a brothel or organising sex work. Men carrying out sex in private was illegal and a non-bailable offence under Section 377 of IPC in India till 2018. Interestingly majority of male sex workers in India operate independently and going by provisions of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1986 (ITPA), male sex work should not be a problem. But it is not so. Thus sex between males whether paid or not has been a criminal offence till 2018. In India instead of using sex work laws to regulate male sex work activities, anti-sodomy laws, or laws criminalising public indecency were used to regulate male sex work to a large degree. The criminalisation and stigmatisation of homosexual conduct also meant that male sex work to a large degree remained relatively untouched by sex work regulation and propelled towards the margins and made a clandestine activity (Weeks 1981).

West and Austrin (2002) call for a more nuanced approach to understanding the sex industry through the lens of work, occupations and networks. Drawing on the work of Adkins (1995) and McDowell (1997) amongst other scholars, West and Austrin (2002: 486) argue that gender relations in the context of the sex industry need to be understood in terms of the production of identities and the wider networks in which the markets operate. Taking on this criticism of the way in which the sex industry is studied, Sanders (2008) examines how there are ancillary industries that support the sex industry, providing a robust and ever-expanding informal economy around the sex industry. Six ancillary industries that facilitate and support the sex markets are sketched: premises, adver-

tising, security, transport, presentation, recreation and hospitality. These supporting industries provide work for both men and women who are not sex workers but provide services and facilitate the operation of the sex industry.

One question which comes to mind is what is the social context for the emergence of the male sex work industry in contemporary India. Is it capitalism and resultant migration which led to resurgence in the sex market? Is it the quick and easy money and coming out of the LGBT community like never before? One popular idea in the sociology of sexuality has been the idea that social change shapes and controls the sexual identity and behaviour. Today, most scholarship in the field views sex and sexuality as fundamentally social. We're born with bodies and society, through its various institutions, decide which part of the body and which pleasures and acts are sexual. And, the categorisation of sexual acts into 'good' and 'bad' or 'acceptable' and 'illegitimate' is an outcome of social power. The dominant sexual norms are articulated by the dominant social groups. Beliefs that there are natural and normal ways to be sexual are practised at an ideological level. How we acquire such beliefs, and their individual and social consequences, are important questions for the study of sexuality. Certainly, the question of who is authorised to define what is sexual and which institutions are accountable for controlling sexualities are the answer to sociological and political questions.

Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1990) idea about sexual classification proposes a representation of sexuality that does not depend on conventional categories of homosexual and heterosexual but focus on the manner in which sexual identities are just performances or roles. This 'performative' perspective of sexuality rejects the essentialist view of sexuality being natural and innate aspect of one's identity. William Simon (1996:30) explains the postmodern concept of sexuality as 'the de-naturalisation of sex' which is the outcome of several contemporary events like the disappearance of traditional social structures, the rise of secularism over religion, and the shift of sexuality from procreation to pleasure. Simon (1996) suggests that contemporary sexualities can be best understood as dramas and heterosexuality constitutes a particular sexual genre – a relatively mechanical standard show. He argues that after the emergence of a post-modern society, sexuality has become more fluid, fragmented and diffuse than before, largely due to the prolif-

eration of lifestyle choices and is no longer perceived as expressions of relatively stable or consistent disposition

Thus postmodern approach discards the authority of scientific studies of sexuality as well as the idea that sexual identity is an outcome of the completion of the developmental process that goes through certain fixed stages. Postmodern perspective to sexuality is thus motivated by the view that fixed sexual orientation that resulted in sexual norms and moral code during the modern era was severely challenged in the Western world in the second half of the twentieth century, giving way to a proliferation of sexual choices and identities (Giddens 1992:180). Anthony Giddens argues that late modernity has liberated sexuality from the confines of heterosexual hegemony and substituted it with 'sexual pluralism' – a sexual identity described and controlled by one's lifestyle choices and relative gender equality. This means that behaviours formerly believed to be 'perverse' have turned out to be an agreeable aspect of sexual diversity or what he calls 'plastic sexuality' — sexuality for pleasure rather than procreation. The latter is closely linked to his idea of the 'pure relationship' — sexual relationships enhanced by more open communication and a greater degree of equality than earlier generations have experienced, and hence a wide range of emotional and sexual experiences. Bauman has captured this in the following lines: "In its postmodern rendition, sexual activity is focused narrowly on its orgasmic effect; for all practical intents and purposes, postmodern sex is about orgasm" (Bauman 1998:24). Bauman (2003) suggested, further, that postmodern uses of sex are self-sufficiently erotic, with sexual pleasures being sought for their own sake at one's convenience.

Elizabeth Bernstein contends that "recreational sexuality bears no antagonism to the sphere of public commerce. It is available for sale and purchase as readily as any other form of commercially packaged leisure activity" (Bernstein 2007:7). This shift of the middle class toward selling sex is part of a move "to a recreational model of sexual intimacy" (ibid:141). Bernstein uses the idea of "bounded authenticity" to conceptualise how broad economic shifts translate into relations between sex workers and their clients. She argues that sex work can be touching and meaningful, that it is not universally oriented toward quick service transactions. Many commentators concur on the im-

portance of understanding consumption in understanding contemporary Western society and suggest that it involves, in the paradigm cases of malls and theme parks, the creation of spaces where we can be entertained as we consume (Bauman 1983; Campbell 1989; Haug 1986). Colin Campbell identifies the roots of development of the modern form of consumption as the locus of identity and key leisure activity in the eighteenth century, among the middle classes. His explanation relies heavily on his concept of 'imaginative hedonism'; the quest for pleasure in dreaming of how consumer goods might enhance one's life, given the particular emphasis he places on pleasure as a defining characteristic of modern consumption (Campbell 1989:69).

Entry into Sex Work: Getting Started

All 34 male sex workers used terms like 'dhandha' or 'kaam' to describe sex work. But there was a distinction between kothi-identified male sex workers and gay and bisexual male sex workers about the notion of sex work. All male sex workers were initiated into sex at a young age of 8 -10 years by some elder member in the family or neighbourhood but such initiation did not seem to play any role in their choice of work. Sex work for them did not happen on a particular day but rather it was a gradual process. Initially, these young boys usually had sexual encounters to fulfil their corporeal needs and desire. They got something in return which might not have been money. At that point, they were not doing sex for money. At that point, MSWs did not understand the real nature or meaning of sex work. Yet they carried out these activities to fulfil their desire but after spending some time things became comprehensible for them. Ishq, a 23-year-old kothi-identified male sex worker who has been selling sex, from the age of 15, did not understand the transactional nature of sex work for a long time. For him, it was simply doing sex and getting something towards the end.

I have been doing sex from the age of 10-12 years. I only realised much later that people pay you after a sexual encounter with them. I was probably 15 years old when I started selling sex. Then I did not know that this is called sex work but yes, of course, I used to get money after sexual encounters with clients. I have been doing this thing since I was 15-16 years old.¹³

Lorway et al. (2009:146) studied male sex workers in Mysore and found that:

¹³Mai 10-12 Saal ki umar se sex kar raha hu. Par baad mei pata chala ki sex Karne ke baad log paise bhi dete hai. To mai shaayad 15 saal ka tha tabse mai sex work Kar raha hu. Ha tab mujhe ye nahi pata tha ki ise sex work kahate hai ha par jab mai karta tha to paise milte the. Jab mai 15-16 saal ka tha tabse mai ye cheeze kar raha hu. (Date of Interview: 01/07/16 at GAURAV)

Although many of the participants recounted their induction into sex work as occurring at a young age and at the hands of older men, the experience was described neither as altering, damaging, or corrupting some prior sexual self-integrity nor as having inhibited the potential expression of a "true" self. Rather, they described their entry into sex work as a socially unfolding experience of transactions, sexual desire, and self-recognition.

Lorway et al. (2009) pointed out three themes which play a pivotal role as the causal route for entry into sex work. These three themes include — sexual desire and pleasure-seeking behaviour of male sex workers combined along with their non-conforming gender behaviour which predisposes male sex workers towards sex work and then they are socially inducted by friends. These themes are utilised in various combinations by male sex workers. From the narratives of male sex workers, it became apparent that these young boys generally got initiated into sexual activities at the young age of 10 to 12 years. Few of them entered into consensual sexual relationship but many of them were forced into sexual relations by older relatives, friends, peers and school teachers. Eventually, they started exploring this outside home and school with other sexual partners. In the above case, the respondent (Ishq) was never forced into sex. According to him “jo bhi tha meri marzi se tha” (whatever it was, it was with my consent). Now he is into full-time sex work and when he was asked about his perception towards sex work he replied:

This is nothing but a kind of compulsion and that is why we do it, we do not have any salary. So I am forced to do it. Money is the main problem, we get easy money here. You work for a whole month and then you get the salary.¹⁴

Another informant Neel, a gay-identified male sex worker from Rajasthan who is a Sutar (carpenter) by family occupation. When he failed his 10th board exams he was sent to Mumbai to work with his brothers. His brothers and extended family were carpenters and use to take up assignments with builders in Mumbai for woodwork. Neel was also sent to Mumbai to join the family business, but gradually Neel drifted due to differences with his elder brother¹⁵ and a year later he joined sex work. He brought out the inherent homophobia in the minds of people and how it drives ‘gay looking’ young men into other alternate forms of employment like sex work:

¹⁴Ek mazboori hai insaan ki isliye karte hai, koi salary nahi hai. To phir mujhe karna padta hai. Paisa hi main problem hai, easy money mil jaata hai. Pura mahina kaam karo phir milti hai salary. (Date of Interview: 01/07/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁵ Neel has been discussed in greater details in the chapter on Family

If someone is more gay, then he looks very different. No one will hire them for work and we get work with lots of difficulties, no one hires us in office or banks. We are living humans, we will have to do something for survival. People want to survive and they will do anything to earn some money to survive.¹⁶

Neel looked effeminate and had suffered a lot because of his looks and identity. He worked as a cook for a Gujarati family in Mumbai along with sex work to sustain himself. Initially, he tried work at many places but the moment the employer would meet him they had just one reply – I will let you know. He had intimate relations with men before he entered into sex work for personal pleasure and desire but he explored sex work for survival. Sex work was easy and his sexual identity did not impede his performance. So how did he embark on this journey? Neel described his journey into sex work:

For work, I used to go to Breach Candy Hospital. Once when I got in the local train at Grant Road station I met a man who used to stay in Andheri. He touched me inappropriately. I was nervous. I thought do people do it here also (he had come from his home in Rajasthan recently)?. This man said that tomorrow he will take me to a film. In the night, I told my brother that I am tired and I do not want to go to work tomorrow. My brother was ok with this. The next day, at 7 o'clock I went to see him. He had called me at Navrang Talkies in Andheri (West). There was some film 'Ek Haseena Thi' was running. We sat for one hour and then when the break came he took me to the toilet. There we had oral sex. Then when we came back, he gave me the ticket and he left. I waited for him for around 20 minutes and then I also left. I was not paid anything but then I was not even familiar with transactional sex. My first-time sex work happened when I met a man from Bhayander on the local train. He took me to a building next to the bus stop (Andheri) and there I had my first experience of sex work. I was paid.¹⁷

When he was asked to explain he left his family occupation for sex work. Neel explained:

¹⁶ Koi gay jaada hai to look se bahut different hota hai, koi kaam par rakhta nahi hai, kaam mushkil se milta hai, office Mei nahi, bank mei nahi aur sabki Jaan hai aur pet ke liye to karna hi padta hai, main cheez pet hai aur wo log paise ke liye kuch bhi kar sakte hai. (Date of Interview: 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁷Kaam ke liye mai breach candy tak jaata tha. Ek baar jab mai Grant road par chada ek Aadmi mila wo andheri mei rahta tha. Usne mereko seedhe udhar haath daala. Mai Ghabra gaya. Mai socha ki idhar bhi ye sab hota hai. Wo bola kal mai tere ko picture leke jaauga. Jab mai raat ko ghar par gaya to maine bhai ko bola ki mai thak gaya hu aur kal kaam par nahi jaauga. Bhai bola ki thik hai. Phir agle din, mai 7 baje chala gaya, Kyo ki usne mujhe 7 baaje bulaaya tha. Andheri West Mei navrang theatre mei, koi picture thi ek haseena (2004)Kar ke. Hum dono ek Ghante baithe saath Mei phir break aaya to wo mujhe toilet Mei leke gaya. Phir waha par apna oral sex hua. Phir jab hum baad Mei waapas aaye to usne mujhe ticket diya aur nikal gaya phir maine 15-20 minute wait kiya aur phir mai bhi nikal gaya. I was not paid anything aur tab mujhe sex work ke baare mei pata bhi nahi tha. Pahli baar sex work ek Bhyander ka ladka mujhe train Mei mila phir wo mujhe bus depot ke baaju mei ek building hai waha par leke gaya waha par hamara hua tha. Usne mujhe paise diye. (Date of Interview: 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

Since childhood I used to long to see those things, I used to like sex. I am in sex work for last 10-12 years. That time when I used to commute by local train I used to get clients. Gradually I started going to the bathrooms¹⁸. My rate depends on the customer. Now, first I interact with customer and assess him and then I go out.¹⁹

Similarly, Ishq would sell sex to clients at the young age of 15 but did not know that it was sex work. Thus desire and longing for partners is big attraction and motivation for many boys to explore sex work. Such intense desire to have a partner was more discernible in case of kothi-identified male sex workers and they were vocal about their desire during interviews. However, this trend is not the most popular reason for entering into sex work. In case of bisexual male sex workers, poor financial situation has been found to be the chief factor for men to join sex work. All informants belonged to lower socio-economic status and could not afford basic needs of everyday life. Moreover, being a man meant they had to be the bread-earner of the family and hence there was the pressure to earn and provide to their families. This is the story of Dhanush who was pushed into sex work because of poor financial situation at home:

I did my BSc from Andheri Bhavans college. There it was full of fashion, showoff and I was a very ugly looking boy. Till then I had never worn jeans. My hair used to be all over, like a 'bhaiyya' (a term popularly used in Mumbai for working-class migrants from UP and Bihar). Almost like ragpickers. Our family background was not so well, we use to stay in a chawl (a type of residential building availed of by relatively poor but gainfully employed working-class families) I was aware of the fact that after doing BSc I will not get anything. I was on a scholarship which used to take care of my fees but fees is not the only expense. When I had joined my MSc first year, I was a complete misfit there. Then I thought that I am doing sex for pleasure but now I will do paid sex²⁰

Sexual identity and same-sex desire is important aspect of male sex work. But do all individuals with same-sex desire sell sex? No, there is more to it. All 34 male sex workers were into sex work because they needed money. Poor socio-economic status along

¹⁸ Lot of street-based male sex workers operate from public toilets in Mumbai. Though with the advancement of telecommunication such sites have become less popular.

¹⁹ kyoki mai bachpan se tarasata tha dekhne ko un cheezo ko, to mujhe sex pasand tha. 10 -12 Saal to ho hi gaya hai mereko sex work mei. Wo time par hum jab train se aate the to mujhe client mil jaate the, phir dheere dheere mai bathroom mei Jaane laga, waha par mujhe ye sab deekhne laga. Abhi mera rate customer ke upar depend karta hai. Dekhyi mai pahle customer se baat karta hu dekhta hu wo Kaisa hai phir jata hoon. (Date of Interview: 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

²⁰When I had joined my MSc first year. I did my bsc from Andheri bhavans college, waha par Itna showoff, fashion aur deekhawa tha aur mai ekdam ganda sa deekhne wala tha, tab tak to mai jeans bhi nahi pahanta tha, Baal bikhre hue, ekdam bhaiyya type , ekdam jo kachara uthate hai jo log unke jaisa. Aur mera family backgrouns utna accha nahi tha financially, hum chawl mei rahte the tab. Mujhe pata tha ki BSc kar ke kisi ko kuch nahi milta tha, though I was on scholarship which used to take care of my tuition fee but sirf fees nahi Hota hai. I was a complete misfit there. Tab maine socha ki mai waise to pleasure ke liye sex karta hu but ab mai paid sex karuga. (Date of Interview: 05/12/17 at GAURAV)

with a sexual identity which is unacceptable to the larger society is the chief push factor in their case. In another interaction, Satyam, a versatile male sex worker originally from Gujarat, has been into sex work for past two years. Satyam initially joined the television industry in Mumbai and worked in few daily soaps as supporting cast as well as assistant director. But when the soaps came to an end he was without work for many months. At last, to pay the rent, he joined sex work at the suggestion of a friend. According to Satyam, sex work is “a compulsion, nothing else, it’s greed. We only see money all around us”.²¹ He resisted selling sex for a long time but financial constraint at last pushed him into sex work:

I had no money and I had to pay room rent which was 1200. From my client I got 500 and I borrowed 500 from a friend and then I gave my room rent. I went there out of compulsion but it’s fine.²²

Another male sex worker said that he did not sell sex for last 6 months because he was committed to his boyfriend. Akki was a bisexual male sex worker and his boyfriend did not want him to sell sex to random men. But many times his commitment to his partner was tested especially when he got very lucrative offers from the clients:

Now for past 6 months I have left sex work because I am committed to my boyfriend, but when I get any lucrative offer from a client, then I get greedy. Like last week one of my client called me and asked me to come and he was paying me 7000. For a moment I got this feeling of greed but then I did not go.²³

Akki also recalled an incident where he was offered Rs. 10,000 for a couple of hours and at that point he could not say no but such incidents were very few. Then how did he manage his everyday expenses and other needs? Akki revealed:

²¹Majboori hai, aur kuch nahi, bas laalach hai , har taraf paise hi dikhte hai. (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

²²Mere paas paise nahi the aur mujhe room ka rent dena tha jo ki 1200 tha , to us client se mujhe 500 mila aur dost se 500 leke maine wo room rent Diya tha. Meroko majboori Mei waha jana pada, haan par theek hai. Then from there it started. (Date of Interview: 6/12/17 at GAURAV)

²³Maine peechale 6 months se sex work chhod Diya hai Kyo ki mai mere boyfriend ke saath committed hu. Par jab kabhi koi client accha offer leke aata hai to thoda laalach to aata hai man mei. Jaise last week mere ek client ne phone kiya aur bola ki kahana ho, tum aajao mai 7000 doonga, to thode Samay ke liye laalach to aagaya tha man mei par phir jab socha to nahi gaya. (Date of Interview: 23/7/16 at GAURAV)

So I survive with salary from Gaurav²⁴ and from part time dance classes. My gay friends who are from well to do families, told me not to indulge in sex work because they feel that it is a natural instinct, to have sex, but if we sell sex to others then we will besmirch the community. They say if you need money you take from us. My friends help me also.²⁵

There is a lot of dilemma which is associated with sex work. The guilt is almost palpable among male sex workers for their involvement in selling sex. They have regular partners whom they call boyfriend. These relationships are of permanent nature and involve love, affection along with desire which is generally missing with clients. Sex work is a compulsion as it gives them easy and instant money. This easy money lures them to come back again and again even after they have decided to quit. Guilt also arises when they are compared with their other homosexual friends who are from well to do families and do not sell sex. Thus according to Akki it is natural for a gay man to do sex with another man but if you sell sex then you have besmirched the gay community. Therefore, there is constant comparison with other gay men who do not sell sex. Dhanush, a 31-year-old male sex worker, originally from Gujarat and has a PhD degree in Biotechnology, feels that perception about sex work varies from person to person. When he was asked about his viewpoint about sex work Dhanush replied:

Situation varies from individual to individual like in my case, I needed that money. But now its like I had sex with you, you liked it and hence you bought something for me and even if you do not buy its ok.²⁶

In case of Akki, after his 10th exam, the financial condition of the family deteriorated and since his brother was the only earning member of the family but he wanted to separate from the family after marriage. Father was an alcoholic and mother was a house wife and Akash and his younger sister were in school. His mother asked him that since he had finished his 10th then he will have to work along with his studies. Since he was a MSM he applied for a job at HST (Humsafar Trust) and he got it. But the money was

²⁴ Many of male sex workers I interviewed worked with Gaurav as peer educators and they get small salary from Gaurav.

²⁵ So I survive with salary from Gaurav and part time dance classes. My gay friends who are from well to do family, told me not to indulge in sex work because they feel that Harmara ye natural hai par kisi ko sex bechege to community ka naam badnaam hoga, aur agar tujhe kabhi paise chahiye to humse lele. Aur wo meri madad bhi karte hai. (Date of Interview: 23/7/16 at GAURAV)

²⁶ Situation varies from individual to individual like in my case, I needed that money. But now Abhi to Aisa hai ki chalo maine tumhare saath kiya tumhe achha laga to tumne Kuch dila diya, nahi bhi diya to koi baat nahi. (Date of Interview: 05/12/17 at GAURAV)

not enough to take care of all the expenses at home. Then one of his friends gave him the idea about sex work:

I had a friend, he told me that if I want to earn easy money then he had an idea. My friend told me that you have all the talent and you will do it well, will you do sex work? I asked him if I will have to be like a prostitute? Will I be wearing a saree? No no! it's like this. You will visit their home in the same attire like you are now and you will have to do what they ask for and you will get your money then and there.²⁷

But it is not so easy to step into this. It's not that one fine morning a person decides and then he/she becomes a sex worker. There is fear, inhibition, reluctance and discomfort. Akki felt all of these emotions but financial constraints took over his fear and at last he gave in:

I was scared that somebody might make a video of the act and it may get viral. So I said no then. After this incident I was supposed to pay fees for my classes which was 12000. I was clueless and did not know what to do. Then I thought that I do sex with others for free so if I do sex for money what will happen?²⁸

So what is sex work? Is it a compulsion, a need for money, for pleasure or a mix of both. In many of the narratives the nature of exchange does not come out clearly. This trend of lack of negotiation was more visible in the case of Kothi-identified male sex workers. Samay, a kothi-identified male sex worker revealed:

Sex work happens when I get someone (client). It's not full-time. I do sex for friendship sake or for my own desire and longing²⁹

Seema Sayyad, manager of Aastha Parivaar who has been working in the HIV sector for past 15 years, shared that sex work begins for money because it is easy money. Since they are already doing sex with partners they feel that it is not much different to do it in

²⁷mera ek friend hai usne mero ko kya bola ki dekh tere ko easy money kamana hai na to mera paas ek idea hai, ... dost bola ki dekh tere mei wo sab talent hai aur tu acche se karega, tu sex work karega kya? mai bola sex work kya prostitute jaise karna padega, saree-veedi pehanana padega kya, arre nahi aisa nahi hota tujhe ghar par jana hoga jaise tu hai bas waise hi aur jo wo bolega Wahi karna hai aur wahi pe hatho hath tere ko paisa mil jayega. (Date of Interview: 23/7/16 at GAURAV)

²⁸ Par tabhi mai dar bhi gaya tha ki kahi koi video na bana le mera aur viral kar de, to maine mana kar diya tha tabhi. ye sab hone ke baad mere classes ke liye mujhe fees bharni thi to mujhe 12000 rupaye chahiye tha. Tab mujhe samajh mei nahi aa raha tha ki ab karu to kya karu. Phir maine socha ki waise bhi mai doosro ke saath free mei to sex karta hi hu to agar paise lekar karuga to kya fark padega. (Date of Interview: 23/7/16 at GAURAV)

²⁹sex work hota hai jaise koi mila, full time nahi hai. free mei dosti ke khatir , ya bhir apni talab ke khatir. (Date of Interview: 25/6/16 at GAURAV)

exchange for money. Devo, a 23 years old bisexual male sex worker who is a part-time fashion designer and knows tailoring feels that money from sex work is very helpful:

It helps us a lot. If one wants to stay in Mumbai then you cannot stay without money, and yes we do sex, so one is getting enjoyment as well as money from sex work. So both our needs are taken care of. Those people who can buy sex, there is no problem in doing sex with them. They have no problem in paying us so we have no problem in taking money because they have money. Some people call us purush veshya (male prostitute), are you a whore! why do you take money? I tell them that everyone has different needs. My need is money and if I have to do it (having sex) then why will I do it for free, I will take money and do it.³⁰

Bimbi (2007:11) noted that the deviant model, explaining the entry of men into sex work, was a dominant discourse since the 1940s. The focus was to elaborate on the factors that ease their entry into sex work and it ranged from intrinsic to environmental pathologies. Thus MSWs have been viewed as coming from broken families (Deisher, Eisner, & Sulzbacher 1969), have mental health issues (Cates 1989), indulge in delinquent and criminal behaviour (Reiss 1961) and recently homosexuality was added as one of the key characteristics of MSW as offered by Scott (2003). Later researchers began to discuss economic disadvantage (Allen 1980; Scott 2003) and social exploitation (Caukins & Coombs 1976) as proximal causes for entry into male sex work. Studies undertaken in the West have tried to understand the motive for entering into sex work. Most common explanations for involvement into sex work include sexual orientation and seeking an affectionate relationship (Boyer 1989), poor self-esteem (Earls and David 1989; Boyer 1989); peer association and peer pressure (Allen 1980; Weeks 1980) and early childhood sexual abuse and victimisation (Boyer 1989; Allen 1980; Coombs 1974). Economic necessity and poverty have also been marked as important factors for entry into sex work (Earls and David 1989; Chappell 1986). Thus there is no one factor which makes possible their entry into sex work. There are a gamut of situations and all play their role concomitantly.

³⁰Bahut help ho jaati hai, Mumbai mei rahna hai to bina paise ke to nahi rah sakte aur sex to karna hi hai enjoyment bhi ho raha hai to paise leke kar lo, apki dono jaroorat puri ho gayegi. Jo paise de ke kar raha hai unse lene mei kya problem hai, Dene Mei kya problem hai lene mei kya problem hai, unke paas paise hai. Koi bolta hai ki tum purush veshya ho, randi hai kya tu, Kyo paise lete ho. mai Bolta hu ki sabki need alag hai tumhe bolna hai bol lo lekin hamari need paisa hai karna hi hai to paisa leke kare na free mei Kyo kare. (Date of Interview: 15/12/17 at GAURAV)

I also observed an unusual case where Rishi, a 24-year old bisexual male shared his journey of entry into sex work. Rishi is a versatile male sex worker. Three years ago while surfing the internet Rishi came across Humsafar Trust, an NGO working with MSM and MSWs in Mumbai. Rishi joined work at HST and he was part of a project working with MSM. Subsequently, he was transferred to another project where he was working with male sex workers. It was here that Rishi came to know about male sex work for the first time. But at that point he was happy with life and had a boyfriend and selling sex was not part of his future plan. He had other dreams. He wanted to spend the rest of his life with his 'loving' partner. But in due course, his boyfriend cheated on him. He was shattered and disheartened and then he decided to enter into sex work. Thus he was initially not aware of male sex work and only came to know through the NGO working with male sex workers. Thus the failure of love relationships was another factor for few boys. They stopped believing in romantic love and trust and just wanted casual sex with any partner. Few other male sex workers got into sex work after working with NGO working with male sex workers. A senior research staff working in the HIV sector with a leading agency, who did not want to identify herself, shared the politics of funding and rising number of MSM and MSW:

I feel many organisations are encouraging more and more people to join this for newer projects and funding. I know many people will kick me if they read this. I have also heard that one MSM gets a target of finding 5 new MSM every month. One cannot produce MSM so they bring heterosexual boys and train them to identify as an MSM in the office for the project sake.

There may be another side to this rising number of MSM joining organisations as stakeholders. The rise in discrimination and victimisation of MSM groups in India resulted in their unification and organisation of gay and homosexual community members to withstand the exclusionary measures of the State and society. India has witnessed a long history of stigma and discrimination against the LGBT community including MSM. Thus most MSM have a closeted identity and fear of violence further prohibited them from coming out. But in the recent past, something has happened which gave them hope. While the fight for repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal code was going on, it created a platform for homosexuals to come forward and join as a community. The social movement of the LGBT community has become very popular and LGBT community is organised and united like never before. They know their rights and this received a further boost when section 377 of IPC was struck and homosexuality was decriminalised.

Now the movement has moved beyond the metro cities and the pride march is a familiar event in cities like Lucknow and Nagpur. Such development gives hope to same-sex sexualities and it may be possible that many of them might come out in open about their identity. With the rise in funding for the MSM sector in India, more and more gay-identified men have come out in open. Last year one witnessed an unusual event at GAURAV. On the occasion of International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, at GAURAV some of MSM and MSW came out in open on their Facebook page. Here I am quoting Noor, a bisexual male sex worker, who wrote on FB:

Even community members have feelings and they have right to speak and express. Please support your LGBT child. Because for children, family is first, family matters a lot.

Though I am not refuting the above observation by the senior researcher completely, while assimilating this information one needs to keep in mind the changing social context of the LGBT community in the recent past in India. Another trend which has emerged from the narratives of MSWSs is the initiation into sex at an early age and then, according to male sex workers, the young boy gets used to it and afterwards they want to have it with other partners as well. As Apaa, who identifies himself as a Kothi, recalled his first sexual encounter with his cousin who was older than him. The first encounter was forceful and Appa did not like it. He threatened his cousin to expose him in front of the family. But he could not gather courage. He revealed:

I did not tell my family. Because I was also bothered about my reputation. Though I had told my cousin that I will tell everyone but I did not do it. I was ashamed of myself. I have spent more time with my sisters than with my brothers. Whenever we used to play I will always play a girl's role. I use to like it also. So I was scared that if I share this incident with family they will say that I myself is a bailee (someone who look and behave like a woman) and that is why he did this to you.³¹

But his plight did not end here. It kept continuing:

After few days, he again forced me. After this, he started giving me chocolates. Since he started giving me these little things I was also compelled by my greed. I feel commercial sex work also starts like this because of greed. Then I developed a good sexual relationship with this cousin of mine. Slowly I started having relations with many friends. When we used to play hide and seek in the evening, then we used to hide in the bushes, then I

³¹Ghar walo ko nahi bataya. Kyoki mujhe bhi meri izzat ki parwah thi, maine usko bola ki mai jaa kar batauga par maine bataya nahi. Phir mujhe sharm aa rahi thi. Bhai logo se jaada mai baheno ke saath raha hu, hum jab bhi khelte the to mai Hamesha ladki ka role karta tha, mujhe achha bhi lagta tha. isliye mujhe dar tha ki ghar wale bolege ki tu hi bailaa hai, isliye wo log tere saath hi ye sab karte hai. (Date of Interview: 03/12/17 at GAURAV)

used to have this activity there also. After this, it became my habit and of course, every individual has desires.³²

In somewhat similar situation Dhanush, shared his encounter with one of his neighbour which was against his will and it kept on going till he was 15 years old. Later, when they changed their house to a different location, Dhanush felt a sense of loss. According to him:

Then we left that place and we shifted to Borivali and then I found that something is missing in the new place. Maybe since this was going on for so many years I was probably used to it and therefore I was missing it at the new place. Then I had an encounter with a neighbour there.³³

I interviewed 34 male sex workers and all of them were introduced to sexual activities at a young age, sometime as young as 10 years old. Many of them were forced into sex like Dhanush, Aapaa, Gary, Satyam, Sam, Chintan but many had consensual first sexual relations with some older cousin, friend, uncle and neighbour. Many researchers have investigated this route of entry into sex work i.e. early childhood sexual exposure and consequent entry into sex work. A group of studies correlated entry into sex work with early childhood sexual abuse using psychological explanations for engagement in sex work. Coombs (1974) argued that sex work occurs as a learned behaviour where a child who has been awarded for engaging in sex with an adult will later sell sex in exchange for money. Boyer (1989) utilised Freud's psychopathological perspective and explained male sex work as acting out of earlier tragedy viz., homosexual child abuse, in an attempt to regain control of their bodies. These studies have overlooked the fact that a large proportion of children abused sexually do not become sex workers later in life. There are many factors which impel one to join sex work. In a similar line, studies by Robinson and Davies (1991) and Leahy (1992) found no support for the theorisation

³²Uske do teen din baad usne mujhe phir se force kiya. Uske baad wo mere ko chocolate dene laga, jab wo mujhe kuch kuch dene laga to mai bhi laalach se majboor ho gaya. Mujhe lagta hai commercial sex work bhi aise hi shuru hota hai. Laalach se. phir uske saath mera acche se relation ho gya aur phir dheere dheere aur bhi friend ke saath hone laga. Kaafi logo ke saath mera relation tha. School mei bhi dheere dheere logo ke saath relation ho gaya. Jab hum log shaam ko khelte the ankh Micholi to kaise hum jhaadi Mei chup jaate the to udhar bhi kai baar ho jaata tha. Phir aap ye samjho ki meri aadat hi ho gayi aur phir insaan ko khwaaish ho jaati hai. (Date of Interview: 03/12/17 at GAURAV)

³³Phir humne wo jagah Chod dee. Aur Borivali chale gaye. Aur phir mujhe lagne laga ki kuch to missing ho raha hai waha par. To shayaad itne saalo se ye sab ho raha tha to mujhe ye laga ki shayaad mujhe uski aadat si ho gayi hai. Phir waha par (Borivali) mera ek neighbour tha uske saath mera encounter hua. (Date of Interview: 5/12/17 at GAURAV)

that child abuse leads one into sex work. Browne and Minichiello (1996:38) argue that studies that have cited sex workers as workers viewed sex work as an outcome of a dignified rational choice. Male sex workers are the product of the same socio-economic forces as any other person and sex work is a job rather than a psychological condition.

Another point of entry into sex work has been the regular partner or boyfriend as they fondly call them. Like in the case of Aapaa, Noor and Manoj, before they entered into sex work they were in relationships with men. In case of a financial crisis, the boyfriends suggested sex work to them. Aapaa recalled his first meeting with his regular partner:

Once I had gone to Andheri Station for some work and I use to stay in Virar. I got down at Andheri station to buy some goods and then I met a boy, he was a good looking guy and was staring at me for long. I was 17 years old and he was almost 18, we met and exchanged phone numbers. We use to speak very frequently, I would go to my relative house to receive his call, after 15-20 calls, he invited me to his home in Khar, Mumbai... I told him everything about me and that boy told me that I am not the only one like this (gay). There are many in this world like us. Then slowly he introduced me to many male sex workers near Andheri McDonald. There were many like us there, before meeting them I use to be very nervous and scared. Once I had asked my boyfriend for 200 rupees since I had no money to go home. He gave me 50 rupees and told me that if I will do something it will fetch me good money. You do sex for free with different partners so why don't you take the money and have sex. So I got this idea for the first time from that boy.

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Similarly, Noor, a versatile male sex worker, got initiated into sex work by his partner:

My first client was arranged by him. The client was my partner's friend. My partner told me to go there and do whatever the client asks and the client will pay me. And this is how I entered into a new world. I got 1000 rupees for my first sexual encounter as a sex worker. For me, that 1000 rupees was very valuable because someone who had no money and suddenly he got 1000, it was a big deal for me. So whenever I will look at the money I

³⁴ Mai Andheri station kuch saaman lene ke liye gaya tha, tabhi mujhe ek ladka mila, wo hero mafik deekhta tha aur tab mai 17 Saal ka tha aur wo 18 ka. Phir hum mile aur number diya. Wo mere ko baur phone karta tha. Mai apne Jaanne wale ke yaha jaa Kar baat karta tha apan ke paas phone nahi tha tab. Jab humne 15 -20 Baar baat Kar lee phir ek din usne mujhe apne ghar par bulaya, Khar mei... maine usko apne baare mei sab kuch bata diya , phir usne bola ki arre pagal is duniya mei bahaut hai hum jaise, tu akela nahi hai. Aur tu bhi mera pahla partner nahi hai maine bhi bahut sare logo ke saath kiya hai. Phir usne mujhe Andheri McDonald Mei bahut logo se milaya, udhar kaafi log the. Varna to mai bahut darta tha. Phir humari bahut acchi dosti ho gayi. Ek baar mere paas paise nahi the maine usse 200 rupayee mange usne mujhe 50 diya, mere paas ghar jaane ke liye koi paise nahi the. Phir usne mujhe bola ki ek kaam karoge kya, vaise tum free mei sex karte ho, to tum paise lekar sex kaero. To ye idea mujhe pahli baar usse sunne ko mila (Date of Interview: 03/12/17 at GAURAV)

use to feel this sense of greed and I use to think that I will do anything which the client will ask me to do. Then I started going to Andheri McDonald and I met many friends.³⁵

Thus many male sex workers enter into sex work through a friend or a regular partner who introduced them to this world. Asthana and Oostvogels (2001:712) claimed that many male sex workers were “brought to the field” by adults, including relatives, while they were still young boys or during early adolescence. From the above narratives, I can conclude that entry into sex work for these men is not an act of impulse. Rather there is a long narrative of stigma, discrimination, abuse, financial crises and with this a sexual orientation which is unacceptable to family and society. All 34 respondents shared an early initiation into sex, with consent and in many cases without consent. The outcome was having multiple sexual partners at a young age of 15-16 years. Some of them (Neel, Aiba, Ishq) shared longing and desire for such sexual encounters. To this, if we add another social reality — poor socio-economic status, and being a male member in the family, the onus of responsibility falls on them to earn and support the family and run the household. But the big obstacle is sexual orientation — no one will hire a feminine looking man at their workplace. At this point friends, regular partners, boyfriends and sometimes the peers at NGO, which they visit sometimes, suggest easy money by selling sex. So there is not one factor which is responsible for entry into sex work rather it is a gamut of social situations which push these young men into sex work.

Kinds of Sex Work

According to Weitzer “sex industry” comprises owners, organisations, managers and workers who are into commercial sex (Weitzer 2000:3-4). Male sex workers have been divided into four major sub-groups – street hustlers, call boys, rents boys or kept boys and escorts. Street hustlers are street-based and they look out for their clients from the streets or cruising spots. Call boys arrange clients by the phone. They work through an agency or an agent who charges a commission (Allen 1980:418-420). Kept or rent boys are generally young men who provide sexual services to older men and in turn, they are

³⁵Mera pahla client usi ne arrange kar ke diya, uska ek friend tha usne bola ki tu udhar jaa, wo jo bolega tu kar dena, paise tere ko wo dedega. Aur phir is tarah mai ek nai duniya mei chala gaya. Mere pahle sexual encounter ke liye mujhe 1000 rupayee mile, mere liye iski bahut value thi. Kyo ki jiske paas ek rupaiyaa bhi nahi tha achank uske paas 1000 rupayee aajaye, ye bahut badi baat hai. Phir mujhe in paiso ko dekh kar bahut laalach hoti thi, mai sochta tha ki wo log jo bhi bolega, mai karuga. Phir mai Andheri McDonadl pe jaane laga phir kaafi friend log mile. (Date of Interview: 20/12/17 at GAURAV)

supported by their older clients (ibid., 404). Escorts who identify themselves as either gay or bisexual are those who advertise their services through the internet, newspaper or magazines.

In the Indian scenario sex work is largely of two kinds — street-based and non-street based. Street-based male sex work in Mumbai is carried out from the cruising spots like railway stations, intersections, popular food joints, public toilets, bus depots, beaches etc. Male sex workers who belong to lower socio-economic strata, are in dire need of money and are more likely to be found in such cruising spots. They are more likely to indulge in alcohol, more prone to violence and discrimination, more likely to have sexual encounters without condoms and therefore more likely to contract STI and HIV infection. Overall their lives are more precarious. Non-street based male sex work takes place from flats, lodges or hotels across the city and many time male sex workers also travel to popular tourist destinations with their clients. Male sex workers either work for a pimp who gets clients for them and charge fifty per cent of the total pay. Now days with the coming of smart phones and applications, two very popular gay dating apps— Grindr and PlanetRomeo, are used by most of the male sex workers who get access to their clients through these applications. Everything is arranged over the phone, from photographs to payments, nature and duration of work and place. With the coming of these mobile applications, ‘sex work has become hi-tech’ according to Dhanush.

Amid all this can we say that sex work is operating like industry or skilful occupation where the person who is running the show ensures that quality and skills are up to mark. In fact, while interacting with respondents, I noticed that well paid, good looking male sex workers are mostly part of a circuit which is operated by senior retired male sex workers. This senior guru has contacts and a large number of clients with him. Before a male sex worker joins the group he has to undergo certain tests and training and once satisfied then he is sent for his first assignment. R Nair, a senior programme staff with Aastha Parivaar, stated that:

They are very happy in their close circle, and new ones are not encouraged. They are tested and tried before the new one can join.

Similarly, Amitesh, who has been into sex work for more than 18 years shared this trend of *guru-chela* tradition among sex workers too: Male sex workers are trained into sex work. Exploitation is also rampant in this area, older established male sex workers first have sex with new boys and once convinced about their performative ability they are sent to clients. What matters most is how long can a male sex worker do it, and what all can they do. Time is an important factor. They assess and evaluate a male sex worker first by making sure that male sex workers are comfortable having sex with men. It is also important to have a good body. While interacting with a group of female sex workers (FSW) about their views about male sex work, one female sex worker Annu shared about how these male sex workers are victimised by the senior male sex worker who works as a pimp:

They will first have sex with the new boy to ensure that he is comfortable having sex with men. They also assess their stamina and how long can they go on. They also want to see if you have a good body.³⁶

Similarly Nikunj, a bisexual married male sex worker shared that this organised sex work through pimps has many requirements. He said:

There are few pimps who will first call the person (the man who wants to be a sex worker with this particular pimp) and then they try him (by having sex with him) and if satisfied, then he is sent to the client for his first assignment. The pimp generally feels that if he sent the new boy and he is not able to satisfy the client then his name in the market will be spoiled. MSW will get his payment because he has serviced but the pimp's business will be ruined.³⁷

Sexualisation is the process by which the male body is objectified as a sexual thing and it becomes the focal point of sexual encounter. Generally, in the context of sex work, it is usually the female body that is sexualised and the sociology of sex work operates from this point of view. So what happened when a male body is being sexualised? A male sex worker is aware of his body and what role it is going to play in an encounter. Thus a sexualised male body is at the centre of the labour process. Working-class male

³⁶Purush ko purush ke saath kar ke dekhte hai ki tum kitna comfortable ho Aadmi ke saath. Tu kitne ghante tak kar sakta hai tere mei kitni chhamata hai. Tera achha bodi bidi hai aur kitne ghante tak kar sakte ho. (Date of Interview: 03/12/17 at GAURAV)

³⁷Kuch kuch pimp aise hote hai jo bulaate hai, pahle try lete hai uske baad kisi ke paas bhejte hai. Kyo ki wo worried rahte hai ki agar mai ise directly bheju to aur isne client ko satisfy nahi Kiya to mera naam kharaab hoga. Msw ko to uske charges mil jaayege Kyo ki uske kapde utar chuke hai par mera business to Aage ke liye kharaab hogaya (Date of Interview: 07/12/17 at GAURAV)

body who is a breadwinner works on the body to produce desirable results. Thus it takes away from the notion of heterosexual masculinity and breadwinning to the fluidity of queer sexuality. Here one is drawing from Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson's (2009) account of aesthetic labour to understand the sexualisation of bodies at the workplace. According to Warhurst and Nickson, aesthetic labour foregrounds embodiment, revealing how the corporeality, not just the feelings, of employees, are organisationally appropriated and transmuted for commercial benefit. This embodiment is intended to appeal to the senses of customers, creating affective service interaction. By focusing on employees' looks it is possible to identify how aesthetic labour extends to sexualised labour. This sexualisation of the male body is markedly apparent in the case of male sex workers who are hired for their looks and their service to the clients. They regularly visit the gym and salon to enhance their saleability.

According to the narratives of informants, there are two kinds of sex work. One is organised with a powerful pimp running the show. He has all the contacts and facilities to run the business. There is a long list of clients with big names. Before a male sex worker is inducted, he is trained and tested. The money is good but there are lots of control and tabs. One is not free. Moreover, the male sex worker will only get 50 per cent of the total payment. The other half is pocketed by the pimp. While interacting with Dhanush, he again brought out that sex work is organised as well as one to one. But it is more lucrative when one is part of an organised circuit.

One to one is possible (sex workers working independently without any pimp) and many MSW have few regular clients from where they get a fixed regular income every month. But those who are high range escorts demanding 20,000 rupees or more for one night, they don't have any work at the site (cruising sites) or through the mobile application. What they need is a pimp who will introduce an MSW to high profile clients.³⁸

When asked if there are such pimps in GAURAV, Dhanush replied:

There is no one here but I have many friends who carry out such work. They are generally associated with film people and TV serials and I know a girl who provides boys to this high profile society. She has a huge number of boys with her from the fashion world and models. They go to Goa for two nights and when they come back they have 30 to 40 K

³⁸One to one is possible here aur kaffi log apne Kuch regular clients pakadh ke rakhte hai, jaha se unhe ek regular monthly income aati rahti hai. But those who are high escorts those who demands 20, 000 and above just for one night unka site par ya application par koi kaam nahi hai. Unko ek pimp chahiye. Jo unhe high profile logo se mila sake. (Date of Interview: 05/12/17 at GAURAV)

with them. They also go on foreign trips with their clients and earn lakhs. Pimps have so many contacts that one cannot match up to them. Moreover, anyone cannot join them. Pimps know the market, what is in demand. If I go to them, they will outrightly reject me. Those men take good care of their bodies, they go to the gym regularly, they also go to the salon and they have a daily routine. Grooming is very important..³⁹

Adding to Dhanush's opinion, Nikunj further explained:

Few MSWs based on their height, looks and personality keep their demands to the pimp. MSW is ready to service the client provided the pimp is ready to pay him his rate. So the pimp will have to arrange clients based on his rates. Like a model keeps his rates fixed generally around 50,000 rupees. Since he is a struggling model he needs money to maintain his lifestyle and his expense and therefore he is in this field. Some models have already done ramp shows and modelling and they are already popular and then the pimp uses him to maximise his profit by saying that he has this famous model with him⁴⁰

In many interactions, a very interesting trend surfaced where each male sex worker operates like a pimp in many cases. Whenever they get a call from the client, they ensure that the client gets an MSW. So if this particular sex worker is busy with some other client or with some other important work he generally sends a friend to this client. The payment is divided, between the MSW who serviced the client and the one who sent him, equally. But there is a flip side to this arrangement. Devo, a bisexual male sex worker explained:

I don't go through a pimp but on a couple of occasions, I have sent my friend to my clients, where I get 50% of the payment. But this has only resulted in a loss for me. Next

³⁹Yaha par koi nahi hai par mere bahut saare friends hai jo aisa kaam karte hai. They are generally associated with film people and tv serials and I personally know a girl who provides boys to this high profile society. she has huge number of boys with her from Fashion world, models. They go to Goa for two nights aur wapas aate hai to 30000, 40000 leke aate hai. they also go to foreign trips with their clients and earn in lakhs. Pimps ke contact itne hai ki aap usko match nahi kar sakte, and any boy cannot join them, pimps know the market kya chahiye kya bikta hai, ab mai jauga to koi puchega bhi nahi. They take good care of their body, gym jana, salon jana, ye sab unka daily routine Hota hai. Grooming is very important. (Date of Interview: 05/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁴⁰Kuch jo msw aise hote hai jo apne height look aur personality ke bal par apne demand Rakhte hai. Mai tumhare client karuga par mera jo rate hai tum usi hisaab se client dena mujhe. Jaise ek model hoga wo Apna rate fix kar ke rakhta hai Uska rate generally 50,000 tak hota hai. Kyo ki wo struggling model hai to use apne kharch aur lifestyle maintain Karne ke liye paise chahiye aur isi liye wo is field Mei aata hai. Koi model hai jo already ramp show Kar chuka hai, modelling Kar chuka hai jo already popular hai ad Kar chuka hai, agar aap well know person hai jo sirf community Mei hi nahi par outer world Mei bhi utna hi popular hai, to pimp bhi bolta hai ki mere paas so and so model hai par haan Uska rate jaada hai, to pimp bhi use use karta hai to maximise profit. (Date of Interview: 07/12/17 at GAURAV)

time the client has directly called them and this way I have lost my clients. So I have stopped this now⁴¹

Place of Sex Work

And there is no such place where we can carry out sex work, either you go to a lodge or if you have a place of your own then you can use that space. If one can manage to get some solitary space we can do sex work there. We have some sites here in Mumbai where male sex workers come and do sex work⁴² (Rishi, 24 years old bisexual male sex worker).

According to Devo, a bisexual male sex worker, they never arrange a place for sex work.

According to him:

I don't arrange the place, this is their (client) headache. Either a hotel or at their place and I also charge my travelling cost along with my rate which is 3000 rupees.⁴³

Because of shrinking solitary space in urban settings finding an isolated place in the city which is a place of hustle and bustle, poses a great difficulty. One has to wait for a different time, especially nighttime and dark corners where the possibility of intimate interaction is possible. Daytime would mean the presence of many bodies and inquisitive gaze whereas the darkness would descend with the sunset and the very site of activity is transformed into a site of quietness and non-activity. For instance, the considerable part of Juhu beach in Mumbai used to fall under darkness after the sunset. Then this space used to be taken up by *mallishwallas* (masseur), female sex workers, transgender sex workers and male sex workers. Recently Juhu beach has been laced with several street lamps and the dark space of marginals has shrunk in considerable measure. To overcome such control and regulations by the administration and legal authority, male sex workers in Mumbai have resorted to new methods and booming technological innovation emanate to their assistance. Rishi, a versatile male sex worker shares the importance of internet and social networking sites in the lives of male sex workers:

⁴¹Mai pimps ke through nahi jaata par ek do Baar dosto ko bheja hai, jisme mujhe 50% milta hai, par usse mera nuksaan hi hua hai. Client agli baar unhe directly hi bula lete hai aur mera nuksaan ho jata hai. Isliye maine wo bhi band kar diya hai. (Date of Interview: 15/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁴²Our waha par koi aisa place bhi nahi hai jaha hum sex work kar sakte hai, ya to aap lodge mei jaoge ya phir aapke paas ghar rahega to aap kar sakte ho , agar koi sunsaan place mil jaye to hum waha par bhi sex work kar sakte hai, humare liye alag se kuch site rakhi gayi hai jaha par MSWs aate hai aur sex work karte hai. Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁴³mai nahi arrange karta wo unka headache hai, ya to hotek ya phir unka ghar, phir mera travelling aur mera paisa, which is minimum 3000. (Date of Interview: 15/12/17 at GAURAV)(Dev)

You must be aware that how social networking sites are so popular nowadays. Now we get more clients on social networking sites than our regular hotspots. Networking is so hi-fi that now we do not want to waste our time by going to hotspot and then first woo client and then the client will take you. Now it's like you login, check if the person is 18 years and above, you say 'hi' and 'hello', negotiate the rates and tell the place where he has to come and he will reach. This way we save our time and money.⁴⁴

So what is the most suitable place for a male sex worker and do they prefer to go to the place which the client has decided or they call the client to their place?

It depends. Most of the male sex workers do not have a place of their own. If you rent a place, then you are required to produce many documents. So we male sex workers prefer that the client should make arrangements for us in the hotel or call us at their place because we do not have a place of our own. So finding a place is the client's headache. Now you want satisfaction then you will have to do this much. (Manoj, a bisexual male sex worker)

How do male sex workers contact their clients? Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker, communicated that besides internet and mobile application one thing which is still popular is cruising spot. One witnesses the popularity of cruising spots among kothi-identified male sex workers like Ishq, Aiba, Aapa and Samay.

Now we have WhatsApp groups. Moreover when we come to know that this place has many clients coming, like there are spots in Andheri, Bandra. MSWs stand there, they get clients, people know and they come. ⁴⁵(Samay, a kothi-identified male sex worker)

Besides hotspot, there is another trend which is getting popular. Generally, a group of 3-4 or more male sex workers rent a place and then they call their clients at that rented place. Amit explained:

Nowadays 3-4 male sex workers rent a flat and then clients visit them at this place. It is almost like a brothel with massage facilities....(he went on and named a famous pimp) So and So started this and now it has become very popular.⁴⁶

⁴⁴aap to jaante ho ki aajkal social networking site kitne famous hai aur aajkal humare hotspot par utne customer nahi milege jitne social networking site par milege . abhi networking itna hifi ho gaya hai ki koi in sab mei nahi padta ki pahle site pe jaye, phir pataye aur leke jayega abhi kaisa hai ki login karo dekho ye banda 18 year ka hai isko hi becho isko hello becho itna payment lega aur bande ko place bata do aur wo aajyega. isse humara time bhi bach jata hai money bhi bach jata hai Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁴⁵Abhi groups bane hai WhatsApp par , aur jaha par pata chala ki yaha par client jaada aarahe hai jaise spots hai Andheri hai Bandra hai yaha par khade rahte hai to milta hai unhe pata rahta hai, log aate hai. (Date of Interview: 25/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁴⁶Yaha par aajkal, teen char log mil Kar ek flat lelete hai aur phir client wahi aate hai. Almost brothel like situation, including massage facilities. Sandeep Soni started this. It was there Abhi bahut popular ho gaya hai. (Date of Interview: 30/11/17 at GAURAV)

This flat system is getting popular with many male sex workers. According to them, it takes care of many crises situations. According to Satyam:

I don't go anywhere. If you go out there are many crises like situations. There may be violence. Moreover, I do not know what are you going to do to me. Let's say if the client has four more people in the same room with him then what will I do. And it's very common. I have just one thing to say to all my clients. If you want to come please come, otherwise, don't come, and all my clients come to my flat.⁴⁷

But there have been many stories of violence and mugging by male sex workers and in such situations do clients feel comfortable coming to such a place? There may be a situation where the client is equally frightened to come to someone's flat. Do male sex workers faces this reverse discrimination at the hand of the client? According to Satyam:

Yes, because of this I have lost my business to quite an extent. Like I spoke to a boy of 17-18 years and he had similar problem. He was saying that let us say I come and you do something to me then. I explained to him that why would I do all this especially since I have invited you to my place. It will be harmful for me too. I will get exposed and caught.⁴⁸

Out of 34 respondents interviewed for this research, there were three who have been into sex work since 2000. Their narratives provided some sense of temporality and one could trace a brief history of how male sex workers operated then and now. In early 2001, Amitesh a 37-year-old male sex worker shared his experience from then:

Earlier there were 8 people who would openly claim that they are sex workers and slowly more people came out and became visible. We will all meet at 9 pm and then we will go to Gateway of India, Nariman Point and stay there till 4 in the morning. There we were getting sex as well as money so why should we leave. Then we started going to parties.

⁴⁷I dont go anywhere, Jane par bahut Saaro cheeze hoti hai jaise crisis hua. Maarpeet hua. Aap mere saath kya karoge mujhe nahi pata, mano mai aapke yaha aaya aur aap ne chaar bandho ko aur usi kamre mei rakha hai to tab mai kya karuga aur ye bahut common hai. Mera ek hi dialogue hai, tumhe aana hai to aao nahi to mataao, aur mera har client mere flat par aata hai. (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁴⁸ haan is wazah se dhandhe ka bahut nuksaan hota hai. Llike I spoke to a boy of 17 -18 he had a similar problem. Maan lo mai aaya tumne kuch Kiya to , maine usko samjhaya ki mai apne ghar par bula kar ye sab Kyo karuga, isme mera hi nuksaan hai. Mai hi phasuga. (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

They (organisers and pimp) use to tell us that if you behave like this you will get money, partners and parties. If you remain decent you will get more clients. ⁴⁹

From the narratives of three informants, Amitesh, Aapa and Aslam it seems that one trend, which was very popular then, was cruising at the hotspot. Thus visiting Gateway of India or Andheri McDonald was popular since there were clients there. Since, in early 2000, internet technology was not so developed in India and therefore male sex workers had two options– either visit cruising spots where the business was brisk or get in touch with some pimp who would arrange clients for the MSW. At that time there were not many pimps and all three informants named one pimp who was very popular. According to them this pimp had created a big business and had rented many flats in a posh locality in suburban Mumbai to cater to elite clients. This pimp is still in business and owns many flats and places to cater to clients. The business was brisk and so were the risks associated with work. They were not aware about their rights and the risk associated with unprotected sex.

Then we did not know what to tell the doctor when we visit them. We did not know a thing about condoms. Sometimes we would serve 10 clients and sometimes 15 in a day. Sometimes the client will have sex with us but would not pay us, then we did not know what to do. If its a female sex worker she will collect people and tell them that this person (client) was troubling her but if we raise alarm then the client use to placate us by saying that this Gudd (a slag for gay) was after me.⁵⁰

Rates of Male Sex Workers

The rates of male sex workers vary from 500 to 7000 rupees per encounter. Sometimes expatriates and NRIs who visit Mumbai pay male sex workers more than their usual rates like in the case of Dev and Rishi. So one question is, how does this rate vary? According to Rishi:

⁴⁹Earlier there were 8 people who would openly claim that they are sex workers, aur phir Dheere Dheere bahut jagah par log dikhne lage. we will all meet at 9 pm and then we will go to gateway of india, Nariman point and stay there till 4 in the morning. Yaha par sex bhi mil raha hai aur paisa bhi to hum Kyo chodege. Phir hum parties Mei bhi jaane lage. Wo hume bolte the ki tum aisa behave karoge to ye milega. Paisa and partners along with parties. Decent rahege to jaada client hai. (Date of Interview: 30/11/17 at GAURAV)

⁵⁰Jab hum doctor ke paas jaye to kya bolege, hume condom ke baare mei pata nahi tha, kabhi 10 client bhi ho jaate the kabhi 15 bhi, par hume pata nahi tha. Kai baar client sex karlete hai lekin paise nahi dete, phir tab kya kare, agar ek fsw hogi to logo ko ikattha kar ke ye to bol sakti hai ki ye mujhe chedh raha tha, par agar humne shor machaya to ultta client hi bolega ki yahi guddh mere peeche padha tha. (Date of Interview: 30/11/17 at GAURAV)

It depends, everyone has different rates. My rate is 5000 and above and I charge 2000 for meeting and spending time (a couple of hours).⁵¹

According to Rishi rates vary from customer to customer. But there are three chief criteria – good looks, behaviour and how well you fulfil demands of the clients. Explaining further, Rishi added that if you remain decent and do not ‘twist and shake’ too much, clients like it. One should not be conspicuous by ‘loud’ behaviour. Generally tall, good-looking, masculine, ‘straight’ looking male sex workers earn more than short, stout and older-looking male sex workers. Thin looking boys are also not much in demand. Another noticeable trend was distinction of rate between kothi-identified male sex workers and versatile male sex workers. According to Noor if you are ‘hile-dule sarkar’ (feminine-effeminate) then client will not like you. Thus masculinity has been a sought after trait among male sex workers too. Noor, a male sex worker said that:

My rate is 2000 rupees and I don’t negotiate, but yes, sometimes I concede. I also negotiate the kind of sex I will do along with the duration of the encounter and this is non-negotiable.⁵²

The next question which came to mind was do male sex workers change their rates if the client is good looking? According to Rishi:

No No, it’s not like this. It’s professional. But if a good looking client comes we get excited and we want to go. But it’s not like this.⁵³

Nevertheless one did not encounter such a clear commercial transaction in the case of few kothi-identified male sex workers. Thus kothi sometimes have sex for their pleasure. They also shared very affable relations with clients. Samay, a kothi-identified male sex worker, shared his perception about sex work and payments:

I still have few clients who are regular and I have a long association with them. I have few fixed clients and I don’t believe in payments (Money). If you are happy you can buy me food, cold drink, recharge my phone or I can borrow 1000 rupees which I plan to re-

⁵¹it depends har kisi ka alag alag rate hota hai, aise mera 5000 and above hai aise mai sirf milne ka aur thoda sa time spent karne ka 2000 charge karta hu, sabka alag alag rate hota hai (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁵² mera rate 2 hazaar hai aur ye mai negotiate nahi karta. Par haan kabhi kabhi maan jata hu. Isi ke saath mai kya karna hai, kaise karna hai aur kitni der karna hai ye bhi pable hi decide kar lete hai. Aur haan is par kabhi koi negotiation nahi hota hai. (Date of Interview: 20/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁵³ nahi nahi aisa nahi hai its professional par agar banda good looking aajaye to humara dil kaise kahta hai chalo chalo par aisa nahi hai Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

turn once I get my salary. They like my feelings and tell me that Sameer you are an amazing guy. Rest of them negotiate for money. I have a long list of clients which I have grabbed from friends. But now they (friends) don't share their clients with me.⁵⁴

Similarly, Neel a gay-identified MSW explained how rates do not matter to him:

Rate is nothing for me. If I am hungry I will ask my client to buy me food, give me my travel expense. If someone is good, then I go with them for just food and travel. But otherwise, I ask for 2500 to 3000 rupees. But if client requests then I am ready to negotiate... Last month I met one client who made a reservation in a hotel for us, gave me food and 4000 rupees also.⁵⁵

So the question which comes to mind is what is sex work? Work or Pleasure? Ashoke Row Kavi while describing male sex work, explained that the terms of the transaction between the client and the male sex worker are not so clear and many times they cross this professional boundary (Khire 2008:131). Thus, work and pleasure get mixed up unlike with female sex workers where the terms of commercial transaction are very clear. While talking with respondents, I was exposed to a different picture. Rishi while talking about his work stated that:

When I am working I am very serious and no hanky-panky, no matter how good looking or how old the client is. When I am working I am only concerned about money. If you pay me my rate then I will come with you or else no.⁵⁶

Thus there was a marked variation among Kothi-identified male sex workers and bisexual-versatile male sex workers about how they view sex work. Rishi who identifies himself as a versatile MSW has a very clear picture about the terms of commerce and rates. Similarly, Noor who is another versatile male sex worker is very clear about the rates and other terms of business. On the other hand, Kothi-identified male sex workers

⁵⁴Abhi bhi mera kuch clients hai jinke saath chalta aaraha hai .I have few fixed clients and I dont believe in payments (Money). Agar Kush hai to kuch Khila de, thanda pila de, phone Mei balance daal do, udhaar ke taur pe 1000 rupayee de do, salary hogi to mai de dunga. Meri bhavana unko pasand aajaaati hai aur wo bolte hai yaar Sameer tu sahi aadmi hai baaki bhadve log aate hai 1300 sau mei nahi aur 1600 sau mai hi jayege. Ab logo ke client chin ke mera ek lamba list hai. Par ab dost log nahi dete clients mujhe. (Date of Interview: 25/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁵⁵Rate ka kuch nahi hai, jaise mujhe bhookh lagi hai to mai bolta hu ki mujhe khana Khila do, aane jaane ka bhaada dedo. Utne Mei bhi agar koi achha mila to hum chale jaate hai. waise hum 2500 se 3000 tak to mangta hi hu. Koi bolta hai to kam bhi kar dete hai. Hum log jaada tar to grindR se hi operate karte hai, kabhi kabhi friend bhi kisi client ko refer kar dete hai. Abhi mereko koi gaye mahine ek client mila hotel mei rukaya, khana bhi khilaya aur 4000 rupayee bhi deeye. (Date of Interview: 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁵⁶ nahi dhandhe ke time par dhandha, aap kitne bhi good looking ho ya kitne bhi budhhe ho, dhandhe ke time par mujhe sirf paiso se matlab hai. agar aap mujhe itna pay karte ho to mai aap ke saath aata hu nahi to nahi (Rishi) (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

are not always clear cut about rates and other terms of the transaction. Aiba, a Kothi-identified male sex worker when asked about his rates replied:

Sex work happens when I meet someone, it is not full time. I do sex for free, for friendship sake or if I feel the urge. If my friend gets a client and he asks me to go with the client, he asks me to go like a Panthi and then we share the money and then I go.⁵⁷

Krishna, a kothi-identified male sex worker shares a great relationship with clients:

They are like my friends, I can say anything, I give them massage, talk to them, we drink together and yes sometimes I go out with them like friends do. I love my relationship with my clients⁵⁸

When Brewis et al. (2000) discusses the case study of Greta, a post-operative transsexual who sets plenty of stores by her surgically acquired femininity. Indeed, Brewis *et al.* (1997) suggest that the transsexual is frequently driven by a sensed biological imperative to physically become the other sex. Their activities often, therefore, reinforce the discursive rigidity of the gender divide—by surgical alteration of their bodies, they seek to become another sex, and thereby another gender. A confirmed and stable gender identity, then, is crucial to the psychological health of many transsexuals and we could argue that Greta enjoys her work for the pleasure it affords because this fits her image of what a woman should be like. It is in this context that one would like to discuss kothi-identified male sex workers. They are male but feel that a woman is trapped inside their body' (Aapaa). Aapaa also believes that he is Vidhya Balan for his client. The desire to be loved by and longed for is very palpable in his/her narrative. Having sex with men is his way of ensuring that his/her charm is irresistible. Thus, having sexual encounters with men help kothi-identified male sex workers move from the terrain of ambiguity towards certainty, that they are desirable and wanted. This may be the reason that many a time kothi-identified male sex workers do not take transactional sex very seriously. Therefore, if they like a pathi (client) they will go with him.

⁵⁷sex work hota hai jaise koi mila, full time nahi hai. free mei dosti ke khatir , ya bhir apni talab ke khatir, Jaise ki mere dost ko pann lag gaya to wo bola ki par agr kisi dost ne bola ki jaana panthi ban kar jaa na, 1500 sau tere 1500 sau mere. (Date of Interview: 07/07/16 at GAURAV)

⁵⁸Client mere dost jaise hi hai. Kuch bhi bol deta hu. Sochta nahi. Mai unhe massage deta hu, unki baate sunta hu. Mai unke sath Peeta hu aur haan kabhi kabhi mai unke Saath bahar bhi jaa-ta hu. Apan ka rishta ekdam jhakkas hai client ke saath (Date of Interview: 12/08/16 at GAURAV)

Nonetheless, there is also evidence from bisexual male sex workers that real desire and real love might be present within the sex worker-client encounter. Satyam, Akshay, Satyam said that their regular partners (boyfriend) were once their clients. As discussed above, sometimes the client is good-natured, good looking and a male sex worker gets attracted and a new relationship is initiated. One pressing issue which few of the male sex workers (Rishi, Veer, Dhanush, Satyam) spoke about is the declining rates of male sex workers in recent times. According to Rishi:

There are fewer male sex workers now and their place has been taken over by MSM. Since MSM do not charge money and they do everything which we do then why would someone pay us. Thereafter our rates have declined. Now many of us go for 500 and 1000 rupees.⁵⁹

MSM who just want to have sex with men and are looking out for partners also use mobile applications like Grindr and PlanetRomeo and if a client of MSW finds such MSM on the network site, then some of them would prefer to go with MSM since they go for free. But there are few clients who want MSWs only and they dictate to the sex worker that they should not stand and mingle with MSM. Amitesh described his experience with clients whenever he would interact with MSM at the cruising spots.

When I had joined HST then sometimes I use to stand with MSM (at the cruising spots) and when clients use to see this they used to tell me that you were standing with the free-sex group (MSM) and therefore slowly I drifted from them.⁶⁰

Recent data from research in Australia showed that men who engaged in transactional sex were more sexually adventurous in general, reported group sex, and scored higher on measures of sexual sensation seeking (Prestage, Jin, Bavinton, & Hurley 2014) Study further points out that younger people in their 20s do not pay for sex as frequently as men in their 40s. Thus as people age the instances of transactional sex rise. Most of respondents also shared that 90 per cent of their clients are older men with children and grandchildren. Thus younger gay-identified men usually find sexual partners but as they age the free partners for sexual acts also decline. And it is here that male sex workers

⁵⁹ MSW bahut kam hai unki jagah MSM ne leli hai, since they don't charge any money aur wahi sab karte hai to why would someone pay us. Tabhi to humara rate bhi ghat gaya hai. Abhi to log 500 aur 1000 rupayee Mei bhi chale jate hai. ((Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV))

⁶⁰Jab maine HST join kiya tha to mai kabhi kabhi MSM logo ke saath khada hota tha, jab client ye dekhta tha to bolta tha ki tu to free walo ke saath mei khada hota hai, isliye mai unse door hota gaya, (Date of Interview: 30/11/17 at GAURAV)

step in to fulfil the demands of ageing men. Thus according to Surender, a 28-year-old bisexual male sex worker, clients are quite demanding and they want everything which a regular partner cannot fulfil all the time. Therefore it is here that the sex workers step in:

He wants everything. Sometimes he wants a decent boy and sometimes a feminine looking boy. Sometimes they want you to wear a saree and I do everything he wants. If he tells me that today I want a feminine look then I dress up and go like that. We have to play various roles with clients also. ⁶¹

Typologies of Clients

The clients of sex workers have never received the same attention as sex workers themselves. There may be various reasons for this but most important seems the accessibility of clients to researchers. Thus clients have been overlooked and are largely depicted as ‘undifferentiated mass’. Clients of male sex workers have been classified based on their sexual orientation, marital status and socioeconomic status (Estep et al. 1992; Morse et al. 1992; Visano 1991). Browne and Minichiello (1995:598) study of male sex workers in Melbourne, Australia identified 5 key typologies of clients—marrieds, easy trade, undesirables, sugar daddies and heaven trade.

For example, ‘marrieds’ look for something their wives can’t give them, tending to expect discretion and very little beyond the act of sex itself. ‘Easy trade’ are clean, gentlemanly, come quickly or only want non-penetrative sex, pay and go. In contra-distinction, workers would prefer not to service ‘undesirables’, violent, dirty or obese types, and/or those who try to break safe sex rules. Distancing, therefore, is arguably more necessary with undesirables than it is with marrieds or easy trade clients. Amitesh, a 37-year-old male sex worker, shared his experience with one such client. This particular client will request Amitesh to abuse him in filthy language before the actual sexual encounter. The ‘abuse’ used to turn him on. But for Amitesh, it was a complete turnoff. In another narrative Rishi shared his encounter with a ‘psycho’ customer, as they usually call them:

⁶¹Use sab kuch chahiye, kabhi use accha ladka decent bhi chahiye, to to kabhi hilta doolta bhi, kabhi saree pahanane wali bhi acchi lagti hai. Wo jaisa bolta hai mai waisa hi ban ke jaata hu. Agar wo bolega ka ki aaj mujhe thoda sa aisa (expression of a woman) chahiye to mai waisa hi ban ke jaata hu. Client ke saath bhi alag alag role play karna padta hai. (Date of Interview: 27/03/18 at GAURAV)

Some customers are very irritating, they inflict pain, psycho customer but when I get paid for that work then it does not hurt. It kind of gets compensated and who doesn't need money other than Kuber and Laxmi. When my client tells me that I will give you 100 lashes and I will pay you this much, I will go happily because I need that money.⁶²

'Sugar daddies' may also turn out to be difficult clients, being older than the workers and therefore having little in common with them, and often proving unreliable financially. Among 34 informants, this was the most common category of client which every male sex worker cater to. They were quite unpopular among male sex workers because of lack of youth and good looks. Further, many felt that they were very demanding since they did not get sex in their personal life and wanted everything they are missing out on. Most of the regular clients which male sex workers had, sugar daddies were most common as regular clients. They were found to be popular among few Kothi-identified male sex workers like Aapaa, Aiba and Sameer.

'Heaven trade'—clients whom the worker finds irresistibly attractive—can also prove problematic, as here most of all sex workers may be tempted to cross the divide between work and personal life, or to allow unsafe sex. However, they may also guard against this temptation by remembering that 'It's never going to happen because the clients see you as a worker. That is all you are to them. They don't want to make a boyfriend out of a worker' (Browne and Minichiello 1995:611). There is another category of clients popularly called 'romantics' who sometimes fall in love with the sex worker (Brewis and Linstead 2000). The golden rule of the sex industry is to refrain from falling in love or getting emotionally involved with the client. I found four instances where a male sex worker fell in love with his own client and now they are partners. In the case of Dev:

I met one through a friend I was very upfront with him and he liked it, then he became my regular partner and then after some time we broke up but we still love each other. He was not married, but now he is going to get married.

It is therefore problematic to claim that every sex worker will necessarily seek to establish a strict boundary between work and non-work with every client—encounters are

⁶²Kuch customer bahut irritating hote hai, inflicting pain, psycho customer hote hai par jab apne ko us kaam ke paise milte hai tab dard nahi hota, its kind of get compensated and who doesn't need money other than Kuber and laxmi. Jab mera client bolta hai ki mai tumhe 100 belt maruga aur 10000 rupaiye doonga mai shauk se jauga, because I need that money (Rishi) ((Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV))

influenced not least by the category in which the sex worker places individual clients. There is also evidence that some MSWs generally enjoy their work and derive sexual pleasure from it.

Female Clients of Male Sex Workers

When questions about female clients of male sex workers were posed, all kothi-identified male sex workers informed that they have never catered to female clients. In fact, many of them expressed disgust when asked about sexual relations with women. Among versatile and bisexual male sex workers, Rishi, Veer, Durg, Satyam, Utpal and Noor have serviced female clients. In many cases, it is not sexual. Rishi explained his experience with women clients:

No, I am so involved with men that I don't think about women but there are many women here in Mumbai who stay away from their husbands and don't want sex, they sometimes call us just as entertainers, to sit with them, to give them company to flirt with them. I go for such assignments. They are high profile and they want good looking, muscular boys. Maintaining secrecy is their top priority.⁶³

“I never had a female client”, is the most common line used by MSWs when enquired about female clients. One felt that MSW's sexual identity as an MSM or gay prevents them from talking about such encounters. Moreover, most female clients demand an extreme level of secrecy and maybe, therefore, MSWs are not comfortable discussing such encounters. Below is a narrative of Satyam who has catered to a couple of clients once:

Once I chatted with a man who wanted me to service his wife along with him. His wife knew about his sexual orientation. Such clients pay you more but there are very few such clients maybe just five per cent. I got this offer once⁶⁴

Utpal, a bisexual male sex worker shared catering to female clients mostly coming from abroad. Sometimes they are couples and Utpal offer services to both male and female

⁶³ I am so involved with men that I do not think about women par haan idhar Bombay Mei bahut saari ladies hoti hai jo apne husband ke saath nahi rahti. Wo bas aapko chahte hai ki aap unke saath Samay bitao. Unko entertainment mangata hai hum Udhar jaate hai baat cheet karte hai thoda flirt ya phir kabhi party Mei jana hota to hum saath mei jaate hai. Mai aise assignments ke liye bhi jata hu. Ye sab high profile clients hote hai aur unko koi lafda nahi mangta, top secret kisi se koi baat nahi. Paisa achha mil jata hai par inko good-looking muscular type ke ladke mangata hai. (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁶⁴Par ek baar maine aise aadmi se chat kiya tha, jo ki uski biwi ko bhi pata tha ki uska pati gay Mei hai, aur uski shart hoti hai ki mujhe bhi service do aur meri wife ko bhi, haan wo paise bhi jaada dete hai, aise log kam hote hai mano to 5 per cent. Mero ko ek hi baar offer mila tha aur mai ek baar his gaya Phir kabhi mai gaya nahi. (Satyam) (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

partners and charge double. Female clients are uncommon and male sex workers do not feel comfortable sharing about their female clients. Confidentiality is critical when male sex workers were catering to female clients.

Meanings of ‘Having Sex’ for Male Sex Workers

Is there any distinction between work sex and non-work sex for male sex workers? Can we distinguish between work-sex and non-work sex? Various research has pointed different types of sexual encounters—work, relational and recreational. The focus of these research have been strategies sex workers employ so that they can maintain the proper distance from the emotional demands of the client encounter and enable the maintenance of self-identity beneath the public, professional mask. A pertinent question is how male sex workers construct and negotiate a sense of self especially when selling sex is linked with societal taboos and stigma. So how do male sex workers manage the contradiction of selling sex and at the same time preserving their self-esteem? One will explore the possibility through various narratives of male sex workers.

Yes, I sell sex. When I am with my client I have to do what he wants. I do everything for which I am paid. That time I don't think about myself or my body. Yes, I think I become their slave for some time. I sell my body and I can do anything for money. This body is mine even if it becomes their (client) for few moments. But this is my body I decide what I want to do with this body of mine.⁶⁵ (Rishi, 24 years old versatile male sex worker)

While interacting with informants the concept ‘sex worker’ was elaborated and explained by them. Thus they are also workers who sell their sexuality as compared to others who may sell their labour-power like a social skill or physical strength. Devo when commented that “ Yes, I sell sex, its work for me like tailoring or cooking”. Similarly, Rishi, when he narrated that “Yes, I sell sex ... But this body is mine even if it becomes their (client) for few moments” suggests that this discursive representation of the ‘sex worker’ is informed by the understanding that they are free to sell their labour to the highest bidder in a mutual exchange, as are other workers under capitalism. Rishi in the above interview shared his feeling of how he becomes a slave for few moments.

⁶⁵Haan mai sex bechta hu. Jab mai client ke paas hota hu to mujhe wo karna hota hai jo wo chahata hai. Tab mai wo sab karta hu jiske mujhe paise milte hai. Yes tab mai apni freedom aur apne baare mei nahi sochta. Haan shayad mai thode der ke liye unka gulam ban jaata hu. Haan mai apni body bechta hu, paise ke liye mai kuch bhi kar sakta hu. Par khair ye body to meri hai naa thode samay ke liye jaroor unki hoti hai. Par ye meri body hai aur mai hi decide karta hu ki iska kya karna hai. (Rishi) (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

Deep down he is aware that it is his body and he decides what he wants to do with it. Thus even if it's a labour process, they are aware that they have the freedom to decide what they want to do with their body and how far can they go. Aapaa, a gay-identified male sex worker decodes his work where according to him there is some component of choice even when they are selling sex.

Whatever we are doing there is a choice. Even when we are doing sex work we first identify our client and we only go out with a 'good person'. Similarly, when we are in love, we choose 'good' boyfriends.⁶⁶

In understanding male sex work from the sex worker perspective, the line between 'sex as leisure activity' (required by clients) and 'sex as work' (performed by the sex worker) is easy to draw, but important for individual workers to maintain — primarily because of the ambiguous status of the body as a commodity. So what do male sex workers employ to manage their personal and professional lives and how do they manage the demands of their job. Emotional labour which is part of their everyday routine, how do male sex workers manage and organise their emotional demands from the kind of work they undertake.

Each person who is in the market of commercial sex as a seller brings with him his unique self, values, beliefs, desires, emotions, needs and expectations, past encounters and knowledge. Some of these are relatively stable over time, others will alter during the encounter. Although each aspect of the individual constitutes part of the interaction, these can be challenged by interconnection with the other person in the dyad. The meaning that the individual gives to the act of having sex is formative of the ways in which he conducts his part of the encounter (Davies et al. 1993:131). Sex workers attach a number of meanings to having sex. These vary with the contextual circumstances of the sex, and who their partner is. They include love, money, ego enhancement, relationship building and maintenance, promiscuity, reaction, physical release, and work.

⁶⁶Hum jo bhi kar rahe hai choice se kar rahe hai. Sex work bhi karte hai to accha insaan dekh kar hi karte hai, love bhi karenge to accha boyfriend dekh kar hi karte hai (Date of Interview: 03/12/17 at GAURAV)

So what does sex mean to male sex workers? When this question was posed to respondents there were diverse replies. Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker feels that relationships, love and sex are very important for them:

People like us long for love and therefore boyfriends are important to us. We want someone in our life.⁶⁷

For others, it is not the same. Few of them feel that sex is nothing but money. After several failed romantic relationships, few like Rishi, Dhanush, Satyam, Varun and Gary do not feel that relationships are important. Thus, according to Rishi, sex is nothing but easy money for him, and therefore:

When my client tells me that I will lash you 100 times with my belt and will pay you 10000 rupees I will go happily because I need that money. For me, sex is nothing but money.⁶⁸

Thus one of the most important strategies in this regard is the way in which male sex workers label and define different types of sexual encounters. Browne and Minichiello (1995:605), in a study of male sex workers in Melbourne, identify several categories of sexual relations which male sex workers reported. Their respondents differentiated between relational sex, which is reserved for partners and 'being in love'; work sex, which is purely physical and uninvolved, and may involve making the client feel wanted; and recreational sex, where the worker in their private life needs to be wanted for themselves, although in a relatively impersonal way (for example, anonymous homosexual encounters). Dhanush, a bisexual male sex worker, also described these three kinds of sex and sexual relation common among sex workers:

I think we have three kinds of sex. One is when you are with your partner (boyfriend). Then there is another which is sex with client which is emotionless and plain work. In between these two sexual relations we sometimes go out with some random men whom we desire or long to be with.⁶⁹

⁶⁷humare jaise log pyaar ke liye bahut tarasate hai, so boyfriend ko bahut mahatwa dete hai ki yaar koi ho agar to. (Date of Interview: 01/07/16 at GAURAV)

⁶⁸Jab mera client bolta hai ki mai tumhe 100 belt maruga aur 10000 rupayee doonga mai shauk se jauga, because I need that money. Mere liye sex sirf aur sirf paisa hai aur kuch bi nahi. (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁶⁹ hum log Mei teen tarah ke sexual relation jaada tar hote hai. Ek to boyfriend ya regular partner ke saath hota hai jo hamari Khushi se hota hai. Phir client ke saath activities hoti hai jo sirf kaam hai aur kuch nahi. Aur kabhi kabhi hum apni bhook ke liye kai baar chale jate hai, doosro ke saath. Ye sex work nahi Hota hai. (Date of Interview: 05/12/17 at GAURAV)

Majority of informants felt that sex work is plain work and there is little or no element of emotion or desire in it. While interacting they refer the sexual encounter with client as ‘activity’ and not ‘love’ or ‘sex’. But interestingly few male sex workers expressed that they enjoy their sexual encounters with clients and thus look forward to it. Going by their narratives, there is no facade or acting while they are with the client. Rather they enjoy their encounters and they are not bothered about money. Aiba, a kothi-identified male sex worker feels that:

If I like my client I go for free, money is not important for me. My friend told me that why are you ruining the business and he got me removed from that area because I was providing sex for free and their business was getting affected.⁷⁰

Similarly Aapaa, a gay-identified male sex worker shared that his relationship with his clients is:

It’s amazing, like friends. I have few fixed clients and with them, I am very relaxed. With them, I become like Vidhya Balan (a famous Bollywood actor). My whole expression changes (mimicking Vidhya Balan)⁷¹

Similarly, Neel, another gay-identified male sex worker, has a very warm and friendly relation with clients:

I have 4-5 clients who are my very good friends. If I need money sometimes they help me with 2000-3000 rupees. I am also always there for them. Thus it is a mutual relation.⁷²

But a cordial warm relation with the client does not mean that male sex workers view work sex and non-work sex similarly. For the majority there is a clear demarcation and for a few gay and kothi-identified male sex workers, they enjoy their relationship with their clients (Aapa, Aiba, Neel) but at the same time there is a clear distinction between sex with client and sex with boyfriend:

⁷⁰Mujhe client pasand hai to mai free Mei bhi jaata huin. Paisa haath ka mail hai apan ke liye. Mere dost ne bola arre kaisa Aadmi hai tu, pure paise ki ma bahen karta hai. Phir usne mujhe apne area se hataa diya Kyo ki mai free sex kar raha tha aur unka business kharaab ho raha tha. (Date of Interview: 07/07/16 at GAURAV)

⁷¹Bahut mast hai, ekdam friends jaise, mere kuch fixed clients bhi hai, aur unke Saath to mai bahut free hu, unke saamne to mai Kaise ekdam vidhya balan ban jati hu. Aisa aisa (with action). Pura hao bhao badal jaata hai. (Date of Interview: 03/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁷²Mere chaar paanch client hai jinke meri bahut acchi dosti ho gayi hai, aur manlo kabhi paiso ki jaroorat padi man lo 2000 3000 to wo log Madad bhi karte hai. Un log ko bhi koi kaam hai to mai unke liye bhi haazir rahta hu. To ye dono taraf se chalta hai. (Neel) (Date of Interview: 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

Whenever I get clients I go for it. Otherwise, I do sex for friendship and of course sometimes when I desire somebody.⁷³ (Aiba)

Nonetheless, this definitional separation of work sex from relational or recreational sex, if it is employed, must be constructed, sustained and reproduced on a daily/nightly basis. In maintaining an appropriate degree of psychological distance from the client encounter and thus preserving the division between 'work' and the private domain, one technique employed by some sex workers is the use of drugs and alcohol. Many informants shared that clients are generally old and you don't feel the desire to have sex with them. Satyam, a bisexual male sex worker explained that :

Clients are mostly old and they are mostly interested in young boys. They are all married with a wife, children and grandchildren. They do not get young people in their regular life and so they come to us. They attract younger men with their money. If the sex worker is less than 20 years its better for them⁷⁴

Thus the terms of transactions are very clear and sex workers define sex with clients as 'not real sex'. By this, they mean sex that is meaningless and has no real human contact. Such sex is perceived as only an act and the affection they give within the act is only a performance. Below is an excerpt from Satyam, a versatile male sex worker where he describes that work sex is all about money and nothing else.

If a sex worker wants money then he will go with anyone—old or someone who is disfigured. They should just get money.⁷⁵

Similarly Manoj, a bisexual male sex worker recalled his experience of cross-dressing as sick:

These clients are 'sick'. They want you to dress up like Bollywood heroines. I am bisexual and I don't like to dress up like a kothi. But it's fine if I am getting good money⁷⁶

⁷³sex work hota hai jaise koi mila, full time nahi hai. free Mei dosti ke khatir , ya bhir apni talab ke khatir (Date of Interview: 07/7/16 at GAURAV)

⁷⁴Client jaada tar aged hote hai Kyo ki unhe young ladko mei interest jaada hota hai. Ye sab shaadi shuda, biwi bachhe, nati pote wale log hote hai. Unhe apne regular life mei young log nahi milte hai isliye wo humare paas aate hai. Kam age wale ladko ko wo paise se attract karte hai agar 20 Saal se kam hai to aur hi achha hai. (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁷⁵Jis sex worker ko paise chahiye wo kisi ke saath bhi chala jayega, budhha, langda, lula, koi bhi bas paise Milne chahiye. (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁷⁶ ye client sach mei sick hote hai. Unhe Bollywood heroine chahiye aur phir aap waise ho jao. Mai bisexual hu aur mujhe kothi jaise dressup karna pasand nahi hai. Par jab uske liye achhe paise milte hai to phir koi baat hi nahi hai. (Date of Interview: 15/06/17 at GAURAV)

Rishi described one of his clients as ‘psycho’ who would indulge in sadistic pleasure by inflicting pain. For Rishi anything is fine provided he is paid good money. Thus even when erotic scripts are popular among male sex workers this is not a male sex worker’s script. When a client visits a male sex worker he wants something which he is not getting in his routine sexual encounters. Therefore such scripts are negotiated at length with every minute detail by the client. In one interview, Aiba, 23 years old, revealed:

I don’t like to play an active role (*panthi*). I like all kinds of sex and I am very good at it but whenever a client wants me to play an active role I want to walk out.⁷⁷

Erotic adventures with casual partners is another most familiar script for male sex workers. They had various stories of erotica with men they meet at gay parties or just randomly. Male sex workers enjoy such encounters like Samir, Aslam and Aiba. But many of them expressed their unwillingness to share the details. Thus according to Satyam:

Sometimes you just want someone, you can call it attraction or desire. You long to be with him. At parties you meet many good looking men. It’s all the time. When I am with my client I try my best to make him feel welcome and wanted. But when I am in one of those gay parties I need to be wanted.⁷⁸

These various meanings that sex has for participants indicate that sexual activity is defined along a continuum between relational, spiritual and physical dimensions. The meaningfulness of sex is constructed at a number of levels, dependent on who the sex is with and how much emotional value is attached to the event. When sex does not involve a degree of sharing of the self, it is understood as a different form of human behaviour, as 'not real' or 'other' sex. This finding is also reflected among female sex work samples (Perkins et al. 1991, 1993). These understandings of engagement in sexual action may also indicate a biological or Cartesian model of understanding personhood, in that one is believed to be able to separate mind, body and soul - the three being independent of

⁷⁷ mujhe active play Karna nahi pasand. Mujhe har tarah ka sex pasand hai par jab client active play Karne ko bolta hai na to bas man karta hai ki kahi bhaag jau. (Date of Interview: 7/7/16 at GAURAV)

⁷⁸ kabhi kabhi aap ko bas koi bahut pasand aa jata hai, aapka man karta hai uske saath Jane ka. Jab hum gay parties mei jaate hai to bahut milte hai. Jab mai client ke saath hota hu to mai koshish karta hu ki wo mujhe pasand kare aur use mai achha lagu. Par jab mai parties mei jaata hu tab mai chahta hu ki koi mujhe pasand kare aur kisi ko mai achha lagu. (Date of Interview: 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

each other in certain circumstances. The way in which the male sex worker constructs the meaning of the sexual act is an important part of his ability to engage in safe sex practices. The condom further demarcates work from personal sex and symbolises false sex where real human contact is not possible, a mask is worn, and the true self is not shared. Condoms are seen as an excellent physical and psychological barrier between the worker and clients, especially those they find dirty and/or repugnant.

Recreational sex fits into the continuum between work sex at one end and personal sex at the other. The meaning given to non-work, non-personal sex lies somewhere between sex that 'counts' and has emotional meaning, and meaningless work sex. Casual acquaintances who want to have unsafe sex are considered as threatening as condom avoiding clients. If a special meaning is attached to the 'one nighter' encounter, or the relationship continues after the first encounter, the meaning of having sex with this person moves along the continuum toward real, personal sex. The most important means of ensuring safe sex practices with casual partners is that sex workers perceive sex in recreational contexts as being defined by the mores of the 'safe sex culture' of the gay community. Within this framework all casual sex is considered dangerous, condoms are expected, and a certain stigma is attached to people who engage in non-condom sex. Informants maintain that they always use condoms when engaging in casual, recreational sex. However, a number of workers believe that unsafe sex does continue to occur at recreational sex venues. Some workers described how safe sex lifestyles can be broken.

Yes, few clients want to go without a condom—we are in love why use condoms. It is easy to explain to the client but for those who are close to our hearts and we love them, it is difficult to explain them. So to explain to a regular partner is difficult. I have to ensure my safety as well as my partner. (Jeet, 25 years old bisexual male sex worker)

Drug use appears to play a paradoxical role in prostitution. Soft drugs (caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, valium, amphetamines, marijuana, etc.) are widely used—sometimes to keep the workers awake during long days and nights, sometimes to relax them and dull the unpleasantness of the job. Soft drug use may also help sex workers to play the role/s required, to become the product that clients demand and to distance their everyday selves from the work.

Among us 'I Love You' is a very dirty and lowly word. If you enjoyed it a little or received a good service you promptly say I love you. Therefore if someone is serious and say these words we do not trust them⁷⁹ (Rishi, a 24 years old versatile male sex worker)

Hence MSWs have developed code and some kind of rules as to how far they can go with the client in terms of emotion, which areas of their body they are prepared to allow clients access to and which are off-limits, to protect their sense as a professional sex worker. Kissing, for example, is rejected because it is too similar to the kind of behaviour in which one would engage with a non-commercial sexual partner since it's too much of genuine desire and love for the other person. While some MSWs will perform any service as long as they are paid for it, others' have a certain code of practice which includes things like:

I tell all my clients before I meet them that what all I can do. I have few rules like no condom no sex, no drugs during activity, duration of activity is fixed and I charge 50 per cent of my payment before I go out with client along with my travel cost... With client, it is sex without love. But when I am with my partner I generally don't use condoms and yes after the activity is done I am still there in his arms. It is different. (Arnav, 28 years old bisexual male sex worker)⁸⁰

Similarly, Amitesh described his relationship with his clients:

There are no feelings with the client. Once it's over, it's over. But when I am with my boyfriend he is mine so I am snuggled up, curl up and go to sleep, we cannot do this with a client.⁸¹

Thus for the majority of male sex workers discussed above, their 'real' selves are located outside of work, removed from encounters with clients (O'Neill 1996:23) and it is their distancing practices that allow them to maintain this self-image as working in sex work only for the economic rewards which it offers. There are similarities between psychological survival in sex work and other occupations. The function of the distancing

⁷⁹Humlog mei i love you bahut hi neech sabd hai, bas thoda sa majaa mila, Acchi service mili to koi bhi I love you Bol deta hai, isliye jab koi seriously bhi bolta hai to hume kuch nahi lagta (Date of Interview: 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

⁸⁰ Mai apne client ko pahle hi bol rakha hai ki mai kya karunga. Jaise bina chocolate ke sex nahi, mai hi fun nahi karta aur kitne der ke liye milege ye bhi pahle hi decide kar lete hai. Iske alawa mai Apna 50% payment pahle hi leleta hu , travel ke saath...Client ke saath bas sex hota hai, aur kuch nahi. Par jab hum partner ke saath hote hai tab mai condom nahi use karta. Aur sabse badi baat, ye sab hone ke baad bhi mai uski baho mei hi hota hu. Alag to hai na. (Date of Interview: 17/2/18 at GAURAV)

⁸¹Client ke saath ye sab kuch nahi hota, kaam khatam aur hum apne raaste aur wo apne. Ab boyfriend hota hai to hum saath mei hi sote hai. Mai wahi hota hu uske saath(Date of Interview: 30/11/17 at GAURAV)

practices described above is reminiscent of that of the humour employed by the male manual workers studied by Collinson (1988) which consisted of constant references to their sexual capacities or their role as family breadwinner and head of household. This humour, suggests Collinson, points to a need on the part of these men to prove themselves to be something more than shop-floor employees, working for low wages in a tightly controlled and alienating work environment (Collinson 1988:186).

One also encountered instances where male sex workers do not select or reject clients based on any particular attraction to or repulsion from them. Thus if a client is paying the rate then it does not matter whether the client is old, fat or disfigured (Satyam). Their acceptance of any kind of client, as long as they will play by the rules (some of which we have already seen), therefore perhaps also functions as part of their attempt to keep work and non-work distinct. This management of the symbolic location of commercial sex as reported by other workers also includes treating clients very differently from non-commercial sexual partners (for example, using a pseudonym and never disclosing personal information to clients).

Male sex workers also emphasise the multi-faceted nature of their lives and shared various efforts to compartmentalise their work. Here they appear to be rejecting society's attempts to label their occupation as their 'master status' (Becker 1973)—refusing to accept that sex work must by definition assume the most significant place in their lives. For example, 10 out of 30 informants were working with Gaurav CBO as outreach workers and peer educators. Thus apart from their identity as male sex workers, they have another identity which is working for the community (MSM) and doing good work. Many other informants are also employed in other jobs like tailoring, cook, TV serials, dance teachers, makeup artists, insurance agents and so on. Besides they play many roles in their lives as fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, grandsons, social workers and agents of social change. Thus it may seem, then, that MSWs may rely on a variety of distancing techniques—drugs, managing geographical place or their bodies, particular rituals to secure their sense of themselves as only offering sex to clients for money. However, different logic about the need to maintain strict boundaries between private and public selves may be applied with different types of clients. Browne and Minichiel-

lo (1995) report that the service provided, and the workers' attitude towards the client, depends at least partly on the categorisation of that client into a specific type.

The historical journey of male sex workers is that of their emergence from obscurity and the status of indefinability. Their history is that of difficulty in locating them and their work in the larger debate of sex work and homosexuality. It is in these deplorable conditions that male sex workers understand their life, work and identity. Their narratives remain the only hope of their representation. From the narratives of male sex workers, I can conclude that they mostly offer sexual services to men and generally do not identify as sex workers to anyone who is not familiar with their work identity. This provides them anonymity and works as a survival tactic in our homophobic society. In a sample of 34 male sex workers, 6 male sex workers disclosed that they cater to female clients too though such opportunities are few. Entry into sex work is not easy and straight. Poor economic position coupled with homosexual identity becomes the chief factor for entry into sex work. Contrary to common perception, male sex work has evolved into non-street based in Mumbai after the boom in telecommunication and the internet. The majority of male sex workers operate from their flats, lodges or hotels and view sex work as a survival strategy. This chapter has attempted to understand male sex work and how male sex workers view it. In the next chapter, I will view the relationship between space and sex work and focus on mapping the geographies of male sex work in Mumbai city. I aim to understand the types of spaces male sex workers use leading to emergences of 'micro spaces and strategies' used by sex workers. The chapter further examines how the government shapes, regulates and controls such spaces and how male sex workers respond to such regulations.

CHAPTER THREE

Mapping Desire: Geographies of Male Sex Work in Mumbai City

“The city is a map of the hierarchy of desire, from the valorized to the stigmatized. It is divided into zones dictated by the way its citizens value or denigrate their needs. Separating the city into areas of specialization makes it possible to meet some needs more efficiently; it is also an attempt to reduce conflict between opposing sets of desires and the roles people adopt to try to fulfill those desires”(Califia 1994:205).

The previous chapter traced the debates around sex, sexuality and sex work and strived to understand male sex work through these debates and sociology of sex work. Understanding male sex workers in their social context provided meanings to the question of male sex work. This chapter is an extension of my previous chapter whereby mapping the geographies of male sex workers in Mumbai city, I seek to understand the relationship between space and male sex work. Locating male sex workers in spatial sense invariably leads to a discussion of places like streets, parks, bars, hotels, public toilets, lodges, restaurants, cafes, under-construction sites, private apartments, beaches, bus stops, railway stations, bushes, clients' houses, shady and dark corners, and the virtual spaces. The present chapter makes an effort to engage with such spaces because male sex workers live in these spaces. These spaces are part of everyday life in cities. The Study of spatial and temporal practices with a focus on how male sex workers experience and perceive space and time will unravel the nuances and complexities of urban spaces. Spatial practices in terms of design, ordering and re-ordering are, for the most part, in accordance with capitalist norms of production. Male sex workers, in such capitalistic imagination of urban spaces, find themselves “out of place”, a phrase borrowed from Sharan (2014). Acknowledging their presence and understanding their struggle with and within the dominant urban spatial order is what this chapter underscores. It tries to show how the dominant idea of the city produces inequality and under-privileges a large number of people who are left with the peripheries of the city. It is in these left out, cornered and peripheral areas of the city where male sex workers figure out strategies for their survival. The mapping of these peripheries brings into light the fact that these peripheral spaces are scattered and can also be found alongside core areas which

engender socio-cultural tension between the two. Male sex workers remain concerned with intermittent series of connections and disconnections with the constantly changing configuration of the city. Masselos interrupts our static stereotypes of the city and its social function by locating the evidences of tension resolution by pointing out “multi-functionality of urban space” despite “the city as a social space of divided worlds” (Masselos 2007:290-291). Urban spaces are not static but rather ever-changing and evolving so that all who are inhabiting the city may survive.

The city, known for being a hub of popular places, people and marketable commodities, is also a site where a multitude of desires gets subsumed in the realm of anonymity and invisibility. City as space provides wide scope for both popularity and anonymity. This aspect needs to be studied from the point of view of many respondents who chose a city, changed their names and live as they desire. It thus brings to fore a very paradoxical picture of a city where life is caught up in the throes of vibrant and loud light. This glaring light of the city keeps many exposed to the clear public gaze. The same glaring city also has many spaces where many remain unseen and unknown, even if they are seen and known by many others who also remain unnamed in the chronicles of the city. The present research tries to understand this paradox. The discussion of the dichotomy of private and the public sphere is of great help regarding the explanation of efforts that the respondents and their clients make to evade surveillance. The private spaces are considered to be of great importance for male sex workers since surveillance can be avoided. Although such paid private spaces provide an escape from surveillance, the fear of violence, abuse and voyeuristic gaze cannot be ruled out.

Unlike female sex work which is closely linked with zones designated as red-light areas in the cities, male sex workers do not have such delineated spaces where male sex work can be carried out. Urban governors and planners actively regulate and restrict the visibility of non-normative expressions of sex and sexuality. So, in such an atmosphere, how do sex workers create a space for themselves to carry out their work? The chapter aims to identify space as an important component of sex work. I will further try to understand the types of spaces sex workers use in the urban environments, adding to the emerging literature on the “micro spaces and strategies” used by sex workers. Sex workers’ feelings about the spaces in which they work, how they decide where to work,

and how policies regulating these spaces affect the conditions they face are some important questions to deal with. Given the potential influence of sex workers' workspaces on their working conditions, this chapter examines how government regulation of these spaces impacts sex workers' life. With the boom in telecommunication, the conceptualisation of space has gone through a transition, but it has not undermined the importance of space as the act of corporeal intimacy would always materialise in geographic space. While doing interviews with male sex workers I simultaneously carried out visits to the popular hotspots, described by male sex workers, to understand the nature of space. Though there were few instances when I found male sex workers at the cruising spots, it helped me to understand the space and its suitability as a cruising spot.

Mumbai: Changing City Faces

Mumbai is situated on the western seacoast along the Arabian sea. Originally it was a cluster of seven islands which was later reclaimed at different points to form the present city. Greater Mumbai Region (GMR) consists of seven islands in the city area and four islands in the suburbs. Mumbai City as we call today is divided into two revenue districts—Mumbai City Districts which is the island city in the south and Mumbai Suburban District comprising the eastern and western suburbs. Mumbai occupies an area of 468 square kilometres (sq. km.) and its width is 17 km. east to west and 42 km. north to south (MCGM 2007). The coastline of Mumbai has been reclaimed for development purposes; e.g., areas like Cuff Parade and Mahim creek were wetlands, later reclaimed for residential and commercial uses. For administrative purposes, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) has been designated to combine GMR and the surrounding areas of Thane, Navi Mumbai, Ulhasnagar, Mira Road, Vasai, Virar, Bhayandar, Bhiwandi, Karjat, Alibaug, etc. Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), set up in 1975, is responsible for planning and coordination of the development activities of this region. The total area of the MMR, excluding Mumbai city, is 3887 sq. km., with a population base of 5.90 million as per the 2001 census. These surrounding areas hold significance for the economy and transportation in Mumbai, as thousands of people travel every day from these areas into the city for employment. This puts additional pressure on the transport network and other civic amenities in the city (MMRDA 2019).

Bombay was one of the twenty-five islands along the Konkan coast of western India (da Cunha 2004). The island of Bombay was united with six other islands through land reclamation to form Bombay. Bombay was transferred by the Portuguese to the British in 1661 as part of the dowry given to Princess Katherine. In the late eighteenth century, Bombay was not as popular as other marine towns like Calcutta and Madras. But Bombay became increasingly significant with the development of foreign shipping and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. This reduced the distance between India and Europe and attracted many migrant groups to the city (Patel 2003:4-6). Colonial economic expansion facilitated the transition of Bombay from an entrepôt to a manufacturing city. Earlier Bombay was mostly exporter of cotton brought to its port from the hinterland but soon spinning and weaving mills started in Bombay city. This setting up of mills stirred another wave of migration to Bombay city. Thus ethnic and caste divisions were organically linked to the economic structure of the city. So it was mostly Parsis along with the trading and business castes of Gujarat including Hindus, Jains and Muslims and with some Baghdadi Jews and Marathi and Konkani speakers (ibid:7). Initially, most of the working class came from the Konkan region. The inter-war period was considered to be an important period in the growth of the city. With the loosening of colonial ties, domestic markets opened up for the textile industry. As profit soared so did the migration (Chandavarkar 1994:25). This was also the period when the national movement was at its peak and it brought about the cultural and political link between the indigenous multilingual elites as well as the underclass in the city. In the 1940s Bombay experienced high migration from all of India including northern, eastern and southern states (Chandavarkar 1994:29).

After Independence, several states demanded the reorganisation of states based on language identities. Bombay was the capital of Bombay state with two major language regions — Gujarati and Marathi along with others (Isaka 2015:143). In Bombay state, most of the business groups were Gujarati speaking and workers were Marathi speaking. Thus a movement for a separate state of Maharashtra started by the working class in Bombay. Hence on 1st May 1960, Bombay state was bifurcated into Maharashtra and Gujarat (ibid:154). Immediately after the formation of Maharashtra as a separate state, three independent movements took place simultaneously. The first was the growth of Shiv Sena, which was established in 1966, with their main goal as Maharashtra for

Marathi speaking people. The second movement was the growth of the Dalit literature movement along with the Dalit Panther movement. The third was an outcome of anti-communist intervention by Shiv Sena and led to the militant economist trade union movement led by Datta Samant. According to Patel (2003), the late seventies was a time of political fragmentation with groups aligning and realigning to obtain power from various structures of power. Another event that later changed Bombay was the cotton mill workers strike in the early 1980s. The strike began on 18 January 1982 but it failed to achieve a favourable settlement. The strike did not create stock scarcity as the informal power-loom sector grew to meet the extended demand. The strike fizzled out and it radically altered the form and content of the working-class organisation. In the early 1990s with the opening up of the Indian economy, Bombay witnessed a reorganisation of its economy. Bombay witnessed an increase in jobs associated with producer services. The growth of the financial sector and trade in stocks and bonds led to ancillary development like communication industry, real estate and expansion of other services. Appadurai traced the shifting of economies from manufacturing and industry to trade, tourism and finance. This attracted more people than the city could sustain and more capital than it could absorb. Mumbai offered the magic of wealth, celebrity, glamour and power through its mass media. Such spaces are also sites of uncertainties and precariousness. Every day people from rural India come to Mumbai in search of jobs that are fewer and difficult to retain (Appadurai 2000:628).

Despite such growth in the economy and financial market, the basic working and living conditions have not changed for many working class in Mumbai. M Swaminathan (2003) pointed out that the issue of deprivation is not merely on account of income and earnings but also in terms of access to land and housing, health and education, environment and population density and occupation of the dwellers. Bombay is now a city with extreme contrasts. According to the World Population Review (2019), the population of Mumbai in 2019 was around 20.19 million which makes Mumbai the most populous city of India and the fourth most populous city in the world. The total surface area of Mumbai City is 233 square miles with a density of 73000 per square mile. This makes Mumbai one of the most cramped cities in the world. Moreover, approximately half of its population live in some kind of slum, on pavements, near railway tracks and under bridges. Dharavi, the largest slum of Mumbai is the second largest in Asia and is home

to more than one million people with a density of 869,565 people per square mile. Swaminathan (2003) in her study has shown that in a space of 4ft by 5ft, approximately 4 to 5 members of a family live together. Sadly, that is not even a standard double bed size. Thus the majority of the working class live their lives on the margins. The majority of this working class comes from the informal sector which has unsteady, unregulated and unprotected work life.

A brief historical discussion of the making of Bombay acquainted us with the multiplicity of signs which any city bears over time. Male sex works, like many others, jostle for space for themselves in this conglomeration of symbolic systems. Male sex workers either live in slums or chawls⁸² (tenement housing originally built for mill workers in Central Bombay) and are part of this large pool of poor migrants who came to Mumbai in search of jobs and freedom to live their lives. Geographically from the southern tip of Mumbai to north, specific pockets are catering to different classes of individuals. South Mumbai is an upmarket area which houses the most affluent sections of Mumbai and the business district is also located in this part of the city. Next to south Mumbai is Central Mumbai, which was abode to mill workers and other working class till the 1980s. Despite Central Mumbai being close to South Mumbai, it was always a low market area as far as housing was concerned. The combination of mills and working-class communities rendered this place unsuitable for the better off to settle here (Bhowmik 2006:153). As an outcome, the suburbs developed as the new areas of the middle class with affluent housing. After the closing of mills in the early 1980s, the importance of Central Mumbai as a centre of business gained momentum. To the north of Central Mumbai is Dadar and Mahim, both are middle class and white-collar areas. The suburbs begin in the north after Mahim, from Bandra onwards. Bandra is considered the new address for the affluents in Mumbai. After Bandra, Andheri is a very popular suburb with some of its beaches like Versova and Juhu.

⁸² “Chawls are buildings with one or two room units of not more than two hundred square feet attached by a common corridor with shared toilets on each floor” (Karandikar, 2010:1). Chawls are housing for working class who are gainfully employed. In initial days chawls were constructed to house the textile mill workers close to the workplace and therefore majority of chawls are still found in Central Mumbai region This area is also called Girangaon—the village of mills.

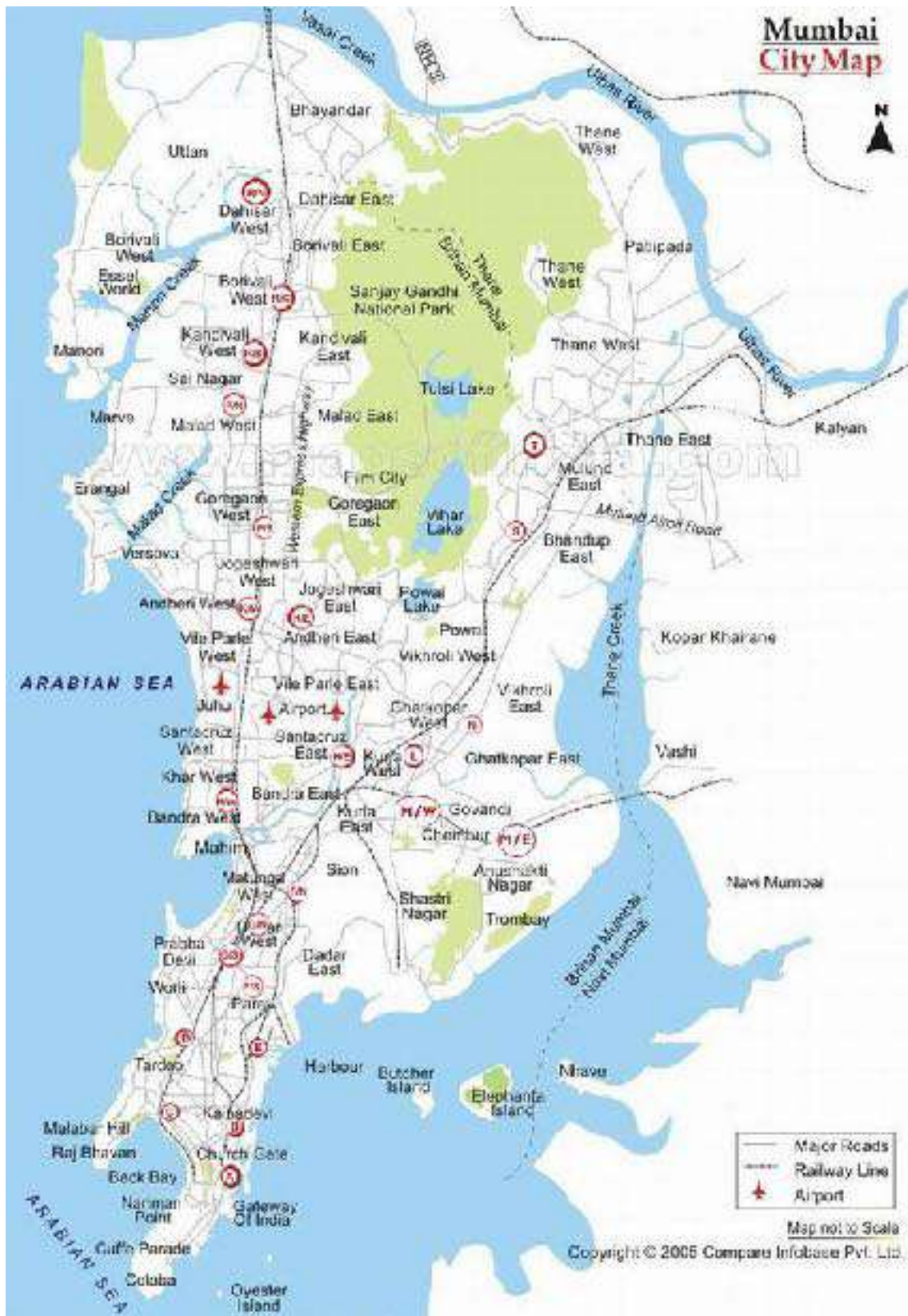


Figure 1. Map of Mumbai

Source: Compare Infobase Pvt. Ltd.

As Bombay (present Mumbai) has been evolving, there is a noticeable as well as a subtle process of production and reproduction of spaces over time. Different spaces come into being for different classes in the order of gradation. Space which occupies the lowest rank is inhabited by the underprivileged and accommodates a vast variety of people. Male sex workers also inhabit such neighbourhoods. Such neighbourhoods are overcrowded with poor civic facilities. However, these areas are affordable for the poor working class. The overcrowded condition of the poor neighbourhoods becomes the ground for remaining ‘unnoticeable’ for male sex workers.

Homosexuality, Sex Work and the City: Tracing the Association

Aldrich in *Homosexuality and the City* argues that homosexuality has always been associated with cities. This is not a modern-day phenomenon, as it was popular even during biblical times and in ancient Athens. Aldrich follows a chronological approach and looks at classical, medieval and modern Europe including the US, Australia and Brazil to understand the Gay history and historiography. Accessing various historical sources, Aldrich concludes that urban centres have been conducive to the homosexual expression of desire (Aldrich 2004:1720). In the previous chapter, there are many references to same-sex desire, where people from both marginal situations as well as the mainstream have been part of such sexual expressions in various historical records. For example, in ancient Athens homosexuality was deliberately ignored but in Renaissance Florence, it was censured. In later years like other ethnic, religious and minorities groups, same-sex sexualities were pushed to the fringes of the cities.

The question arises as to why cities and urban spaces are preferred by same-sex sexualities? It is not difficult to recognise the reason for the preference for cities. According to Ishq, who is a Kothi-identified male sex worker, the city provides them with anonymity. There are many more like them, and there is a feeling of solidarity in the city⁸³. This feeling of togetherness which is missing in the rural areas or small town gives them support and comfort to sustain in a homophobic society. According to Aldrich, migrants could break out of the censure imposed elsewhere, locating new ‘sub-cultures’ to satisfy

⁸³ Idhar koi kisi ko nahi janta aur janna bhi nahi hai. Sab mast hai apni life Mei. Gaon Mei to bahut restriction tha, abhi bombay mei aakar thoda freedom mila hai. Rahta hu acche se. Idhar par mere jaise bahut hai. Pahle lagta tha mai akela hi hu aisa (Date of Interview:1/07/16 at GAURAV)

reprobate desires. A city always has a large group of the working class and homosexuals who look out for romance and corporeal intimacy and search out for casual, situational or long-term partners (ibid:1721). Thus cities provide opportunities for same-sex sexualities to meet and enter into relationships.

There is no doubt that cities are more popular among homosexuals but the relationship between cities and homosexuality is complex. A considerable amount of research has been undertaken to understand this association. Weston (1995) in her essay *Get Thee to a Big City* studied the migration of gay and lesbian populations in America, in the wake of the great Gay migration of the 1970s and early 1980s. Weston argues that there is a quest for community in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term. As "members" of an imagined community, people feel attached to fictional groups like nation, race, gender, class or sexuality so that their subjectivity becomes inseparable from the construction of "we-ness" (1995:257). It is the same 'we-ness' which my respondent, Ishq, also talked about. In the 1970s, there have been many sociological studies to understand 'gay space' in cities. One of the popular works has been Humphreys' *Tea-Room Trade*⁸⁴. This work drew a great deal of criticism for ethical issues in its methodology while trying to provide details of men seeking sex in public toilets. In the 1970s, the concept of 'ghetto' was extended to homosexuals in the cities which were the outcome of the mass migration of homosexual people to big cities, as discussed by Weston (1995). Martin Levine commented on aggregations of homosexual residents and venues in particular districts, considering how such 'ghettos' might be defined and measured (Levine, 1979). Manuel Castells and K. Murphy (1982) pioneered a theory of socio-cultural identity and urban structure which contends that places visited by homosexuals and people they meet while looking out for relationships form some kind of an urban 'sub-culture' or, a 'community' bound by shared interests and solidarity. Male sex workers working in Mumbai have migrated from different parts of India but unlike these studies where migration led to ghettoisation of gay and lesbian community, no such spatialisation was visible.

⁸⁴ Tearoom Trade invited lot of controversy for its methodological ethics. Humphreys explored the sexuality of closeted men who would visit public toilets for quick corporeal interaction with their partners. . The author engaged in systematic observation of homosexual acts in public settings, and later developed a more complete picture of those involved by interviewing them in their homes, again without revealing their unwitting participation in his study.

In connection with the relationship between homosexuality and the city, some researchers have also tried to study the impact homosexuals have on the city. For instance, in *The Margins of the City*, each essay tries to locate how same-sex desire and the city intersect (Whittle 1994). Lawrence Knopp has examined the “homosexualisation of gentrified areas in cities by both dominant interests and gays seeking economic and political power as well as sexual freedom” (1995:139). The impact of gay and lesbian issues on local government and municipal politics has been studied by Robert W. Bailey. Arguing that cities are privileged arenas for identity development and expression, Bailey focuses on four American cases: political organisation and sexual identity in Birmingham, municipal districting in New York, police practices in Philadelphia, and school politics and domestic partnerships in San Francisco. Regime theory, the notion of neighbourhood activism, theories of identity formation and economic development perspectives are marshalled to evaluate the imprint of lesbians and gay males in urban America (Bailey 1999). Combining psychology and sociology, Henning Bech suggests organic links between homosexuals and the city. Bech describes the city as the social world of the homosexuals, their “life space”. Bech explains this life space:

What is it about the city that stimulates? Surely that altogether special blend of closeness and distance, crowd and flickering, surface and gaze, freedom and danger. Others are defenceless vis-à-vis your gaze and you yourself are on display to theirs; you come so close to them that you can actually touch them, yet ought not to: a distance that incites you to overstep yet still maintain it; surfaces intercept gazes and turn into signals, and the flickering vibrates; the crowd generates feelings of supply and possibilities; the anonymity and the absence of immediate social control amplify the feeling, and the risk of nevertheless being monitored and uncovered increases the tension. You sense this omnipresent, diffuse sexualization of the city and confirm it by designing your surface accordingly and by taking up a position, perhaps also by engaging in cruising (Bech 1997:118).

Bech points out the symbiotic partnership of urban space and homosexual life in the culture of modernity. Bech’s study is also incisive in drawing on historical materials on urban–homosexual links, for instance, Hirschfeld’s 1914 enumeration of venues in Berlin. As George Chauncey has shown for New York, late 19th-century observers in America likewise associated homosexuality with the city. Chauncey brings out the testimony of a migrant dated 1882 as to how the city gives free rein to the homosexual desire:

Only in a great city could a homosexual give his overwhelming yearnings free rein *incognito* and thus keep the respect of his every-day circle. ... In New York one can live as Nature demands without setting every one’s tongue wagging (Chauncey 1994:42).

Sex workers sell one of the most private human acts in public. Nancy Duncan in her work *Bodyspace* began with an observation about the gendered dualism of mind and body and how it is associated with public/private distinction. Thus, according to Duncan, the public sphere is chiefly associated with universal reason and transcendence of the ‘disembodied, disinterested Cartesian observer’ who is generally a white, bourgeois able-bodied heterosexual male (Duncan 1996:2). Further, Duncan discusses ways in which abused women and sexual minorities constantly work towards undermining the coherence of such public and private binaries and other related binaries. The destabilising of these boundaries is a countervailing force working to both open up the private spaces to public debates and contestations (1996:127). But this contestation has not been an easy exercise since such binaries have been constantly employed to control, discipline, confine, suppress and exclude the non-conforming categories. Thus space is not just a background for social actions but at the same time plays a crucial role in manifesting social hegemony and power.

Hart emphatically explains this point, “It is both uncontroversial and obvious (at least to geographers) that people’s identities are in part constructed through the spatial locations they inhabit and frequent” (Hart 1995:215). Thus the physical space one is occupying tells us the important aspects of a person’s biography including his status and position in society (Knopp 1995; Lefebvre 1991). Knopp in his essay *Sexuality and Urban Space* observed that the spaces occupied by a person or group of persons indicate the class and status of that person in the society as well as power exerted by these persons through these spaces (Knopp 1995:136). Thus certain marginalised ethnic and racial groups occupy certain locations in the urban spaces. Similarly, especially in the context of the western world, many sexualities at the margins would occupy a specific neighbourhood. The same is true for sex work in urban spaces.

Theories relating to the importance of space in maintaining social order has been offered by Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre developed a Marxist critique of society focussing on the emancipatory possibility of everyday life. Lefebvre held that the lived world of people including their sexual desires have progressively been colonised by the capitalist forces (Lefebvre 1972). He argued that capitalism sustained and grew by producing space and suggested that each society produces a space ideal for its continuation. Thus,

instead of historical materialism, it is geographical materialism which focussed on spatial conflict. Lefebvre (1991) pointed out the importance of urban space in bringing the transition from 'historical space' to an abstract space by routinising and legitimating the rhythms of everyday life:

That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is dos and don'ts - and this brings us back to power. Power's message is invariably confused - deliberately so; dissimulation is necessarily part of any message from power. Thus space indeed 'speaks' - but it does not tell all. Above all, it prohibits. Its mode of existence, its practical 'reality' (including its form) differs radically from the reality (or being-there) of something written, such as a book. Space is at once result and cause, product and producer; it is also a stake, the locus of projects and actions deployed as part of specific strategies, and hence also the object of wagers on the future - wagers which are articulated, if never completely (Lefebvre 1991:142-143).

Phil Hubbard and Teela Sanders (2003) utilised Henri Lefebvre's (1991) notion that how space is a socially-produced phenomenon, with each society producing a space suited to its reproduction. Utilising Lefebvre's ideas to understand space and sex work, Hubbard and Sanders argued that "the geography of sex work is the outcome of an unfolding relationship between different types of space— the ordered spaces of the capitalist state on the one hand, and the 'lived' spaces of prostitutes on the other" (Hubbard and Sanders 2003:75). These spaces are not segregated and mutually exclusive and Hubbard and Sanders have demonstrated that such spaces fold onto one another in particular ways resulting in 'distinctive geographies of sex work'. In so doing, they dismiss accounts that suggest that the location of prostitution in the contemporary city can be explained simply in terms of choice and constraint; the reality is that sex work is subject to moments of territorialisation and deterritorialisation as the relationship between different types of space unfolds. Red-light districts most obviously embody the relegation of sex work to specific spaces in a city. States limit sex workers' access to certain spaces in their attempts to make the city "a functional and ordered whole", viewing sex work as morally wrong and therefore "a disturbance to that socio-spatial order" (Hubbard and Sanders 2003:82). Such efforts are nothing but an attempt to preserve the social norm of heterosexual relations of monogamous nature only. Simultaneously, there is an equal effort to curb any kind of non-normative sexual behaviour, especially in the public domain. Policing of sex workers' access to space marginalises them both physically and socially; even the creation of legal zones of tolerance may ghettoise them from the rest of society.

To survive in this controlled surveillance society, sex workers devise newer methods to escape and subvert state control and to overcome the surveillance. When I started my fieldwork in 2016 in Mumbai I noticed the installation of floodlights on Juhu Beach, one of the popular cruising spots in Mumbai. Aiba, a masseur and male sex worker who offered sexual services to many whom he met while offering massage services, complained that with the installation of those lights it was not possible to carry out sex work in the bushes or behind the walls near Juhu beach.

A: Clients are not comfortable having a massage, forget sex work

R: So what did you do?

A: Now I take my clients to a nearby lodge but many clients do not want to pay the rent of the lodge. The business has declined but we have survived for long and will manage.⁸⁵

The installation of lights on beaches and other dark places suggests how light has come to be associated with “regulatory and panoptic vision” of the state and the society (Foucault 1991). Moreover, light’s regime amounts to displacement. This certainly calls for the problematisation of light because it is connected with the ‘practice of seeing’ (Dinkar 2019). Moreover, it also necessitates to avoid looking at the dark as dangerous. Looking at dark from the viewpoint of the underprivileged draws on the critique of the west’s orientalist frame of looking at the East as a place of dark and discursive association of dark with uncivil and dangerous.

The rise of mobile applications and virtual social platforms adds a new dimension to the existing discussion. This change has been instrumental in overcoming many obstacles which were associated with the conventional cruising spots. Moreover, it has also played important role in the acceleration of the business. Male sex worker will visit the site but will not solicit the client in the traditional manner. Rather they will try and find the client through the mobile applications and then they communicate and negotiate the place and rate over the phone. This allows them to remain undetected by the police. Sameer who also used to operate from Juhu Beach earlier changed his place and started operating from Carter Road in Bandra. Carter Road is a popular cruising spot due to the availability of bushes and dark shady corners later in the night. Thus male sex workers,

⁸⁵Abhi to customer pair bhi nahi choone deta activity to bahut door hai. Phir aapne kya kiya? Idhar Bajoo Mei ek lodge hai Udhar leke jata hu. Par wo bhi mahanga hai aur customer paise nahi Karch karna chahta hai. Dhandha kharaab ho gaya hai. Par theek hai ho jayega (Interview Date: 07/07/16 at GAURAV)

like female and other sex workers, devise different methods to overcome and subvert state control. They may change the method of soliciting or may change the site completely or temporarily.

Similarly, as argued by Hubbard and Sanders (2003:84) who studied street-based female sex work in Birmingham, England, sex workers turned to window prostitution⁸⁶ as a “tactical response” to prohibitions against street sex work, forming the current red-light district. Thus it is not just the State which controls and shapes the urban spaces rather sex workers also negotiate and subvert control mechanisms and in doing so they shape the urban space to their needs. Similarly, Cathy McIlwaine while studying female sex work in Cebu City in the Philippines noted that Sex workers are limited in their “experiences of space” by government control, but they exercise resourcefulness and resistance through the “construction of their own particular spaces” (McIlwaine 2006:150). Lawrence Knopp in *Sexuality and Urban Space* explains the phenomena of construction of spatial differences and how these spatial differences are utilised for the accumulation of power and in the process, these spatial differences are also empowered and this phenomenon, according to Knopp, “is true in even the most asymmetrical of power relations” (Knopp 1995:159). Thus states have the power and control over sex workers where they can displace them from a prominent space but sex workers symbolise their power of resilience and create their own space within the society. In the distinguished work of Angie Hart *(Re)Constructing a Spanish Red-Light District*, where she studied street-based female sex workers in a Spanish red-light district and found that the area became simultaneously an illicit space and a “safe space” for taboo activities (Hart 1995: 222). This space and power balance is dynamic; as sex workers adopt strategies to avoid state control, states come up with new ways to control them. For this reason, Hubbard and Sanders describe spaces of prostitution (red-light district):

as the outcome of an ongoing relationship between the ordering enacted by the state, law and citizenry (manifest in dominant representations of space) and the negotiation of this ordering enacted by those who make their living in the red-light district. This identifies the red-light district as always becoming, a complex assemblage made and remade

⁸⁶ Female sex workers in Birmingham who would solicit clients on the streets rented houses on the same street and would solicit clients from the windows of the house hence the term window prostitution. Like India where sex work is not illegal but soliciting clients in public is illegal, Birmingham came with similar prohibitions forcing women to stop working from the streets. (Hubbard and Sanders 2003:84).

through the folding together of these different types of space (Hubbard and Sanders 2003:80).

Sex workers' varying responses to the law regulatory intervention points to a process of negotiation (Jason 2008). During fieldwork, it came to notice that it is not just a bivariate relationship between the sex workers and the state. Multiple actors play crucial roles in the way sex work is carried out in an urban space. Besides state agents like police, there are many others, like clients, pimps and local residents who sometimes play an equally important role in shaping the space where male sex workers inhabit the space. Clients play a decisive role in where sex work will be carried out. It may be in a public toilet or some bushes nearby, a lodge, house of the client or even a five-star hotel room. Thus, not so well to do clients prefer places like public toilets, parks or some old discarded structure or behind some bushes. Some clients who are comfortable with the sex worker and have known them for some time may take them to their house provided no one is at home. Many clients who can afford the lodge-rent of around rupees 600-1200 may go to some lodge. The rich clients may take the male sex worker on a trip to some nearby tourist spot or some prominent five-star hotel in the city. If a male sex worker is working with a pimp, they need not worry about visiting the cruising spot or finding a place for sex work. It is all fixed by the pimp. When a sex worker gets a call from the pimp, he has to visit the pre-arranged place. Most of the time this place happens to be a pimps' apartment or place decided by the client.

Many sex workers said that they often had to move out of a cruising spot because of complaints by local residents. In such cases, either they leave the place temporarily for some time, or in some cases, they have to completely abandon the place. These complaints by the local resident are more common in case of female sex workers who are more conspicuous by their presence and draw the ire of the locals. An important point worth mentioning is that all these agents have some kind of relation with the state and they negotiate with state agencies from time to time. Such negotiations by pimps, local residents or brothel owners (mostly in the case of female sex workers) in turn shape workspace and limit the power of sex workers to choose their own spaces. The spaces where sex work takes place, therefore, are the result of conflicting pressures in a complex evolutionary system.

Geographies of Male Sex Work in Mumbai

Sex work is considered the oldest form of occupation in India like any other older civilisation. In the modern Indian context, especially during colonial rule, the status and perception regarding sex work underwent a drastic change. They were treated as vermin. In the early 1920s, Doctor K.S. Patel, who worked at the venereal diseases hospital in Mumbai called for compulsory health checks and residential segregation of sex workers. He argued that the demand for commercial sex could not be wished away and therefore the only way to protect the wider citizenry from venereal diseases was to closely monitor sex workers (Tambe 2009:xi). The attitude towards this form of non-normative sex has not changed much. The attitude of government bodies is to create a world-class surveillance system to control and monitor sex workers so that the general public is safe from HIV and STI. This leads to an important question as to how male sex workers carry out their work spatially when there is constant surveillance to detect and curb all kinds of non-normative sexual exchange in Mumbai City? All 34 respondents expressed their concerns about the limited space available to carry out sex work in Mumbai. In one interview with Aiba, a Kothi-identified male sex worker, he described the plight of male sex workers in Mumbai city:

If a client is ready to pay the male sex worker but he does not have a room then he will go into the bushes. If a male sex worker goes on the beach then horse carts are a big nuisance and the police will trouble him. A boy and a girl can kiss each other at Juhu beach in public but two males cannot do this. If I take my client to a lodge then again it invites trouble. The lodge owner is sceptical. He will take a long five minutes to just stare at us and then he wants to know as to who is male and who is female. I am also scared that they might have some hidden cameras.⁸⁷

One of the street-based female sex workers in Mumbai who generally operated from the Dadar market, pointed out that how this space where she has been operating for many years has now become a space with a lot of contention:

Oh! The place from where we used to operate earlier, they (male sex workers) started soliciting clients and later Hijras started soliciting business. Our work was completely

⁸⁷ koi paisa deta hai to room nahi, room hai to paisa nahi hota, phir jhaadi mei, samandar ke kinare, kabhi ghodi aagai, police aagai, bahut isme lafde hai, sukoon nahi hai. Ladka ladki, girlfriend- boyfriend juhu pe logo ke saamne kiss kar sakte hai par do male ye nahi kar sakte hai. Ye saari mushkile hai, aur agar lodge par gaye to lodge wale ko bhi shak Hota hai, ladka ladki gaye to thik hai par agar do ladke gaye to wo bhi panch minute tak dekhta hai phir bolta hai nar kaun hai maada kaun hai, phir dar hota hai ki kahi koi camera to nahi laga hai (date on Interview: 07/07/16 at GAURAV)

ruined. Even clients prefer them because only a male sex worker can fulfil their demands. We cannot do it.⁸⁸

Durg, 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker pointed out the tussle for space for sex work in Mumbai:

Nowadays cruising spots are not so popular but my house is close to Marve and Aksha beach and a lot of TG solicit clients there. So one day I went, opened my hair and I also stood with them. They asked me – what are you doing here? I said nothing. There were a lot of bushes and dark places where sexual activity was taking place. So I opened my mobile and I also found a client on Grindr. So I started going to this spot as there are always clients available.⁸⁹

Thus there is a huge competition in sex work where female sex workers, male sex workers and Hijras all operate from the same streets or space. I have discussed in previous chapters about types of sex work– street-based and non-street based male sex work. Depending upon the nature of sex work the spaces will also vary. These different spaces provide a different level of safety and security to the sex workers. Generally, it has been found that male sex workers who carry out sex work in open streets are more prone to violence and discrimination than their counterparts who carry out sex work from homes or hotels. But this does not mean that sex workers operating from homes or hotels are not exposed to violence and abuse. Some male sex workers said that they prefer to operate from the cruising spots because it allows them autonomy to choose and plan according to their needs.

In an attempt to map the geographies of male sex work in Mumbai, GAURAV's intervention programme at 37 hotspots across Mumbai became my point of focus. Since these intervention programmes are located in areas where there is a propensity of male sex workers, it helped me to understand the spatial dimension of male sex work. There

⁸⁸Arre pahle hume jaha par khade hote the baad mei ye log waha par aakar kadhe hone lage aur phir baad Mei hijde log Aakar Khade Honi lage. humara dhandha hi kharaab ho gaya, client log inhi ko leke jaate hai. unki jo demnad hoti hai wo hum nahi karte hai, wo unse hi hoti hai aur hum karege bhi nahi. Wo wahi karege (date on Interview: 30/11/17 at Aastha Parivaar's Office)

⁸⁹Waise to cruising spots ab kam ho gaye hai par hum log ke yaha hai na jo marve beach hai aksha beach hai na waha par TG log khade rahte hai. Aur mai aise baal khol kar aise jaa raha tha aur wo log bole ki kya kar raha hai tu (modified) kya kar rahi hai tu idhar mai bola ki kuch nahi bas Khada hu aise hi. Waha par andar leja kar (jhadiyo mei) wo log pan karte hai to mai bola ki mai bhi dekhta hu ki mujhe bhi koi nearby mil jaye ga to maine grinder open kiya aur mujhe bhi mil gaya to phir mai bhi wahi leke gaya par raat ke time par jangal mei. Phir aise pata chal gaya na mere ko ki waha par pan hota hai phir mai Udhar jaata hu (Date of Interview: 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

were certain sites in Mumbai which were consistently reported by male sex workers as the most popular sites for male sex work in Mumbai. I took up 10 sites and have tried to understand why they were so popular among male sex workers. The 10 sites which were very popular among male sex workers are McDonald eatery in Andheri West. This is one of the most popular hotspots despite the huge popularity of digital hotspots. Similarly, platforms number 1 and 2 of the Andheri station remain popular hotspots. Public toilets at Andheri stations were very popular until a few years back. Carter Road in Bandra is another popular spot for male sex work. In south Mumbai, Gateway of India and Colaba causeway are popular hotspots to date. Both these spaces are close to Churchgate station on the Western Railway line. Both Gateway of India and Colaba are popular spot among foreign clients and is also home to some of the famous hotels, bars and eateries. Beaches are quite popular as a hotspot in Mumbai and Juhu Chowpatty, Girgaum Chowpatty, Versova beach, Aksha beach and Mandovi beach are quite popular spaces for sexual transactions. Lokhandwala is another very popular space for cruising which is an upmarket residential and commercial space in Andheri Mumbai and it is close to Versova beach. It was a large marshy land which was reclaimed and turned into one of the poshest locality in the suburbs. Lokhandwala is also home to the Indian film and television industry. With many shopping malls, cinemas, parks and fitness centres along with good connectivity, it is one of the most happening places in the suburbs. Durg, a gay-identified male sex worker who is also an outreach worker with GAURAV stated:

In Lokhandwala, which is my area, anytime someone visits the public toilets they will find gay people there. It is busy throughout the day and towards the evening it gets very crowded.⁹⁰

An enquiry into the spatialisation of male sex work in Mumbai brought to notice a particular pattern concerning spaces where sex work is being carried out. Mumbai as a city survives due to its two suburban railway systems—Western line and Central line. Both lines run back and forth from north to south, starting 4 in the morning to 1 am, connecting millions of working-class to their residences and places of work. Masselos (2003) in his work argued that “railways are absolutely critical for travel to work”. Housing

⁹⁰Lokhandwala jaise ki mera hi area hai kabhi bhi public toilets Mei jao HRG Matlab gay log waha rahte hi hai. Din bhar ka hi ye haal hai aur shaam ko to kuch jaada hi ho jata hai, bahut bheed hoti hai (Date of Interview: 12/06/18 at GAURAV

developments have followed a ribbon pattern which was determined by the railway system. Thus most of the offices and working spaces are close to the railways' lines. This is where the business lies for all the working class and male sex workers are no exception to this. Most of the hotspots are located near major railway stations as clearly visible from the map of Mumbai which also includes the points of intervention by Gaurav. There is a pattern associated with Mumbai local trains and the manifestation of homosexual desire. Informants narrated their stories of meeting men in local trains who were interested in them. Utpal, Satyam, Dhanush, Neel all got their first client in Mumbai local train. Dhanush explained:

So one day while I was on the train one senior citizen approached me. We exchanged our phone numbers and the moment he got down from the train he called me. I informed him that I will take rupees 1000. He was ok with the price. So that is how it all started.⁹¹

Mumbai local trains, train stations, public toilets at the stations, platforms and restaurants and shops near stations are all important spaces for male sex workers. According to Utpal:

Everything happens around here. You get clients in these overcrowded trains, numbers are exchanged and sometimes we come out of the train and go straight to a lodge nearby. Sometimes we just go behind the walls or public toilets. I got my first client on the local train.⁹²

It is interesting to note that intervention programmes by the NGO GAURAV is closely located at around the railway stations. Thus Mumbai local trains which are generally referred to as the lifeline of Mumbai seem to play an equally important role in the lives of male sex workers. Right from reaching a client to finding one, local trains are always convenient.

⁹¹ Ek din mai train Mei kahin jaa raha tha to ek budhe uncle ne mere se baat chalu kiya. Phir number liya mera aur jaise hi wo train se utra mero ko phone kiya. Maine bhi bola ki mai 1000 lunga. O bola theek hai aur bas aise hi shuru hua ye sab. (Date of Interview: 05/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁹² idhar train Mei hi bahut kuch ho jata hai. Aap ko isi bheed Mei client bhi milta hai, number lete hai aur kabhi kabhi to train se nikal kar hum seedhe lodge Mei ghooste hai. Phir kabhi station ke toilet Mei ya to phir koi deewar ke peeche. Mera pahla customer bhi mereko idhar se hi mila (Date of Interview: 28/12/18 at GAURAV)



Figure 2. Sites where Gaurav runs its Intervention Programme in Mumbai
 Source: Gaurav Annual Report 2015-16

Risky Spaces, Risky Sex and Spatial Tactics

Mumbai is one of the most densely populated cities in the world and even to get a little space to sleep is a struggle. In such stark deprivation, male sex workers keep searching for new places to carry out sex work. It is here that informants introduced me to a term called “khopcha”– shady corner in the parlance of Bombay's colloquial terms. If I loosely translate, it is an isolated or secluded place to carry out some kind of nefarious activity. “Khopacha” has been considered an avoidable space especially in cities owing to perceived dangers. But seemingly shady corners of cities allow much-needed space to a large number of needy people. Male sex workers are in constant search of such ‘khopcha’ where they can take their ‘not so well to do clients’ for some quick transaction. It may be a construction site in the bustling market or busy neighbourhood or some bushes or groves which may provide some cover. Night-time is the most preferred time for such activities since it brings some anonymity, concealment and solitariness. Thus some of these dark corners are working spaces for many urban poor on the margins. But the state is always on surveillance to control such activities which happen in these dark corners. I have stayed in Mumbai from 2008 to 2011 and Juhu beach used to be one of my favourite spaces in Mumbai but when I went back for my fieldwork in 2016 I noticed many changes. Juhu beach is one of the most popular beaches of the suburbs and in the evening when night falls you can spot couples under the coconut trees in the dark. Then there are *mallishwala* (masseurs) who offer their services on the beach when it gets dark. Similarly one would spot sex workers soliciting clients in the dark. But when I went back in 2016 I noticed that the entire stretch of the beach has been lighted up with bright halogens light.

Lorway et al. (2011) while studying the spatialisation of sexual risk among men who have sex with men (MSM) at local cruising spots in the southern state of Karnataka evoke de Certeau (1984) work to understand how MSM and MSW create privacy in spaces perceived as risky. Thus MSM and MSW focus on the “middle ground” between structure and agency which is the corporeal experiences of sexuality and the “spatial tactics” that MSM enacts to create privacy in places they perceive as risky (de Certeau, 1984: 91–101). From this perspective, “sexual risk” is better understood as reproduced through erotically charged spatial arrangements and embodiments, what Gavin Brown has referred to as the “[affective] potential resulting from the interaction of bodies in

place”, rather than as resulting from external “social factors” that enable or prohibit ‘rational’ decision making (Brown 2008: 917)

It is important to draw attention to the non-unitary nature of space in light of the fact that character of space changes during nighttime. It requires different kinds of strategies to survive the city in the nighttime. According to Sameer, a Kothi-identified male sex worker, it is a dangerous turf and they have to take the utmost care. This also includes adherence to a particular lifestyle which, according to Satyam, may sound dangerous to ‘normal’ people. Thus male sex workers mostly take some kind of drugs or alcohol when they are out at night to work. According to Dhanush, it serves two purposes – primarily after taking drugs fear is gone and he/she learns to relax. If male sex workers want to continue in this work then they will have to follow a particular lifestyle that may appear dangerous to most of us. Around these risky spaces at night-time, local goons and bullies extort money from male sex workers and have forceful sex with them. Utpal revealed other tactics used by male sex workers to survive in these risky spaces.

I built rapport with local goons. I adopted pre-emptive tactics which meant I approached them before they came to me. I would go to them and ask them to have sex with me. I would tell them that I am fond of them. The rule is simple –if one protests too much they will come after him and will trouble him. Therefore, when you run away from them they will chase you with more ardour. Whenever I will come across the local goon I will cajole him to have sex with me and he will go away.⁹³

Pat Califia in *Public Sex* observes that hidden markets of city sex have certain common characteristics and “if one visits a sex zone at the wrong time of day, it may be unrecognisable. This type of marketplace is usually tolerated only between sunset and dawn” (Califia 1994:206). According to Califia such places are forbidding and there is a clear distinction between insider-outsider and this dichotomy is so clearly established that an outsider would never step into this dark shady world which male sex workers would call a “khopcha”. The insider is trained through constant search and their secret knowledge to find out such places and develop the courage to carry out the forbidden work. Thus such risky places or hidden markets are key to the business of sex workers.

⁹³ jaise local gunde hai na unse maine rapport banaya hai, to isse pahle ki wo hi aaye mai jaake unse bolta tha ki aao aur meri lo. Sun na tu mujhe bahut pasand hai aur jo log jaada natak karte the na wo unke Peeche jabardasti padte the. To tum jisse jitna door bhagoge wo tumhare peeche utana hi aayega ... Mai jab bhi usko dekhta mai bolta chal na aaj to kar le mai kabse bol raha hu (Date of Interview: 28/03/18 at GAURAV)

I observed how the dynamics of a space change at different points in time. For instance, a corner near the bus stop exhibited diverse shades. It began from eight o'clock in the morning when a middle-aged lady would arrive and occupy the spot to sell flowers and garlands in a small cane basket. She would remain there for two hours till ten o'clock. Soon after, a juice vendor with his pushcart would take over the vacant spot for the next two hours. At around 12 he would leave the place for a group of young men who would put up their stall of gazettes and mobile phone covers. The business would be brisk, young students would be their main customers in the daytime. Towards the evening when the office rush would start, a lot of working youth would stop to see those goods. At around 9 in the evening when the crowd would start thinning, people might find a few Hijras and kothi-identified male sex workers near the bus stop. But they would be so enmeshed with the crowd that unless one would look for them you might not even notice them. Everything appeared like a normally crowded marketplace. This particular bus stop near McDonald's eatery is one of the popular cruising spots in Mumbai. There are several such spots all over the city. The question regarding the origin and popularity of cruising spots needs explanation. The next section deals with the question of origin and popularity of cruising spots. An attempt has also been made to understand how such spots are appropriated for various purposes in overcrowded places in Mumbai city.

Morphology of Cruising Spot

George Chauncey's *Gay New York* (1994) emphatically described the importance of cruising spots in the lives of homosexuals. Such spaces are crucial in the making of intimacy and community solidarity. Cruising in public spaces like parks, toilets, bus stations, railways stations, street corners, according to Brown (2008), are tactics to subvert morality which is considered socially appropriate behaviour in a public space. Public cruising unsettles the very notion of a distinct divide between public and private realms (Johnston and Valentine, 1995). Such transgressions not only challenge the ordering strategies of the state and the resulting heteronormativities it imposes but also "queers" public space, transforming it in ways that exceed the intent of original urban planners (Hubbard, 2001:54).

In recent times, digital hotspots have gained prominence in the sex work business, the importance of real geographical space continues to be important despite the popularity of digital hotspots. Soliciting of clients begins at cruising spots and from there, if the solicitation is successful, it ends in a hotel, lodges or a public park. One question which intrigues me is how does a particular spot or space become a popular cruising spot in the hustle and bustle of a busy city like Mumbai. Durg, a 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker, explained this process in detail in one of the interviews:

Emergence of cruising spot starts with one person then two which goes on to become four and this cycle continues. If any place has TG (transgender) around then sex work is going on in that area. In the case of gay male sex workers, initially, there may be few people but slowly it starts building up and then that space becomes a cruising spot. Then everyone comes to know about the activities taking place there.⁹⁴

Soliciting in busy places like Andheri Station or Lokhandwala points to implicit strategies which the MSWs adapt to survive in Mumbai. Devo, a bisexual male sex worker, explained:

Oh, sex work does not happen here. But HRG (the term HRG which is being used interchangeably by MSWs for gay and MSM men and it stands for High-Risk Group which is categorisation by NACO) are found here at Andheri bus depot and the bus stop opposite Andheri McDonald. Many male sex workers are found there. A person does not have to do anything. Just go there and try to maintain eye contact with anyone and if he is a male sex worker, he will correspond with eye contact which confirms that person is gay. After this, the male sex worker will take this person (client) to his place. If he does not have his own place then he will take the client to a lodge. There is one more thing, there is a lot of construction going on in Mumbai and the constructed site is cordoned off with large sheets and covers. Sometimes we go inside this for activity and I have done this many times.⁹⁵

To the outside observer, the male sex worker will be like another man walking on the road or running an errand. Outside gazer does not see them as someone soliciting a

⁹⁴Waha par kaise banta hai pata hai ek se do hote hai phir do se chaar bante hai aur phir bas ban jata hai. Aur agar kahi par TG hai to samajh lo ki yaha par sex work hota hi hoga. Aur agar gay ka dekha jaye to...Phir aise hi ek do ko ek do ko dekhte dekhte baaki ke bhi aane lagte hai aur dekhte dekhte wo cruising point ban jata hai. Aur phir sabko pata chal jata hai ki yaha par kya hota hai (Date of Interview: 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

⁹⁵In jaghon pe pan nahi hota par haan yaha par HRG bahut milte hai, jaise Andheri bus depot, bus stop opposite andheri mcDonald, yaha par bahut saare MSWs Khade hi rahte hai. Bas kuch nahi Udhar Jaane ka aur eye contact karne ka aur agar wo gay hoga na to phataak se eye contact karega aur aap turant samajh jaoge ki samne wala gay hai. Phir Udhar se wo apne place par leke jaate rahege. Agar Apna place nahi hai to kisi lodge mei leke jaate hai. ek aur baat batau mai aapko aajkal Kaise hai na building ka kaam chalta hi rahta hai aur uske chhao taraf patre mare hue hote hai kai baar to hum log udhar hi ghus jaate hai raat ko aur activity Udhar hi hoti hai mai bhi kai baar aise kiya hua hu (Date of Interview: 15.12.17 at GAURAV)

client. It is only when a sex worker frequently or daily visits the same spot that the people in the neighbourhood will notice them but even that is quite improbable in our homo-social environment. Men hanging out with men is normal, common and appropriate in public places. Moreover, to overcome any kind of undue attention from outside gazer they develop some kind of code to communicate. Lorway et al. carried out a study of the MSM group in Karnataka to understand the relationship between space and homosexual intimacies. It pointed out strategies that MSM adopt to draw the attention of their partners:

To navigate such heterogeneous urban environments, the pursuit of male-male intimacies often involves coded erotic signalling in the form of gestures, gendered performances and innuendo. Feminine kothis, for instance, sway their hips, bite their lips or touch their crotch to draw attention from other men as they move through a cruising spot, while their counterparts often assume accentuated masculine postures, puffing their chests out to arouse the interest of kothis (Lorway et al. 2011: 1093).

Similarly, Turner describes how men pursue sex in public and can recognise each other through their unique signalling— “a process of walking, gazing and engaging another (or others)” (Turner 2003: 60). George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* (1994), deals with the history of homosexuality in the US, argued that the hustle and bustle of urban spaces, in the New York of pre-world War, provide them with the protective condition to carry out prohibited sexual activities. Such activities were possible since such urban places were less easily regulated compared to residential quarters (Chauncey 1994:179). In the same urban context, other scholars have pointed out that though urban spaces provide some kind of protection from societal gaze yet the same spaces are also responsible for incidents of violence, shame, guilt chiefly for those who are gender variant (Browne, 2004; Doan, 2010). Since gender-variant homosexuals are easily definable due to their looks and appearance, they generally draw the ire of societal gazers. I observed that cruising spots are more popular with kothi-identified male sex workers. Kothis are effeminate and are easily identifiable and incidents of abuse and violence are common with them. In a corporeal interaction kothi always takes a passive position and are called ‘bottoms’. Kothi-identified male sex workers do not work alone. They prefer to operate in groups because it gives them protection from goons and rowdies.

If a ‘bottom’ will come to a cruising spot he will come with ten more, bringing his friends along. Then while loitering with their friends they are exposed to this new cruising spot.

They will observe that sex work is happening here. Then next time they will bring more friends for sex work. This has happened to me many times(Manoj, MSW)⁹⁶

Cruising spots are also popular among Transgender sex workers. Gender variant sex workers operating from cruising spots do not often go to hotels or lodges for sex work. I noticed this in the case of kothi-identified male sex workers who are conspicuous due to their effeminate looks and gestures. Kothi-identified male sex workers generally operate from the cruising spot, even in the time of boom in telecommunication, and cater to clients who generally cannot afford a lodge or hotel and want the activity to take place at or around the cruising spot. Kothi-identified male sex workers cater mostly to clients from the lower economic backgrounds. Many a time even if a well to do client is interested in a kothi-identified male sex worker, the client hesitates in taking them to some lodge, hotel or his own place because of their striking feminine gestures and appearance. The apparent feminine looks often tend to invite unwanted attention. Hotels may not serve them. It is thus evident that both the client from the lower economic background and the kothis do not want to go far from the cruising spot.

Popular Spaces for Male Sex Work in Mumbai

A cruising spot or Hotspot is sometimes just a place for coming face to face with clients. It offers the opportunity for discussion, negotiation and striking the deal. The question as to where they will go for their sexual activities remains a matter of anxiety for both the male sex workers and their clients. That brings us to another important question – where do male sex workers go for corporeal intimacy? In this chapter, I have tried to explain why, among several places, certain places remain more popular.

Nikunj, a bisexual male sex worker, shared that despite the popularity of digital spaces, male sex workers still prefer to work through some pimps. With pimps, the certainty of getting a client is high as they have long lists of clients ranging from high profile businessmen to film stars to expatriates to white-collar workers. Since the pimp is already familiar with the clients, the chances of victimisation and violence are lowered. When a male sex worker is on his own, there are many occasions when there is no work for

⁹⁶Ek bottom Aaya na to apne saath 10 ko leke aata hai bolta hai arre chal na mai tere ko ghumane ke liye lejata hu. Phir doosra bottom aayega aur ghumte ghumte wo bhi area dekh lega. Phir bolga arre yaha to pan hota hai. phir sab bolege chal yahi chal phir wo apne dost ko leke aata hai, aisa mere saath bahut hota hai (Date of Interview: 15/06/17 at GAURAV)

days. With pimps, there is a constant flow of money. While working through pimps, a male sex worker does not have to worry about the arrangement of place because it is either the pimp or clients who handle the place so a male sex worker has to just reach the place on time. On the other hand, male sex workers who work independently have to constantly think about the place where they will take the clients.⁹⁷ Half of the work is declined due to a lack of available space to carry out work. Rishi pointed out this lack of space for work in Mumbai.

Most of the male sex workers do not have a place of their own. If a male sex worker wants to rent a place then he will have to produce a lot of documents. So we male sex workers prefer that clients should make some arrangements in some hotel for us or take us to their house.⁹⁸

Male sex workers operating independently prefer clients places because most of them do not have a suitable place where they can take their clients. According to Utpal, a bisexual male sex worker, clients are very smart and hence they will not take anyone home in the first meeting itself. So familiarity is important. Even clients are sceptical about taking someone home and therefore, they prefer someone they know already. Another noticeable trend is that wherever a male sex worker operates he will not travel a long distance rather they prefer a nearby contact. Male sex workers operating through mobile applications find clients close to their location. Nikunj, a male sex worker described this:

There is a new trend because of networking (mobile application and internet). Now MSW does not visit the cruising spot but they do not go very far away. By and large, they remain functional around their area.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Sabse jaada poular to pimps ke saath hota hai, Kyo unke contacts jaada hai, hifi clients aate hai, so pimp ke saath thoda safe bhi hota hai aur aaram se client mil jaate hai. Agar hum apne bharse par nikle to mile na mile guarantee nahi rahti hai na. Haa par usme se hume Aadha paisa pimp ke saath share karna padta hai. Depend karta hai agar pimp Uska friend hai to aadha se thoda kam bhi lega par agar ladka naya hai to half lega...pimp ke saath kaam karo to MSW ko place ke baare mei nahi sochna padta hai. Wo sab arrange rahta hai. Aur pimp ke sath ho to har mahine ka paisa aata rahta hai Kyo ki clients to milte hi hai...agar aap kudh se jao to place ka bahut maramari rahta hai (Date of Interview:7/12/17 at GAURAV)

⁹⁸it depends waise most of msws ke paas apna kudh ki jagah bhi nahi hoti, rent par room lo uske liye der saare document do, isliye hum log mostly prefer karte hai ki aap hum logo ke liye hotel mei arrangement karo ya apne ghar par bulao, kyo ki humare paas place nahi hai (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

⁹⁹Because of networking ab log cruising spot par nahi jaate hai, par wo jaada door bhi nahi jaate, ghoom phir Kar apne area mei hi rahte hai (Date of Interview: 10/06/18 at GAURAV)

Thus Durg stayed in Malad and most of his clients were located in Borivali which was close to his place. Since his college was in Churchgate, he also carried out sex work in the Lower Parel area which, according to him, was full of clients. Similarly, Sam who stayed in Juhu Koliwada revealed:

For sex work, I prefer dark places like the jungle and Carter Road has many such spots. I have also visited lodges and hotels. Foreign clients whom I generally find on Grindr take me to hotels. I have mostly visited Princess hotel and JW Marriott. I have also gone to Taj Mumbai once. Then there are lots of hotels near the airport where I have gone several times.¹⁰⁰

All the places which Sam visited for sex work were again close to his place of residence. Carter Road in Bandra is not far from Juhu. Similarly, both hotels, Princess and JW Marriott are in Juhu. Mumbai Airport has long chains of hotels that are again close to Juhu. Thus a male sex worker generally does not prefer to travel very far from his place of residence unless there is a good deal in terms of money.

The less preferred venues for sex work are lodges and smaller hotels. According to Utpal, going to a lodge is quite inconvenient and full of hassle. You will have to produce your identity papers and then the people in the lodge are constantly staring, making them feel uncomfortable. So in this scenario what do male sex workers do? According to Satyam, they take help from friends. Many male sex workers have rented apartments in Mumbai where 4-5 of them stay together. So whenever a friend needs a place for sex work they get in touch with one of these friends who have rented apartments. They allow their friends to use their place at a rent of rupees 500 for a few hours, which the clients pay.

With the coming of mobile applications, most of the cruising spots, toilets and parks, have become non-functional. Now male sex workers first fix a place and then look out for clients on mobile applications. So if a male sex worker has a place then he can have sex or else no.¹⁰¹ (Nikunj, a gay-identified male sex worker)

¹⁰⁰Dark place jungle, Carter Road to pura jungle hi hai. Lodge and hotel haan mai gaya hu na. Bahar se jo aate hai na, foreigner log jo grinder par milte hai jab wo bulate hai na tab hotel jana padta hai. Jadatar mai to Princess, Jw Marriot , taj Mei ek baar gaya hu. Airport ke paas bahut saare hotel hai jaha par mai gaya hu (Date of Interview: 7/06/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁰¹ Abhi ye sab Grindr, PR aajane se kaisa hai na ki koi site par nahi jaata. Abhi hum kya karte hai ki jagah fix karo phir phone uthao aur client dekho. Humare paas jagah hai to kaam to mil hi jata hai (Date of Interview: 10/06/18 at GAURAV)

In a city like Mumbai where shrinking spaces are felt every moment of a person's existence – from a little one-room chawl where 6-8 people sleep in, to standing in trains where there is no room for even air to pass. All the newcomers in Mumbai who have to travel by train get this piece of advice that they should just stand with the crowd and when the train will arrive at the station, they will get pushed in, no matter how crowded is the train. Through their daily struggle, people become accustomed to even those spaces in which they are very likely to feel alienated.

Outdoor Trips for Sex Work

Male sex workers also go outdoors with clients on holidays and such trips are very popular among male sex workers. The most common rate for such trips is rupees 10000 per night and male sex workers mostly go for two nights to 5 nights. Some sought after destinations are Goa, Alibaug, Khandala and Lonavala. But such trips are rare and male sex workers do not get such opportunities frequently. Such trips are common with foreign tourists who come to India for some fun, according to Utpal. Utpal shared that we can get around 4-5 such trips in a year or sometimes none. But such trips are quite lucrative and male sex workers save some money.

I go on outdoor trips with clients. It is like a package which includes staying, food and I have to stay with the client for a few days. I have been to Goa many times. Such packages are more profitable where you get Rs. 50,000 for five days.¹⁰²

Amitesh, a bisexual male sex worker, once visited Dubai with a sheikh for two months and made a lot of money. It is not just money, clients buy them clothes, perfumes, shoes, watches and other gifts too.

Gay Parties

Gay parties are very popular with male sex workers. All male sex workers have been to these parties and some look forward to it. A gay party is a get together for gay-identified people and such parties are organised regularly in Mumbai. In one of my interviews, I spoke to Nikunj, a bisexual male sex worker who is married and has a one-year-old child. Nikunj shared many details about various spaces inhabited by male sex workers

¹⁰²Mai bahar bhi jata hu package jaise itne din rahna khana, aana jaana aur client ke saath raho. Goa kai baar gaya hu. Package mei jaada profit hai jaise 5 din ka 50,000 (Date of Interview:28/12/18 at GAURAV)

for work or otherwise. Since Nikunj is an escort and he works for a well-known pimp in Mumbai he provided lots of details about how escorts are different from other male sex workers. I was keen to know where do they go and where do activities take place. Nikunj informed:

Generally, we go to parties with clients. These gay parties are there almost all weekends, sometimes in Virar or Mumbai Central or Karma. These parties are generally organised either in a pub or in some farmhouse. There is a party organiser who will coordinate with the owner of the farmhouse and police...the regular charges for such parties starts from Rs. 800 which may get higher on festive occasions. The rates for such parties are also decided by the location of such parties as well as the kind of people who come for such parties. Such parties are organised every weekend or sometimes fortnightly.¹⁰³

According to Nikunj such parties are exclusively for gay people because 'straight' people will feel very uncomfortable in such parties. On the other hand, gay people often go to straight peoples parties. So who organise these gay parties? According to Nikunj people who organise such gay parties have resourceful contacts with police and local politician. Male sex workers are also part of these organising bodies. Dev, a bisexual male sex worker shared that he used to be a 'helper' for such parties. His friend was the organiser and such parties are quite popular among male sex workers as there is a lot of fun along with work. 30 male sex workers cited Nala Sopara as the most popular place for gay parties in Mumbai. Nala Sopara is a town within Mumbai metropolitan region and comes within the Palghar district of Maharashtra. Nala Sopara is 57 km from Mumbai on the Western railway zone. On the Western Railway line, it takes 1 hour and 20 minutes from Nala Sopara to Churchgate station. Rajodi beach, Kalam beach, Arnala beach are very popular beaches in the Nala Sopara area. Other popular spaces for such gay parties are many five and seven stars hotels in Mumbai like Leela's, and Capitol which often host such parties. According to Dev, gay parties in five stars hotels generally start around 9 pm and go on till 2 and 3 in the early morning. There is fun, frolic, dance, food and drinks. But sexual activities do not take place here in these parties because of lack of space. If a male sex worker goes to such parties it is mostly to build contacts with prospective clients and some pimps. Other popular spaces where such gay

¹⁰³Generally parties Mei jaate hai. Gay parties jo hoti hai wo har weekend Mei rahti hai, kabhi Virar mei, kabhi mumbai central mei to kabhi karma mei. Generally pub mei, ya phir kisi ke farmhouse mei. Koi ek organiser hota hai jo police se aur farm house owner se coordinate karta hai... Occasion like festivals hai to jaada charge hai aur agar regular hai to 800 sau se shuru hota hai, ye bhi depend karta hai ki party ka location kya hai, aur log kaise aate hai. Ye parties har hafte ya phir 15 din Mei to hota hi hota hai (Date of Interview: 10/06/18 at GAURAV

parties are organised in suburbs like Thane and Nala Sopara. Here these parties are organised in farmhouses close to the beach or sometimes on the beach itself. Sexual activities also happen as there are 'dark rooms' where such activities are possible. If a party is happening on the beach then also sexual activities do take place in nearby bushes or hideouts or behind big boulders on the beaches.

Gay parties are quite popular among male sex workers since it allows a respite from their monotony of routine and drudgery of daily life. There is dance, music, food, drinks, drugs and sex. Durg, a 19-year-old male sex worker recounted his experience with such parties. He had a different view of such parties:

I will tell you what is the problem with such gay parties—we mostly get older clients. I prefer clients who are around 25 years. I cannot have sexual relationships with older men and in these gay parties, we mostly get old people. Most of the male sex workers are not bothered about the age of their clients but I cannot go with old men. There are dark rooms where activity (sexual interaction) takes place but there is another problem with this. There will be one top (commonly referred to as panthi who takes an active role in sexual relations) who will be devoured by many kothi-identified males. There are many forests there where people go for activity... but these parties are very dangerous. There are high chances of contracting HIV in such parties. There is alcohol and drugs which is free-flowing so people drink and then forget everything. They do not remember the number of people they have had sex with. So now I have completely stopped going to such parties.¹⁰⁴

According to Utpal, sexual activities are rampant there but in the morning it is like 'Who are you? They do not even recognise you in the morning'. According to Samuel, a 19-year-old male sex worker, such parties are very colourful:

Different people dress differently. Some of them dress up like girls, some as Bollywood heroines. There is a stage where people come on and dance. Then afterwards drinks are served and then people take their partners and go to rooms. Once it is accomplished with the first set of partners then they go with another sexual partner and this keeps ongoing.

¹⁰⁴Lekin pata hai iska problem kya hai, jaadatar aged log ho milte hai. Mereko jaada tar 25 ke saath sahi lagta hai uske upar to mai lehi nahi sakta hu. par udhar to buddhe log milte hai. Pata hai jaada tar sex workers ko client se koi Matlab nahi Hota unko sirf paise se hi Matlab Hota hai, Budha ho koi bhi ho par apan se Nahi hota hai baba. Udhar par dark room hote hai jaha par activityy bhi hoti hai par bas yahi hai ki ek top ko kai kothi log Khate hai nocte hai, udhar jungle bhi bahut hai Udhar bhi jaate hai log...par pata hai ye parties bahut dangerous hoti hai, Udhar positive hone ka jaada chance hota hai. Ab aap hi socho, daroo drugs aur kya chahiye par Peete hi sab bhool jatae hai kitno ke saath kiya kuch pata hi nahi hota hai. Isliye maine abhi ekdam band kiya hua hai (Date of Interview: 12/12/18 at GAURAV

The most popular spot is Nala Sopara where on Kalam beach there is a hotel by the name 'Mini Goa' which is a popular spot for such parties.¹⁰⁵

Technology and Space

There are multiple platforms like WhatsApp, online sites, mobile applications which present a different perspective to understand the changing notion of space. Increased usage of such platforms could be seen as a response to shrinking spaces. Discrimination and stigmatisation at the counter of lodges and hotels compel MSW to figure out alternatives. Virtual platforms have limitations too because the need for inter-corporeal interaction necessitates the availability of real space. It is for this reason that there is a great deal of struggle involved in sorting and figuring of space.

Informants discussed how life changed after the coming of mobile technology. Mobile-based dating can be traced back to 2009 when Grindr was launched. It came to India in 2011. Grindr is a geo-social app for gay males which matches users based on their geographic proximity to each other (Das, 2019). Thus if A is on Grindr and starts this application at Andheri station then Grindr would try and find out partners from around that area keeping in mind the preferences elected by A. It saves travel time for both partners. I interviewed 34 male sex workers with different sexual orientations but the common thread was sex work and Grindr. All 34 of them operated through Grindr though the frequency of usage varied. Another very popular dating application is Planet Romeo which was a gay men's dating website and now a mobile application, which was launched in 2002, has also become popular among male sex workers (ibid:127). In one of the focussed group discussions, a street-based female sex worker stated:

We used to be so scared at Dadar junction (while soliciting clients), I was always scared that someone will notice me. Life has changed. We are thrilled after the coming of the internet and smartphones.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Alag alag log alag Tarah se ready hote hai, koi girlish, koi Bollywood heroine aur Udhar ek stage bhi hota hai aur wo stage par Aakar nachate bhi hai. Phir drinks ke baad log apne apne partner leke room Mei jaate hai phir uske saath ho gya to kisi aur ke saath. aise hi chalta rahta hai. Is Tarah ki gay parties jaada tar Nalasopara area Mei hoti ai, kalam beach, mini Goa Kar ke ek hotel hai udhar par hoti hai (Date of Interview: 07/06/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁰⁶Hume Dadar junction par dar lagta hai. Koi dekh lega baba. Zindagi Badal gayi hai, mai to pagal ho gayi internet aur smart phone ke aane se. (one FSW) (Date of Interview:30/11/17 at Aastha Parivaar Office)

Rishi, a versatile male sex worker, explained how websites and applications for gay people are secure because only people with similar orientations will be part of such a group. In case, Rishi ever encounters anyone from his own family members as mutual contact on these apps then he blocks the contact to maintain secrecy. To date his secret is safe. Durg, a 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker felt that Grindr is his safest bet:

We may go to a cruising spot but there is no certainty that we will get a client. Moreover, there are TGs (Transgender) as well as female sex workers there and sometimes it leads to squabbles. They are in their finery with full makeup and I am very simple.¹⁰⁷

Thus at the cruising spots, there are many problems. There is stiff competition from fellow workers and Durg feels that sometimes the way a TG sex worker will present themselves to the client, a male sex worker clad just in simple clothes and no makeup has a very slim chance. Moreover, cruising spots have their limitations. The policeman may harass them, someone from their locality may spot them, the local goons may victimise them. Amid all this, a male sex worker has to find work for himself. Since Grindr showcases photos of men, based on the preference of the user, arranged from nearest to the furthest away one feels that it is easy to operate through Grindr but it is far from being an effortless exercise. When one taps at the picture, it will display a small bio of the user along with the option to chat, send one's picture and their exact location. So what happens when one taps on the picture of a prospective client? Durg stated:

Some clients are a complete nuisance. They will ask 10 questions — will you do this, will you do that? Send me this picture send me that picture. Get nude and make a video call now. I go insane and I disconnect the phone. It is alright for once or twice but every time to want to see me nude! I also have my privacy.¹⁰⁸

Another male sex worker, Satyam, shared that these applications are quite addictive. When a male sex worker visits a cruising spot, they get client, the activity takes place and then they are back home and sleep peacefully. But with the mobile application, it is

¹⁰⁷Cruising spot pe jao to mila mila, nahi mila nahi mila. Aur waha par TGs bhi hote hai unka bhi dhandha hota hai. Aur agar spot par hum bhi hai, TG hai aur FSWs bhi hai to thoda sa noke jhoke bhi hoti hai. Wo log full makeup Mei hote hai aur mai Kaise ekdum simple (Date of Interview: 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁰⁸Kuch client bahut dukhi kardete hai ye karega wo karega, ye photo bhej wo bhej, abhi nude hoke video call karo. deemag kharaab ho jaata hai roz ka drama to mai phone kaat deta hu. Arre ek baar ho gaya do baar ho gaya ab baar baar tumhe mai video call kar ke deekhau mera bhi badan hai. Mai bola ki mai badan bechne ka paisa leta hu badan deekhane ka nahi. Tum video call par deekho aur Udhar wo maze le. (Date of Interview: 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

a different story:

I was addicted to phones for some time. Then I had to control it. I used to be on the phone all the time and had forgotten about eating and drinking too. I used to feel that let me have one more client for the day. For us, money is very important.¹⁰⁹

A TG sex worker added that:

These clients irritate me a lot. It starts with good morning in the morning and goes on till they bid you goodnight. Many TG are making a lot of money through phone sex.¹¹⁰

Similarly, Samay sounded very annoyed when he informed:

One cannot work if he is on Grindr. Every two seconds the client will ask you to send one or more pictures. We do not keep all kinds of photographs on our phones.¹¹¹

Anonymity is a key factor that plays an important role in the popularity of digital hotspots. Thus male sex workers can mask their identity. Hiding true age is most common among male sex workers since young boys are in great demand hence an older male sex worker is pushed to hide his true age to increase his chance of getting a client. Similarly, posting attractive display pictures is another trick to increase their chances of getting a client. Cooper (2002) argued that people prefer the internet to enhance anonymity to mask their real identity and this, in turn, will reduce their evaluation anxiety and accountability. Another important factor responsible for the rise of mobile applications among male sex workers is increased accessibility. Thus mobile applications come in handy to subvert state control and to reach out to a larger pool of clients. Mobile technology has also reduced the expenses of male sex workers. According to Rishi, now they do not get ready to go to cruising spot rather they are sitting in their house and tap their phone and there is a flood of clients. Thus it saves time and money needed to travel to a cruising spot. Now they just communicate about the place to the client and he reaches.

¹⁰⁹Beech Mei mujhe phone ki lat lag gayi thi, lekin phir maine kaafi control kiya, pure time phone phone, khaana peena bhi bhool gaya tha mai. Lagta tha ki ek aur client mil jaye bas. Paisa ko hum jaada value dete hai (Date of Interview:6/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹¹⁰wo bahut pakate hai, subah good morning, shaam ko goodnight. Phone sex karke TG log paisa le rahe hai (Date of Interview:30/11/17 at Aastha Parivaar Office)

¹¹¹ Grindr par rah kar aadmi kaam nahi kar sakta, do second nahi hota hai ye bhej do wo bhej do, aur sab Tarah ki photos bhi phone par nahi rakh sakte hum (Date of Interview: 25/06/16 at GAURAV)

The male sex work scenario has changed in the last decade with the coming of smartphones and gay dating apps. It has made soliciting somewhat easier if not smooth. But finding a willing client is just one aspect of sex work. The question of geographical space again crops up after the client is willing to go with the male sex worker. Now, where will they go for the actual act to take place? There are many options— hotels, lodges, at clients' places, at male sex worker's place, at a friend's place and sometimes in a public park, in the bushes near the beaches or public toilets. It is not easy to find a place to carry out the work. The rich clients can afford a good hotel in Mumbai and most of the male sex workers have visited all prominent hotels in Mumbai. Utpal, a bisexual male sex worker who has been into sex work for the past 19 years in Mumbai shared the medley of spaces visited by male sex workers for work:

There are no hotels or lodges which I have not visited for work. I have worked in a fifty thousand hotel room and have also carried out sex work in a fifty rupees room. I have frequently visited J W Marriott at Juhu, Taj Bombay at Colaba, Renaissance in Powai and have also visited the lodge in Gaiwadi which charges 50 rupees.¹¹²

Male sex workers who have been in this trade for long are familiar with the trends and temporalities of the city. Utpal said that customers from the Middle East are mostly found in the Colaba region. Utpal informed me that:

In monsoon, you will find Arbi (customers from the Middle East) customers and in winters mostly white foreigners(it is difficult to figure out the origin of these white men) will visit Colaba. They are seasonal.¹¹³

One noteworthy fact about male sex work in Mumbai is about the kind of people male sex workers cater to. All 34 informants who were interviewed belonged to the economically lower class. But somehow their economic status did not decide their service to the client. Male sex workers serve all kinds of clients – not so well to do clients whom they generally cater to at or around the cruising spot. Then we have middle-class clients who either take them to their house or some lodge nearby. Economically they are better than

¹¹²Bombay ka kaun sa hotel hai Kaun sa lodge nahi jo dekha nahi hai maine. Mai 50 ruapaiye se 50000 tak ke room me bhi gaya hu. J W Marriott Juhu par , Colaba Taj bombay hai phir Powai Mei ek hotel hai Renaissance aur mai Gaiwadi mei 50 rupayee ke room mei bhi gaya hu (Date of Interview: 28/12/18 at GAURAV)

¹¹³Colaba Mei baarish mei Arabi milte hai aur sardiyo Mei foreigner gore milte hai. Inka bhi season hota hai (Date of Interview: 28/12/18 at GAURAV)

the previous category of clients. Then there are well to do clients who take male sex workers to five stars hotels, resorts or outdoor trips. What is noticeable here is that the economic background of male sex worker has little to do with the kind of clients they will cater to. Rather it is their looks which determine their spatial presence. Like in one interview Utpal explained:

Your looks will decide where you will be found, Kothi will be found in cruising spots and fair Goodlooking males will be found in five-star hotels.¹¹⁴

Mumbai is one of the most urbanised and densely populated cities in the world. There is a constant struggle to get a few inches of space. Male sex workers are also part of this struggling group who are constantly on the lookout for newer spaces from where they can carry out their work. In this chapter, I mapped the movement of male sex workers over different spaces in Mumbai city. There is a wide range of spaces that are inhabited by male sex workers in course of their work—formal spaces like hotels and lodges as well as informal spaces like beaches, shady corners, toilets, parks, bus stops and depots and many other such spaces. Since the male sex worker carries out work across various spaces it results in the development of complex and circuitous spatial networks. These spatial circuits include not only these formal and informal spaces but also consist of fellow sex workers, pimps, clients, lodge owners, gay party organisers, shop keepers at street corners and many more like this. These spatial circuits go through frequent configuration and re-configuration.

When male sex workers are soliciting clients from different spaces across Mumbai, one cannot fail to notice the contradiction of gazes. Male sex worker is constantly trying to escape the uneasy and intrusive gazes of homophobic and heteronormative society. Simultaneously, male sex worker tries to draw the attention of selective gazers who will be their prospective clients. Installation of CCTV cameras, lighting up dark corners, coming up of new police booths and increased police patrolling activities constitute unwelcome gaze. Therefore, vulnerability is pervasive throughout this spatial network. To overcome their vulnerabilities, male sex workers rely on their social networks of fellow

¹¹⁴Aapka chehra aur body decide karta hai ki aap kaha miloge. Ek gora chitta manly good looking ladka aapko bade 5 star hotel mei milega aur kothi jada tar hotspot par hi rahta hai (Date of Interview: 28/12/18 at GAURAV)

sex workers, friends and pimps. Smartphones with internet connections and applications like WhatsApp, Grindr and Planet Romeo have played a crucial role in ruling out, in considerable measure, the scope for unwelcome gaze and surveillance. I have attempted to understand male sex work and its geographic boundaries. The focus of the next chapter will shift to male sex workers in relation to the question of identities and tensions associated with their social constructions and relations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Locating Lost Identities of Male Sex Workers in the Binaries of Gender and Sexuality

It depends on situation but personally I know that I am a man with a woman's soul¹¹⁵(Krishna, a kothi-identified male sex worker).

The last chapter dealt with the geographies of male sex work in Mumbai and traced spaces that male sex workers visit in course of work. It helped in understanding male sex work spatially in Mumbai. This chapter is a corollary of the previous chapter in so far as it dwells upon the discussion of locating male sex workers on the continuum of gender and sexuality. It is an extension of the discussion on male sex workers in the spatial context in that it deals with discursive and ideological aspects of sexual space. It proceeds with a critique of the existing paradigm of gender and sexuality which refuses to go beyond male-female binary. I draw on queer theories to sharpen the arguments against the fallacious binary framework of gender and sexuality. The chapter takes institutionalised compulsory heterosexuality as the starting point and locates male sex workers in this structure. I wish to understand how sexuality is culturally produced in multiple ways and how male sex workers negotiate these culturally determined sexual scripts. This negotiation is marked by constant tension to behave in a culturally appropriate manner. I aim to understand how male sex workers contest, reproduce and modify their gender and sexual identities in their everyday interaction with clients, partners, wives and significant others. There are multiple hierarchies in their expression and negotiation of their sexualities and gender identity. Rather than viewing the fluidity of sexual and gender categories with suspicion, it welcomes them because the recognition of the fluidity is accommodative and inclusive. I also aim to problematise and interrogate the singular and monolithic view of masculinity so that male sex workers' location in the socio-cultural system may be ascertained in the multiplicity of masculinities.

¹¹⁵wo to situation par depent karta hai but personally mai janta hu ki mai ek ladka hu jisme ek ladki ki bhi aatma hai. (Krishna). Date of Interview: 12/08/16 at GAURAV

Sexuality in common parlance refers to anything that is related to having sex. Thus, articulation and expression of our physical desire and social experience of it is an important aspect of sexuality. Sexuality thus incorporates a person's sensual desires, identities and behaviour associated with the expression of desire. Though Sexuality deals with the most intimate aspect of one's life, it is predominantly social and political. Sex is biological but sexuality is culturally produced. The chief reason for this is the mode of expression and articulation of sexuality. Sexuality is performed within relations of power and it changes historically and culturally and in different social contexts. (Abbott et.al 1990:198) Thus, the sexual behaviour of human beings cannot be detached from the social and political conditions in which it takes place and the social relations within which it is rooted. Even the most personal and intimate aspect of sexuality, auto-eroticism, which includes masturbation and the like, are also the outcome of social forces. Our socialisation has a lot to do with the way we respond to such acts and make sense of them. Sexuality is responsible for our identities and gives us a sense of self. Thus we may see ourselves as "men and women, as heterosexual and homosexual, 'normal' or 'abnormal', 'natural' or 'unnatural'" (Weeks 1986 :3). According to Foucault, sexuality must not be thought of as "a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct" (Foucault 1998:105).

In India, male sex workers have been operating for years. Their sexual partners include homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual men and women. These male sex workers self-identify with all three major categories (heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual), and their sexual identity is reified in their work roles, friendship choices, and sexual behaviours with paying and non-paying partners (Khan et al. 2005:160). He acts a heterosexual with his wife, a homosexual with his male client and is also available to fellow sex workers. Their multiple sexual identities shift from one to another swiftly. Sexual fluidity is particularly evident in the case of male sex workers in the Indian context. The key question here is how sexuality operates in their interactions. Is there something called 'a true representation' of sexual identity in the case of male sex workers?

We learn very early in our lives that 'natural' sex is always with a member of the opposite sex. Thus, through social and cultural forces we learn that sex with members of

same-sex is not natural, or rather is described as 'abnormal' or 'unnatural'. In the light of this information, most of the sexual encounters of a male sex worker would be considered unnatural as the majority of his sexual encounters are 'same-sex' encounters. The interesting fact in the case of male sex workers is that the same person will play multiple sexualities i.e. masculine, feminine and bisexual. In a study by Khan, Hudson-Rodd, Saggars and Bhuiya (2005) of the total sample, 48 per cent were married sex workers, and of the remaining 52 per cent, 90 per cent were planning to get married in future. Thus marriage is essential and along with this the heterosexuality. But the same man, when he caters to his clients, he assumes a passive-receptive role (enact the role of an enchantress). This duality in male sex workers questions the existing binary framework of sexuality. These roles enacted by the same person rather mock the divide created socially and historically over time. The notion of a strong difference between 'the sexes', an opposition of interests which takes the shape of rivalry ('the battle of the sexes') sometimes and which has little hope of coming together loses its characteristics in the case of male sex workers. Men are men and women are women and rarely the two shall meet, but they are meeting here and this meeting is striking and clear.

Theoretical Perspectives on Sexuality

In the contemporary West, sexual desires, behaviours and identities are largely organised around the two polar opposites of heterosexual and homosexual. But this polarity does not impart equality, and heterosexuality is considered 'normal' and 'natural' and homosexuality as 'abnormal' and 'deviant'. In the initial phase, scientific discourse on sexuality viewed sexuality as biological and organic. Lately, sexuality has been conceptualised as a social construct that is the outcome of ascribed social and physical interaction. Both approaches are rooted in the principle that sexuality has a biological and social core and it is a permanent part of one's biology, psyche or social identity. Later, as a result of the influence of postmodernism and poststructuralist ideas, sexuality came to be regarded as a 'performative' component of identity, devoid of any biological or social spirit, but rather continuously performed within the structure of power relations and language. (Abbott et al. 1990: 199). The aim here is to bring in various perspectives on sexuality to assess their effectiveness in explaining the fluidity of sexual identity among male sex workers in the Indian context.

Essentialists view sexuality as a biological or psychological essence. Essentialist theory of sexuality is grounded in the assumption that sexuality is a basic human drive determined by biological forces and exists within human bodies and functions all through one's life. Leonore Tiefer observed that most of the studies by sexologists constantly fail to understand what might fall within their field of analysis: "Is sexuality an individual dimension or a dimension of a relationship? Which behaviours, thoughts, or feelings qualify as sexual – an unreturned glance? Any hug? Daydreams about celebrities? Fearful memories of abuse?" (Tiefer 1995:20). Sexologists have envisaged sexuality in an inadequate and constricted way where sex is natural and basic. But they overlooked various other articulations of sexuality by putting it under the category of 'unnatural' and 'perverse'. The sexual encounters of male sex workers, which are 'same-sex' encounters, are termed as unnatural and deviant. Thus one pertinent question which always comes to our minds is—what constitutes sexualities. Weeks argues,

one of the problems with the new sexual history is that it is in danger of becoming a history without a proper subject. A history of sexuality is history of "category of thoughts" and a history of "changing erotic practices, subjective meanings, social definitions, and pattern of regulations whose only unity lies in their common descriptor (Weeks 2000:130).

The problem is heightened by the fact that different cultures have assigned sexual meanings to phenomena that are freighted with sexual overtones in the present had different meanings in the past. The history of sexuality broadly take in identities, orientations, sex acts, work practices, images, bodies, thoughts, institutions, and systems of power, but focused on connection with erotic desire (Phillips and Reay 2002). In *Queering India*, Ruth Vanita begins the introduction with a critical moment in Deepa Mehta's film *Fire* where Sita remarks to her lover Radha, "There is no word in our language to describe what we are or how we feel for each other" (Vanita 2002:1). This was the case prior to 19th-century European inventions of labelled categories. Thus sexual behaviour existed but no categories and labels existed to define and identify. It follows that in those parts of the world where such categories are not used frequently, people do not view long-term same-sex relations as a marker of identity. Vanita (2002) and with Kidwai in *Same-Sex Love in India* (2000) bring out the history of sexuality in India and have shown that there were many expressions for the term homosexual in a variety of Indian languages. The term 'Chapti' (clinging and sticking together) was found in me-

dieval Urdu poetry for lesbian sexual relations. In *Queering India*, Vanita argues the troubling question of naming and traces the history of naming in same-sex relations which proved that same-sex relations were there even before the first World started naming it. Thus like sexualities themselves, the history of sexualities changes with its social and intellectual context. Early historians of sexualities produced works ringing with Freudian theories of essential “drives” and “taboos”.

Freud (1905/2017) discovered the origin of human psychology through sex drive and considered sexuality as the core of many emotions and behaviours among individuals. He advanced a detailed theory of sexual development (Psycho-sexual stages of development) and also discussed abnormal forms of sexuality. This abnormality was any deviation from the heterosexual, genital-centred sexual relation of monogamous love. While examining ‘the Sexual Aberrations’, Freud concluded that it is almost impossible to make clear distinctions between ‘acquired’ and ‘congenital’ forms of inversions. Sexologists viewed sex drive as procreative and heterosexual by nature. But for Freud, sex drive operated on the pleasure principle. Humans derived this sexual pleasure not only from intercourse but various other emotions which also played a role in the articulation of their sexuality. There are erogenous zones in human bodies and we derive pleasure from their stimulation. Many of these erogenous zones are otherwise prohibited as perverse (mouth, anus). Thus Freud advanced non-genital pleasure which is not abnormal and is beyond heterosexual reproduction. These sexual expressions only become abnormal when an individual is fixated on that particular expression or act.

Freud’s understanding of sexuality is deeper than sexologists. Freud’s sexual drive was flexible and it is here that social forces could play their roles in its articulation and expressions. Sexologists and Psychologists started the traditions in thinking about sex and sexuality but the singular emphasis on the biological base of sexuality could not understand various aspects of sexuality. They completely ignored social forces such as family, religion, state and economy which are important factors responsible for human desire, sexual fantasy and sexual identity. In the twentieth century, social forces gained significance and new social ways of articulating sexuality emerged. At this juncture, I will now examine the social theoretical perspective which influenced the sociology of sexuality.

Feminist Perspective to Sexuality

The feminist perspective puts forward a powerful and influential social analysis of sexuality. Feminists believed that one enters this world with pre-defined gender roles and that is irrespective of one's economic system. Gender identity turns out to be the most important manual and guiding force for shaping social as well as personal aspects of one's identity. According to the feminist viewpoint, gender roles shape and guide our behaviour. We are not born with these gender roles but we learn to play the roles of man and woman through our socialisation process. This was summed up by Simone de Beauvoir, "One is not born a woman but becomes one" (Beauvoir 1973:301). Our sexual desire, emotions, attraction and inclinations are imprinted by gender. Feminists argue that we acquire our sexual identity and temperament through the development of gender identity (Oakley 1972). Thus masculine and feminine gender roles guide our sexual behaviour.

Adrienne Rich (1980) in her path-breaking essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* argues that gender dynamics are responsible for sexual differences between men and women. She underlines how social forces work to ensure the social conception of heterosexual men and women. These social forces coerced its subjectivities to adopt gender-specific sexual roles. Rich adds that keeping in place this heteronormativity is a complex social process. Coercion and inducements work in tandem to shape individuals into heterosexual men and women. Thus heterosexuality is romanticised to such an extent that many of us grow believing that this is the only reality. At the same time any non-heterosexual behaviour is deeply ostracised, criminalised and seen as a perversion and unnatural along with discrimination and violence which is meted out to non-heterosexual subjectivities. Rich further observes:

Enforced submission and the use of cruelty, if played out in the heterosexual pairing, is "normal," while sensuality between women, including erotic mutuality and respect, is "queer," "sick," and either pornographic in itself or not very exciting compared with the sexuality of whips and bondage (Rich 1980: 216).

Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker shared his parents' reaction towards his appearance, personality, clothes, body language and gestures. When father used to be drunk he would call him 'chhakka' which is slang for feminine looking men and some-

times used for Hijra in India. Respondent was undergoing two kinds of pressure there. His appearance and behaviour were not approved by his father and he was ridiculed for his looks and behaviour. Moreover, he also observed that his mother faced the wrath of his father for giving birth to an unmanly son.¹¹⁶

Catherine MacKinnon (1989) contends on the role of male authority and dominance in determining women's sexuality. MacKinnon perceives sexuality as an outcome of the exercise of power by men, and sex is used as an instrument to control women. Indeed, it is the very foundation of male supremacy. In our society, according to MacKinnon, men play the chief role in defining and labelling certain desires and emotions as sexual that is monogamous and procreative heterosexual relation, and thus control and define women's sexuality. Hence, women have a subordinate role when it comes to their sexual desire and feelings. Some feminists, like Gayle Rubin, have opposed this analysis that sexuality is the direct manifestation of gender politics. She claims that this viewpoint ignores significant differences between women's and men's sexuality. Rubin considers that sexualities while linked to gender, yet it has their dynamics. In *Thinking Sex*, Rubin argues that sex is essentially about erotic desires, fantasies, behaviours, identities and politics — none of which are reducible to gender dynamics. Gayle Rubin (2007) puts forward an erotic pyramid that is based on attitude towards different kinds of sex and sexualities in western society and this classification seems to be quite applicable to our pan Indian societies as well. At the summit of the pyramid is monogamous, married, procreative and heterosexual relations; below this is unmarried, monogamous heterosexual couples which are followed by all other kinds of heterosexuals; auto-erotic sexuality is a clear category in the middle of the pyramid. Steady, long-term gay male couples are on the boundaries of propriety but wanton gay males who switch relations are at the base of this pyramid. The most unwanted and hated detested subjects are transsexuals, transvestites, sex workers and porn stars. Individuals who score high in this pyramidal distribution were regarded as respected citizens who can access institutional support and material benefits. On the other hand, those individuals who fell on the other side of the scale were labelled mentally ill, of criminal tendencies, and had limited scope for

¹¹⁶ Interview taken on 1 July 2016 at GAURAV

social mobility with poor institutional and economic support. Rubin observes the treatment meted out to this bottom half of 'unlucky' individuals:

In its most serious manifestations, the sexual system is a Kafkaesque nightmare in which unlucky victims become herds of human cattle whose identification, surveillance, apprehension, treatment, incarceration and punishment produce jobs and self satisfaction for thousands of vice police, prison officials, psychiatrists and social workers (Rubin 2007:169).

Rubin viewed sex as a weapon of coercion and it cannot be explained or understood in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and class. Further, none of us can really fight or overcome this oppression though a white male sexual pervert maybe a little less affected than a poor black female sexual pervert. She maintains that sexual hierarchies are constructed across societies where the distinction is made between good and legitimate sexuality and bad and illegitimate ones. Thus certain desires and attractions are labelled as straight, healthy, moral and natural whereas certain other kinds are seen as awful, immoral and unhealthy. The social systems tend to promote and support the "normal and good" form of sexuality and seek to control and bully the "abnormal and bad" form of sexuality through legal means or violence. In Indian society, a similar pattern of "good sex" and "bad sex" exists where procreative marital heterosexuality is considered the ideal form of sexual relation. Simultaneously, this construction is oppressive for certain groups like sex workers and homosexuals. And when a homosexual is into sex work, coercive action and victimisation are frequent. Rishi, a versatile male sex worker revealed that there were doctors (mostly quacks) who guarantee treatment for homosexuality. One of his friends was taken to one such practitioner to treat his homosexuality.¹¹⁷

Ever since the twentieth century, sociologists became interested in factors that shaped sex and sexuality. Their interest lay in factors like religion, race, class, gender and many more which are held responsible for articulation and expression of sexuality. For instance, sociologist Ira Reiss (1967) who was interested in social factors responsible for sexual behaviour and attitude found that there was a cultural and behavioural shift among American youth. Earlier sexual morality always linked sex with marriage but a change was seen and sex was permitted in the context of affection. Reiss attributed this

¹¹⁷ Interview took place on 24 June 2016 at GAURAV

cultural change to increased economic and social empowerment of women. This increased economic empowerment led to the decline in double standards which endorsed extramarital sex for men but labelled women as “bad girls” when they displayed similar behaviour.

Ken Plummer (1975) extended the labelling theory of sex. In *Sexual Stigma*, Plummer argued that human beings are not born homosexuals rather learn to be homosexuals. According to Plummer, an individual may experience same-sex desire or attraction but to identify those feelings and desires as sexual identity (homosexual) is learnt. People with same-sex sexualities learn this in the course of interaction with both heterosexual and homosexual worlds. For instance, Aapaa, a gay-identified male sex worker whom I met explained that he was not familiar with the existing nomenclatures. At the age of 17 years, he met a boy at Andheri station, but he was shy to talk about his feelings and orientation. Eventually when they became close friends then Aapaa disclosed his sexual identity to him. His friend told him:

there are many like us (gay), you are not the only one. You are not my first partner, I have had relationships with different men.¹¹⁸

Social Constructionist Approach to Sexuality

Sociological approaches to sexuality focused on sociological forces impacting sexuality during the 1960s. This was also an era when the focus shifted from biological and psychological aspects of sexuality towards the social understanding of sexuality. William Simon and John Gagnon are founders of this social constructionist framework. Both felt the need to refer to more sociological explanations to elucidate the results of their empirical research and thus they recommended a “script” theory of sexuality. Instead of acknowledging humans as born sexual, they argued that human sexuality is learned socially. Through the process of socialisation, a child learns about feelings and desire which are sexual. Agents of socialisation also teach him about appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Sexual scripts focus on the appropriateness of sexual behaviour and inform people about who to have sex with, in terms of their age, sex, class and race. Sexual scripts are detailed accounts of how, where, when and what of sexual

¹¹⁸Phir usne bola ki arre pagal is duniya mei bahaut hai hum jaise, tu akela nahi hai. Aur tu bhi mera pahla partner nahi hai maine bhi bahut sare logo ke saath kiya hai. (Date of Interview: 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

relations. Gagnon and Simon were saying that sexuality is not a natural instinct we are born with but an outcome of social labelling. In *Sexual Conduct* (1973), Gagnon and Simon proposed for the first time that sexuality is more about shared social meanings and less about instincts and desire. One's sexual identity is an outcome of these shared social meanings.

If we employ the concept of the *sexual script* to understand male sex workers, we can clearly demarcate their distinct sexualities and power relations associated with each other. *Personal scripts* are operational when they come to know of their sexual orientations, desire, fantasy, likes and pleasures. In order to fulfil their needs and desire, they establish same-sex relationships. When in desperate need of money many prefer to sell sex rather engaging in some other occupation. There are various factors playing their role here like unavailability of suitable jobs, stigma and discrimination by the employer and thus they prefer to sell sex. One informant Devo, a bisexual male sex worker, feels that "we like to have sex and in sex work, we get enjoyment as well as money". So it is the personal script that might play role in their entry into sex work. Interactive scripts are operational when they interact with their clients, spouse and other male sex workers while carrying out sexual intercourse. So, the kind of positions and roles (active or passive, receptive or insertive) they undertake depends on the interpersonal script. This interpersonal script is the result of social learning about the kind of sex which is acceptable and expected. Thus, a male sex worker may play a passive and receptive role with one client and may take an active role with another client. The *Historical-cultural script* is crucial when they are interacting with their family and the larger society. Thus compulsory heterosexuality, procreative monogamous relations are all results of cultural scripts. Knowing the absolute importance of compulsory heterosexuality in the Indian context, marriage becomes unavoidable. Hence many of them are married and few have children. It is the cultural script that creates a sense of low self-esteem and stigma among homosexuals and male sex workers. This low self-esteem is an outcome of social training about 'good sex' and 'bad sex'.

Gagnon and Simon brought out the social aspect of sexuality and have claimed that sexual conduct can reflect upon various motives in the society like political, economic or cultural. Thus, people may engage in sex for social mobility, monetary gain, or spiri-

tual transcendence. Sex may be utilised to build connections or networks or to express or articulate one's gender identity. Gagnon and Simon further distinguished behaviour from identity. Behaviour was far less exciting than the meanings and symbols that are associated with it and through these symbols and meanings, people understood and accounted for their conduct. Sexual conduct is normatively organised and is learned through lifelong socialisation. John Gagnon observes: "in any given society people become sexual in the same way they become everything else. Without much reflection, they pick up directions from their social environment. They acquire and assemble meanings, skills and values from the people around them" (Gagnon 1977:2). Thus sexual behaviour is not very different from other human behaviour. Like any other social behaviour, we learn it from other people, institutions and ideas and build this into a meaningful narrative. But this narrative building is not so simple; there are rules and hierarchies which control movement and standards of evaluation. Gagnon and Simon formulated the term "sexual scripts" - the social and cultural outline with the help of which one creates and expresses an intensely personal and intimate experience (Green 2008)

Adopting the language of dramaturgy from Goffman (1967), Gagnon and Simon (1973) contended that sexual actors like film stars "enact" social scripts, representing a learned potential. In this framework, even erogenous zones were said to be the result of a learned scripting process that varied across cultures (Gagnon and Simin 1973:62). Sexual diversity based on cultural scenarios again created similar problems that it is trying to overcome. It is the problem of the over-socialised person. Essentially the actors here are no less than the puppets where actors rely on the puppet master for every single move. To explain "why," "what," and "how" of sexual scripting based on interpersonal and intra-psychic scripting, scripting theorists gaze outside the scripting framework to find the vital factors that shape and define sexual conduct and desire, together with social structural factors. Thus, to explain why individuals choose certain scripts over others and how they enact a script differentially from others, Laumann and Gagnon (1995) integrated social structure vis-a-vis "master status" going beyond the tripartite scripting model (Laumann and Gagnon 1995:191-192). They placed the tripartite scripting model within a larger structural framework because, by itself, scripting theory cannot make out "who people are and how these features shape what an individual believes is possible to

say and do (and often think)...” (ibid:191). For Script theorists, master statuses are the basis for the manners in which social relation is planned. Master statuses also constitute a basic element of the self-identity of the persons who possess them. The noteworthy point here is that, in each situation, an individual's specific master status features are used to conceive expectations about his or her attitudes and behaviour (Laumann and Gagnon 1995:192-193). Thus, it is one's master status like gender, race, class, and educational background - that is significant in shaping the “who,” “why,” and “what” of sexual practice. These statuses encompass aspects of identity, offer schemes of understanding, and manipulate the structure of interaction in a manner that primarily organises all resultant scripting processes.

Laumann and Gagnon (1995) observe that “Sexual scripts are interpreted and enacted differently by actors depending upon their unique life histories, experiences and backgrounds”. This helped Whittier and Melendez (2004) to carry out their analysis of Erik, a 44 years old Latino male, who eroticised rough sex with white men where he imagined himself as the “conqueror” (Whittier and Melendez 2004:139). By taking up an aggressive, domineering attitude in these encounters, Erik experienced a kind of blissful racial triumph, healing him from a childhood history of racial exclusion in “the White world” (ibid:140). This particular application of scripting theory is path-breaking in the sociology of sexuality insofar as it seeks to highlight the relationship of the social world to individual sexual fantasy. Neel, a kothi-identified male sex worker from Rajasthan, was the youngest among two sisters and one brother. When he was 8 years old his sisters were married and brother migrated to Mumbai for work, and his father used to work in the farms:

My sisters were elder and they were married when I was 8 years old. So I was doing all household chores. I had learnt all household work at a young age because I grew up with my sisters. We don't enter anyone's house in the village as ladies are working in the house. So I only stayed at home with my mother and sisters and I started feeling like one of them. My hands were soft and velvety like my sisters. Everyone used to ridicule me and asked me whether I am a boy or girl.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹Meri bahne badi thi aur jab mai 8 Saal ka tha to unki shaadi ho gayi. Mai ghar ke saare kaam kudh hi karta tha. Maine bahut choti umar mei hi ye saare kaam sikh liye the. Mai bahno ke saath hi bada hua tha. Gaon mei hum Kisi ke ghar mei nahi ghuste hai Kyo ki aurate kaam Kar rahi hoti hai aur parda Hota hai. Phir mai ghar par hi rahta tha maa aur bahno ke saath. Mai bhi unke jaisa hi ek hone laga. mere haath bhi unke jaise hone lage. Sab mera mazaak udate the, bolte the ye ladka hai ye ladki, tune ladki Kyo paida kiya hai. Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV

And at the same time Neel would fancy older men and would love to watch:

When my father or my cousins will come out of the bathroom I used to experience a different feeling which I was not able to explain. I longed to see them again and again and used to love it. When my father would come out in a towel after bathing I would wait anxiously to see him. I would long to see him like that. But then I had no understanding about sex.¹²⁰

“Unique life histories, experiences and backgrounds” according to Laumann and Gagnon (1995) play an important role in one’s playing a particular sexual role. Thus Erik would play an aggressive and dominating role in the sexual encounters. Neel likes to play a passive-receptive role. Life histories and biography play a crucial role in making one sexualities. In their intriguing analysis of sexual inter-subjectivity, Whittier and Melendez (2004) analyse reports of sexual interaction from the vantage point of an individual's perception of her partner's perception of her – that is, “what individuals thought others thought of them” (Whittier and Melendez 2004:133). Explicit in this examination of inter-subjectivity are factors associated with the social structural location of the sexual actor and her or his partner. Neel would identify with his sisters more when he talked about “velvety hands like his sisters”. Father, on the other hand, was a power figure for him and he would long to see him even when he did not know anything about sexuality.

To sum up the social constructionist approach towards sexuality, one will add that all efforts to socialise sexuality is to maintain heterosexuality and curb all forces working against it. Sociologist Gail Hawkes (1996) has correctly described this in the following lines: “a persistent presence in the construction of healthy, moral and natural sexuality was the privilege of heterosexuality” (Hawkes 1996: 3). As a result of this ‘modernisation’ process, those expressions of desire which were considered to have damaging outcomes for the upholding of the patriarchal bourgeois supremacy which included sexual freedom to women, same-sex desire, auto-eroticism etc were marginalised and even made criminal

¹²⁰Jab papa bathroom se nikal ke aate the ya phir bade papa ke ladke aate the to mujhe pata nahi kya feeling aati thi unhe aise dekh kar. Mujhe une baar baar dekhne ka man hota tha. mujhe achha lagta tha. Mere papa naha kar jab towel mei aate the to wait karta tha ki kitni jaldi wo aayege aur mai dekhuga. Wo Dekhne ke liye mai bahut tarasta tha. Tab mujhe sex ke baare mei kuch pata hi nahi tha. Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV

With the rise of the gay movement, many theories of the origin of homosexuality were forwarded from time to time. One such perspective argued that some people are just born homosexuals. So if homosexuality has always existed, it is as natural as any other sexual orientation and therefore should not be treated differently and punished. However, this view has been challenged by the new gay/lesbian studies. This new school of thought assume that homosexual behaviour is a natural element of the human condition, but the arrival of homosexual identity is a rare and exceptional historical event. When and why did a homosexual identity surface, and how has the meaning of homosexuality changed historically? Jonathan Katz (1983) argued that, between colonial times and the 1970s, homosexuality in the US took many turns and changed from a behavioural indication (sodomy) to a deviant, abnormal personality (the homosexual), and later to an affirmative social identity (gay/lesbian). Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (1975) illustrated that Victorian women, whose lives were organised around the household and familial tasks, often had close ties with each other that at times the lines between friendship and romance was breached. These intimate ties sometimes matured into romantic relationships that were celebrated as complementary to marriage and were often lifetime romantic bonds. Building on this increasing body of historical scholarship on sexuality, John D'Emilio (1988) propounded the first detailed investigation of the growth of homosexual identity and community in the United States.

The new gay/lesbian studies offer an extremely social view of homosexuality. It helped to give rise to "Queer Studies" in the late 1980s when the debate around the ontology of sexual orientation and gender has reached an impasse (Seidman 1996, 1993). It was against the background of growing increasingly institutionalised lesbian and gay studies that queer theory arose (Epstein 1996). A queer perspective proposes two key ideas. First, the idea that human sexuality is natural is a cultural notion and belief, and there is no biological truth in it. Second, this idea has clearly demarcated sexuality into groups where one is considered normal and healthy and the other as abnormal and sick. Queer studies transfer the focus from homosexuality to sexuality and widen our view of sexuality to see it as an instrument of social control.

Postmodern Sexualities

The journey from the social construction of sexuality to sexuality as a pure “performance” free from biological or social outcomes has been predominantly the outcome of post-structuralism, particularly the efforts of Michel Foucault (1979) which was further expanded by Judith Butler (1990). Later this has been supported by the empirical argument that we live in a postmodern era where our social identity is marked by a proliferation of lifestyle choices (Giddens 1992). The ‘performative’ view of sexuality works on the idea that sexuality is an important aspect of identity and its survival is contingent on the manner in which it is displayed and performed. Thus sexuality has no permanent and stable biological or social essence outside of its performance.

According to Foucault, society and social identity including sexuality is an outcome of discourse. He highlighted that those who are powerful, in this case, the heterosexuals, are the ones who defines the less powerful (read homosexuals) as deviant, abnormal, and unnatural. To demonstrate we can introduce the discourses on homosexuality where it has been defined as an illness (homosexuality has been removed from the list of psychological disorders by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 but it was re-labelled as a ‘disturbance’ in sexual orientation). Similarly, in homophobic discourse, gay men have often been presented as an effeminate, promiscuous, vectors of HIV and STI, child molesters. Likewise, lesbian have been labelled as man-hating and violent (Bem 1993; Ingraham 1994). Since these discourses are such a prominent part of one’s social reality, many gay men and women perceive themselves in light of these stereotypes and even internalise the negative labels (internalised homophobia) applied to them (Moss 2003:197-223).

Michel Foucault’s work was involved in capturing specific ways of thinking, talking and writing about various social realities which are responsible for the construction and organisation of one’s sense of self, observation and understanding of the social world, and other people. He argued that what we believe to be subjective expressions is the outcome of dominant discourses popular in any society at any given time. These dominant discourses shape the social meanings people attach to their own and others’ identities and behaviour. In Foucault’s term, discourses are not simply ways of knowing but also outline how the world should be classified and organised. Foucault (1979) intro-

duced the concept of 'bio-power' which, he argued, were method to control population and it was started in Western societies in the eighteenth century. With the exploitation of bio-power, human sexuality came under the influence of dominant social and political discourses of that time. As an outcome, the discourse that subsequently grew around homosexuality demonstrated it as a perversion. Although Foucault (1979) did not examine gender seriously and viewed the control of women's sexuality as an important aspect of social control, feminists have found some really useful ideas, chiefly the argument that sexuality is an outcome of social construction and reconstruction through discourses which are often complex and developed in contradictory ways.

Foucault denied the 'repressive hypothesis'—the argument that human sexuality has been constrained and controlled by various social forces like religion and family — has been interpreted by feminists as liberating, allowing sexuality to be restructured and negotiated on feminist terms. Foucault further challenged the idea that sex is biological and natural. He recommended that it was the very idea or the discourse of sexuality that shaped what we called sex. We are not born sexual but learn to be sexual beings; this occurs in societies that have created the idea of "sexuality".

My first sexual encounter was at the age of 10-12 years with an elder cousin which is a common trend among MSM. I had gone to my village for one month and there I had sex with my cousin, around 15-20 encounters. Then, I did not know if it was right or wrong and that we call it gay sex. We just did it... when I was in 7th standard gradually I started realising it. When I use to go to school where I would share my table with another boy and whenever his hands would brush mine I would like it. I was not interested in girls and I would not even look at them. My friends would get playful with me and will hug me and I would just love it.¹²¹

In the above narrative, Rishi, a versatile male sex worker, recalls his first sexual encounter at the age of 10-12 years. Interestingly he was not aware of 'normal' and 'abnormal' sex(uality). It was an exploration. But gradually by the age of 14, he started realising his orientation and desire. The dominant discourses did play their role in shap-

¹²¹Mera pahla sexual encounter 10-12 Saal ki umra Mei hua. Jaise ki generally MSM ka jo 1st encounter Hota hai wo family mei se hi kisi ke saath hota hai. Wo mera cousin tha mere se bada. Mai apne gaon gaya tha aur waha par 1 mahine raha. Us ek mahine mei humara 15-20 baar hua tha. Par tab mujhe ye nahi pata tha ki ye sahi hai ya galat aur ise gay sex kahte hai. Bas kar liya tha...phir jab mai 7th standard mei tha tabhi mujhe dheere dheere pata chala ki mai kya hu, actually mai jab school jata tha aur mere bajoo mei ladka baitatha tha aur jab unka haath chooo jata tha to muje bahut achha lagta tha , ladkiyo mei mujhe koi interest hi nahi tha, mai unhe dekhta bhi nahi tha. mere jo friends the wo mere se masti karte the aur kabhi gale mei haath dalte the to mujhe bahut achha lagta tha. (Date of Interview: 24/06/16 at GAURAV)

ing his thought about himself. When did this idea of sexuality originate, and why? Foucault (1977/1991) considers that the modern state and social institutions had good reasons for controlling people's sexuality. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth century in many European nations, there was massive migration to cities with a growing need for mass literacy and schooling and intense economic competition between nations because national power was held to be dependent on economic prosperity. These developments required a strong political interest in acquiring comprehensive and useful information about human bodies- how they reproduce, continue healthy, respond to various external stimulations, and can be made more productive, efficient and supportive. For example, as cities became economic and social centres, the government sought information about migration patterns, fertility, mortality, nutrition and health. This rising need to understand and manipulate bodies helped to create the idea of sexuality. Controlling sex is to exercise great control over the individual and whole population. So sexuality is at the centre of the modern system of sexual control.

the historical moments of the disciplines were the moments when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjections, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful (Foucault 1991: 137-138).

Do we believe that Foucault gave up the notion of sexual freedom? He wrote during a period of sexual rebellion. Foucault agreed that increasing individual choice is a good thing. He was a supporter of fight for gay rights. But gay rights are not freedom. It does not liberate the individual from stigma and social discrimination. The gay rights movement has reinforced a system that compels individuals to come out with their sexual identity (as straight or gay) and reinforces the deviant status of bisexuality and other non-conventional sexualities. In addition, a gay movement has its prototype of a gay person who sets precedent for members of similar sexual orientation to act and look. Thus, the gay movement exercises control over its members, mounts pressure on them to identify exclusively as gay and to act in a way that is recognised as gay. Thus no matter what you are, gay or straight, society has a system of social control. I am reminded of an activist whom I met during fieldwork, who was gay and was associated with an organisation working on gay rights in Mumbai. He would participate in weekly meetings and would share responsibility with the organisation members. After few years of his association with this organisation, he fell in love with a woman and realised that he

is bisexual and not gay. This realisation turned out to be a bitter experience for him. All his group members started avoiding him. He was ridiculed and discriminated against and was no longer allowed to attend the weekly meetings as these meetings were exclusively meant for gay men. It becomes quite apparent from this foregoing instance that social control is an inescapable social reality irrespective of the fact that one is straight, a homosexual or a bisexual.. Hoshang Merchant has captured the impact of the Western gay lifestyle on sexuality in the Indian context. He writes:

In India, the MTV culture has done the country's homoerotic culture a disservice...it has projected the West's gay sub-culture in its worst light by highlighting its lunatic fringe as if it were the mainstream. Your baker, butcher, banker, bus conductor, neighbour or brother could all be very ordinary and also very gay... while encouraging homosexuals to come out of the closet and increasing tolerance and acceptance it has also caused an increase in the display of physical or verbal abuse against homosexuals and put closet homosexuals on the defensive. It has also put many young men out of the gay circuit, forcing them prematurely into the arms of women (Merchant1999: xiii-xiv).

So if sexuality is a system of social control, then, paradoxically sexual liberation might involve liberating ourselves from this very idea of sexuality. This would mean dealing with our sexual desire and behaviour not as a manifestation of our sexuality but as simply emotions and behaviour that provide pleasure, create social ties, or are sources of cultural creativity. Foucault (1997) advocates a politics against sexuality- against a society that sexualised selves, identities and acts. Why would this be a good thing? By not designating a moral meaning (either normal or abnormal) to adult, consensual sexual desire and behaviours, individual would be subject to less social control. For example, to reverse the stigma of homosexuality, gay movements championed a normal gay identity. But instead, we could approach homosexuality as a desire or source of pleasure or a cultural expression. Here cultural practice in the Indian subcontinent can be discussed in this context. Shivananda Khan talks about this concept of '*masti*' among young men which is somewhat culturally acceptable. Similarly the *launda* dance in north India especially in UP and Bihar where young boys dressed as females are the source of sexual desire and erotic fantasies (Lahiri and Kar 2007). Since this practice is sanctioned, it allows people to enjoy this as a source of pleasure and a cultural expression. So instead of celebrating the sexualisation of the human body and its feelings and sensations, perhaps it is more liberating to desexualise pleasure and learn to enjoy a wide range of sensual pleasures and remain free of controls that rely on notions of normality.

Foucault emphasised the role of discourses or networks of ideas in producing and regulating human sexuality. The Philosopher Judith Butler has drawn on Foucault's studies to offer a new point of view on gender and sexuality. Butler thinks that societies that believe in a natural gender order are also organised around the norms of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is the source of our culture of romance, marriage, and family and is enforced by our social agencies like family, laws, State, religious bodies and schools etc. Observing men and women as naturally harmonising and complementary makes heterosexuality look like the natural, normal, and right way of living. The system of compulsory heterosexuality can help to understand why societies are divided into two gender types, but it fails to explain how gender and sexual identities are maintained daily. Butler's ideas about gender identity have been very dominant in the Sociology of sexual identity. Growing up in a society that classifies our feeling, actions, and social roles as either appropriate or inappropriate for men and women, we learn how to behave in a gender-correct way. By means of a system of rewards and punishment, we learn to present ourselves as either men or women. We come to know, automatically, what body language, style of dressing and grooming, and ways of walking and talking are considered "normal" for men and women. Thus a slight waving of the hand of a young man may put him 'in that category' which is abhorred and disapproved in our 'normal' society.

In addition, Butler maintains, as we go by the gender norms, others are likely to read our behaviour as a manifestation of a core gender identity. For example, most of us would possibly think that an individual who looks and acts like a man (aggressive, competitive or determined) is a man and these behavioural tendencies are at the core of his identity. Nevertheless, Butler recommends that there is no core gender identity that guides our behaviour. Instead of observing our gender performance as an expression of inner gender identity, Butler suggests that these behaviours are enacted taking into consideration the images of women or men that we take over from our families and our culture. The deception of core feminine and masculine gender identities obscures the social and political forces that mould humans into gendered selves; similarly, the doctrine of a natural gender order camouflages the role of gender in the maintenance of heterosexual dominance (Butler 1988).

Butler's argument about the 'performativity' of gender is her best contribution to gender theory. Thus sexualities do not represent any innate behaviour or stable social categories; rather sexualities are outcomes of performance. Butler (1990) demonstrates this with reference to drag queen who is considered by the audience to have a 'true' gender and sexual identity underneath his 'act'. But she argues that his 'true' identity is another kind of performance like one represented in drag. Hence drawing on Goffman's studies, Butler argued that we are all 'on stage' performing and there is no true self underneath various roles that one performs in various contexts. This viewpoint underlines that heterosexuality is not natural or normal as emphasised by essentialists. Thus heterosexuality is simply one performance among many probable alternatives.

When I am with my wife I never, not even accidentally, refer to myself in the feminine person and when I am with a customer I never refer to myself in the masculine person. ¹²²

Thus Karthik, a 38 years old kothi-identified male sex worker who is married with a child of 8 years, describes this role play like the drag queen of Butler. As Butler (1990: 31) famously put it, "gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but as copy is to copy". Thus it is not that gay is a performance and heterosexuality is natural and innate. Both are performances in their respective social contexts. This argument creates two main challenges to heterosexual hegemony. First, it exposed the means through which heterosexuality is socially constructed as normal and natural, and second, it shatters certified connections between sex, gender and sexuality. (Butler 1993) emphasises that heterosexuality is only *naturalised* as an 'original'.

Drag is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e., an act of expropriation or appropriation that assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that "masculine" belongs to "male" and "feminine" belongs to "female". There is no "proper" gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex is cultural property... Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation (Butler 1993:312-313).

Indeed, according to Judith Butler (1993), drag is never 'unproblematically subversive'. She continues:

¹²² Jab mai ghar par hota hu to kabhi bhi aaj tak apne ko aurat ban ke nahi bola hu aur jab mai kaam par hota hu to aaj tak kabhi apne ko aadmi ban ke nahi bola hu. Date of Interview 10/06/17 at GAURAV

It (drag) serves a subversive function to the extent that it reflects the mundane impersonations by which heterosexually ideal genders are performed and naturalized and undermines their power by virtue of effecting that exposure. But there is no guarantee that exposing the naturalized status of heterosexuality will lead to its subversion. Heterosexuality can augment its hegemony through its denaturalization, as when we see denaturalizing parodies that reidealize heterosexual norms without calling them into question (Butler 1993:231).

Butler's idea convinces us to examine sexual identity as a process. We project our sexual identity by our behaviour. Accordingly, researchers examine the micro-dynamics of identity formation. For example, we have observed that one's behaviour and certain objects (clothes, cars, home, furniture, eyeglasses) come to be signs of sexual identity, and individuals attain the skill to read each other's behaviour in terms of categories. The performative approach to sexuality does not argue that sexual identities are fake or artificial because they are copied or performed. Instead, these performances are real as one experiences them in terms of their personal and social consequences. Though these performances are real, there is no element of choice available to those who are carrying it out. Our heteronormative society puts enormous social pressure on each of us to "perform" the appropriate gender and sexual roles. Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker, recalled how at home he was ridiculed and controlled by parents:

Why do you walk like this, put your hand in your pocket when you walk, don't throw your hands around. Speak in a strong manly voice. They are always nagging me at home.¹²³

Any deviation from this assigned gender or sexual norms carries serious consequences, ranging from denial of respect to being targets of harassment or violence. In Indian society sexuality and sexual identities are never discussed and every man is considered Rama and every woman Sita. Any transgression from these imageries is seen as an onslaught in traditional Hindu culture. The history of sexuality in the Indian context, the earliest text– the Kamasutra offers a picture of a utopian space where non–procreative, non–normative and non–heterosexual practices found representation.

Since the objective here is to understand the non-normative sexual identities in a context where the hegemonistic premise of heterosexuality is considered the norm, the post-modern world has come up with a diverse range of theories and viewpoints to under-

¹²³Tu aisa kyo chalta hai, zeb mei haath daal ke chal, aise aise haat mat pher, kadak aawaaz mei bol. Ghar mei bhi kabhi kuch bhi bol dete the. Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

stand non–normative sexuality from a non–essentialist perspective. Sexuality in today’s India is largely private and personal and becomes public and political at the same time. The recent queer pride march in Delhi on 25th November 2018 witnessed the most monumental celebration in the history of pride march after the repealing of parts of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). In 2008, when Delhi celebrated its first queer pride march, few hundred of queer-identified men and women walked with mask on their faces. In 2018, in contrast, more than 5000 men and women sang and danced on the roads of Delhi, celebrating their identities. I see the collapse of centres and margins in such events. LGBT/Q/K¹²⁴ who are on the periphery are slowly pushing towards the mainstream and expressing their identities in various ways.

It becomes evident from the examination of sexuality patterns of male sex workers in the Indian context that social forces play an important role. Family and kinship units along with society dictate the terms of likes and desire. Therefore, compulsory heterosexuality achievable through the institution of marriage is an undeniable reality for every single individual. Personal choice, orientation, pleasure is not always possible through socially acceptable modes. So how can people with homosexual orientation express and satisfy their desire? One easy way can be to learn to enact these socially acceptable roles without essence or involvement of self. For a man with same-sex sexual orientation, heterosexual relation is just a performance to placate society and to put an end to all questions. For male sex workers with multiple sexualities, it is not easy to express and enjoy their natural tendencies. To solve this problem they have developed a segmented lifestyle. Sexuality has become more fluid, fragmented and diffused largely due to the proliferation of their lifestyle choices.

Sexuality and Identity

Cultural studies believe that identity is constructed out of historical events and discourses and it is not imminent. These discourses are nothing but relationships of power. Queer Cultural Studies (QCS) is an effort to redefine identities and create a cultural/political space within the existing heteronormative paradigm. According to Nayar (2007) QCS is nothing but political and is concerned about social/cultural/political power. The

¹²⁴ lesbian–gay–bisexual–transgender/queer/kothi: while most of this formation is universally acceptable, Kothi, an Indian term for ‘men who have sex with men’ is culture specific

focus is to reverse the mass image and myth-making, a shift in power equation and overall sexual justice. QCS seeks to understand why homosexuality has been pathologized and heterosexuality is given a privileged position. Thus, the focus of QCS is on the institution and cultural technologies that have structured sexuality.

Jeffrey Weeks (1997) notes that each culture labels certain practices as either right or wrong, moral or immoral and healthy or perverted. Sexual discourse in the West relies mostly on Christian ideas about sexuality. Distinction between sexes is preordained, the sexual act is only for procreation or love and men and women in marriage do not own their bodies. Weeks described five factors that are necessary for the successful emergence of sexual subculture and movements: large numbers in the same situation, geographical concentration, identifiable targets of opposition, sudden events or change in social position and an intellectual leadership with readily understood goals (Weeks 1997:79). As an outcome of these factors mass gay and lesbian movements in the US and other countries of the 'First World' provided a model which later other countries followed. QCS helped a lot in forging solidarity among the world's gay population placing them all in the category of oppressed, silenced and marginalised. But the context in which gay lives are lived varies from culture to culture. For example, coming out of the closet is possible like never before but the danger of doing it has also increased manifold. Thinkers like Carol-Anne Tyler (1991) suggested that 'coming out' is essential for the creation of gay identity and displaying one's gayness is important. Similar behaviour by gay men in India receives the wrath from family and society. A 19-year-old male sex worker, Durg, when "came out" to his family he was beaten up brutally and even after two years his father did not speak to him. In fact he felt that he was lucky that his parents did not throw him out of the house.

Weeks (1997) argues that sexual tradition has offered two basic positions — sex as fundamentally dangerous and acceptable only in the context of marriage and procreation. The other position says that sex is healthy but repressed and denied. At this juncture, Weeks offered a third approach and put forward that sex is meaningful only in terms of social relations and contexts. Thus, one can only make appropriate choices around sexuality by understanding its social and political context. So we need to move away from the morality of the acts towards a new 'relational perspective'. So we need to look at the

power relation at play that limits the possibilities of choice, autonomy and pleasure. (Weeks 1997:81–2)

Exploring Diversity of Sexualities Among Male Sex Workers

After understanding the sociology of sexuality, I now explore and understand the diversity of sexual behaviours and identities among male sex workers. This diversity of sexual identities is one of the most astounding characters of male sex workers in India which draws one's attention. In general terms, sexual identity is seen as the conception about one's self, generally in terms of "gay", "lesbian", "bisexuals", "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals". This conception about oneself varies from person to person to such an extent that people with same sex-sexualities may call themselves gay, homosexuals, bisexuals, *Kothis* or nothing at all. Majority of men who have sex with men (MSM) in the South Asian context reject all identity labels and thus keep a broad range of sexual possibilities.

Identity is commonly a process of naming and placing ourselves in socially constructed categories where language plays a crucial role. Identity is also viewed as the narrative or story of the person that he or she as the biographer effectively ties across the life course (McAdams 1988). It is also the pledge and strengthening of values and life options and everlasting commitments a person makes over time (Franklin 1999). So with these everlasting commitments, one is expected to develop a stable and permanent identity. These are permanent parts of one's personality that are used to identify the person. But how does one get these value options to articulate his/her desire and attraction? According to Socor (1997), a person's identity is instinctively and unconsciously affected by the mental activities of significant others. These significant others are parents and other family members, neighbours, school and peer groups. There is no single identity that a person develops with this process. People create several identities based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, occupation, religion, political ideology, personal relationships, and race. These identities are integrated or ordered in terms of importance. But is this always true? Traditional scholars have grouped distinct identities such as Jews, women, blacks, gays and lesbians and others into one single category of the 'other'. Cultural differentiation and experiences of the groups are entirely ignored in accounts of identity formation. The most classic example is the case of homosexuals. They are relegated to a

singular 'undifferentiated' category. Their race, class-caste and geo-cultural differences are completely ignored. Can we ever put an Indian *Kothi* and an American gay in the same category even though both are homosexuals? John Gagnon brings out this “othering” practice by scholars in the following lines:

It is a common, but false, belief that if we know that persons choose same-gender sex partners, we can successfully make inferences about the kinds of families they come from; the kinds of sex lives they lead; their tastes in clothing, art, music, interior decoration; the way they talk; the kinds of work they prefer; and their religious or leisure orientations. We do not believe we can make such inferences about persons who choose opposite-gender sex partners (Gagnon 1977:235)

Since this chapter deals with the subject matter of sexuality and sexual identity of male sex workers, who, by virtue of their work, engage in same-sex sexual activities, it is pertinent to explore these concerns pertaining to identities. If same-sex identity is so crucial that it supersedes all other aspects of one's personality and at the same time there is stigma and discrimination attached to this identity, how do male sex workers do this? To begin with the definition of sexual identity, sexual identity is a cognitive construct referring to structured sets of characteristics that an individual sees as representing the person in both real or imagined situations, defined as sexual or romantic (Troiden 1988). Like race or ethnicity or gender, sexual identity is a fundamental component of self-identity. Moreover, it is a salient feature of presented identity, that is, the image of oneself projected to others (Troiden 1988). The important components of the self and presented sexual identity are self-identified sexual identity; clothing styles, mannerisms, and other observable signs of self-identified sexual identity; sexual role preferences (insertee-insertor or active/passive); sexual acts (oral-anal); and friendships and associations (Calhoun 1992)

How do male sex workers present their sexual identity to others? Which aspects of sexual identity are projected to significant others? Erving Goffman notes that in our everyday lives we present ourselves to others based on our internalised knowledge and understandings of cultural values and social expectations. This helps to win approval and acceptance from others and this is how we deal with the impressions of ourselves that we present to others and act as artist in a role. But this is not one-way communication of ideas. Others are also engaged in this performance by going along with our presentations and by managing their impressions (Goffman 1959). The interactional strategies

that male sex workers in India engage in with their families and larger society demonstrate this process in action. The fluidity of sexual identities that male sex workers articulate and the extent to which they go to present themselves as either sexually conforming or as asexual in the front stage is worth probing. Below is an excerpt from Rao and Sarma (2009) which brings out the fluidity of sexuality:

Though married, I see myself as a homosexual, not an MSM or anything else... I am a female acting as a male in marriage, and a male acting as a female in my homosexual life. I agree this may cause an identity crisis... Maybe it amounts to playing a role? Our Hindu gods had multiple gender identities- they switched from one to another with ease. There's the obvious example of Ardhanareshwar (Rao and Sharma 2009:28).

Male sex workers thus display a sexual identity that is fluid and there is a multitude of sexualities in them.

Look, inside the park I am a gay. Once I leave the park and go onto the streets that changes. Outside the park, I am a good Hindu, a married man with a good family (Shivananda Khan 1999b:22)

Thus identities here shift, change and shape themselves according to context, place, social situation, need and desire. There was no sense of continuity, but one of fluidity. Before exploring the mystified world of male sex workers, I must confess that this notion of puzzlement and confusion is the outcome of our socialisation where we generally encounter binary sexual categories which never appeared to have digressed. Growing up in a society that classifies feelings, actions, and social roles as either appropriate or inappropriate for men and women, we learn how to behave in a gender-correct way. This fluidity of sexualities is an essential feature of male sex workers who project different identities in different social circumstances. Now at this juncture, it is important to examine little more about this fluidity of sexual identity.

Male Sex Workers and Sexual Identity Frameworks

In the Indian subcontinent, there is a high degree of fluidity in regional frameworks of sexuality and identity. Here, identities are mainly centred around family and community and to a lesser extent on involvement in particular sexual practices, most notably those of penetrator or penetrated (Khan 2001:107). Identity is not based significantly upon who the person is but a lot on what a person does, and in what context his or her social life is structured. So the identity among male sex workers is a combination of role-play-

ing, disguise, and disclosure. Male sex workers do not have a permanent and fixed sexual identity but it emerges in a specific social situation. These social settings are important for the articulation and expression of sexuality. As soon as the individual is removed from the particular social setting, the sexual identity becomes dormant. There are various frameworks to understand and explain sexual identity. There are 'indigenous' identities that are popular among street-based male sex workers. Alongside, there are global nomenclatures which are more popular among the middle and the upper middle class homosexual population but few male sex workers use them in certain settings and it is slowly picking up among male sex workers who do not believe in indigenous nomenclature. And latest, with the coming of international funding agencies, there is another framework that talks about sexual behaviour rather than identity and is commonly used in the NGO sector. When male sex workers get associated with NGO run support groups, they tend to adopt this nomenclature.

Kothi and Panthi Framework

Kothis describe a wide continuum of sexualities but are generally men who display effeminate characteristics. Many of these men are predominantly the receptive partner for anal and oral intercourse, which increases their risk of acquiring HIV infection compared to predominantly insertive MSM. However, given the diversity among *kothis*, some, called *khada kothis*, in northern India, for example, practice insertive anal intercourse. Many *kothis* are bisexual and are often married to women. The continuum of sexualities in India means significant overlap occurs between *hijra* and *kothi* populations, and many *hijras* self-identify as *kothis*. The distinction is that *hijras* almost exclusively dress as women and are more likely to have undergone sexual reassignment surgery than are *kothis*. *Kothis* are more likely to be in active bisexual partnerships or to practice bisexual concurrency than are *hijras*, who tend to leave their families when they join the *hijra* community (Pisal 2006).

Panthi is a term generally used by *kothis* and *hijras* to refer to MSM who practice exclusively insertive or penetrative sex and rarely display any female characteristics. *Panthi* has also been used to describe heterosexual men who do not have sex with *hijras* or *kothis*, so not all *panthis* are necessarily MSM. *Panthis* are nearly always married to women, though some *hijras* or *kothis* consider themselves married to a *panthi* even if

the *panthi* is married to a woman (Chakrapani 2005). One essential character of *Kothis* is that they are clean shaven. Among *Kothis*, there is a section of men who show extreme outward feminine behaviour; they are called *bila*. They use cosmetics such as blusher, kaajal, eyeliner, lipstick, eye shadows etc to add feminine charm to their looks. They also wear ornaments along with colourful and flashy clothes to enhance their beauty and femininity. In addition to the swirling of the waist, other bodily movements like movement of the legs, arms and other such gestures also personify their feminine appearance. Many of them use hormonal tablets like Ovril and Lindiol to promote breast growth. Cross-dressing is an important feature among *Kothis*. They use *Utti* language which is different from the dominant language. By using this language they want to create a distinct in-group which is different from other groups. By displaying typical feminine behaviour *Kothis* try to attract masculine partners. They prefer to display 'passive homosexual behaviour' and like to be in a receptive role. With a strong preference to 'receive', they would expect their partners to take the initiative and perform.

In the process of describing the sexual identity of *kothis*, the identity of *Panthis* emerged; *Panthis* always exist in relation to *Kothis*. In fact, *Panthis* is not an identity of an individual but rather a public sexual identity prescribed by *Kothis* to 'non-feminine' men who expressed desire for an effeminate males. In other words, a *Panthis* is 'masculine' male who has a sexual desire to penetrate another male. *Panthis* would take great offence if they are described as homosexuals. To them only effeminate males are homosexuals and since they are masculine hence they are not homosexuals. There are certain *Panthis* who patronise particular *Kothi* and sometimes the *Kothi* refers to him as her husband, but the *Panthis* seldom accepts such a relationship. Thus, the existence of class structured homosexuality can also be seen within this framework. Since the framework of *Kothi- Panthis* is based on the social and sexual roles of masculine and feminine and active and passive, these identities can be designated as transgendered sexual identities. Purkayastha (1999) believes that the sexual orientation of *panthis* range through the continuum of exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality. Most street-based male sex workers assume the role of a *Kothis* and their clients are *Panthis* to them.

At this point, one is pressed to think about this existing binary of homosexual and heterosexual. So who is a homosexual? The notion and institution of masculinity are so

deep-seated in the psyche that even when a ‘man’ (active-masculine) is having a sexual encounter with another male (passive-feminine) he is called a ‘man’. Dev a male sex worker from Rajasthan who identifies himself as a *panthi* shared his experience with clients when they question him about his sexuality and work identity:

After the sex is done they ask me why are you like this (gay and male sex worker). Then I reply that even you are also like this only. Your need is sex and my need is money.¹²⁵

Clients when having sexual encounters with MSWs, they still believe that there are different rules for them and sex worker. Interestingly both are in a same-sex relationship though the perception of sex(uality)is different. So there is one group which do not identify them with any identity tag. Khan (2001) in *Culture, Sexualities and Identities* observed that sexual penetration is not a definer of identity, but one of phallic power. So the "penetrator" always views his behaviour as a symbol of masculinity and the one who is penetrated is seen as ‘not man’. In the Indian subcontinent, a homosexual is generally seen as someone who is penetrated and therefore passive and hence ‘not man’. This is based on the hypothesis that all anal intercourses are for homosexuals and vaginal intercourse which is procreative defines heterosexuality (Khan 2001:107). Another trend is the emergence of a long list of nomenclatures among same-sex sexualities who are not closeted. Dhanush, a bisexual male sex worker who also works as an advocacy officer with Gaurav shared the politics of nomenclature in this field.

Last year I met someone who was a transgender. She had long hair, silicon, she was from Pakistan and she introduced herself as a bisexual transgender. I asked her what is this and then she replied that my sexuality is bisexual, my gender identity is a female, my gender is transgender. And I was totally confused. So people are expanding this. They are creating more groups and try to stay in these groups only.¹²⁶

The notion that sexuality could not simply be understood through the presumptive binary categories of “homosexual” and “heterosexual” resonated with queer theory, arguing that sexual identities, desires, and categories are fluid and dynamic and that sexuality is

¹²⁵Sex hone ke baad bol dete hai ki tum aise Kyo ho? Jis par mai Bol deta hu ki Aap bhi to aise hi ho. Aapki need sex mera need paisa. Date of Interview 15/12/17 at GAURAV

¹²⁶Last year I met a transgender she was like, bade Baal saree, silicon, she was from pakistan. Her name was Sara gill. She said I am bisexual transgender. Ye kya hai? She said my sexuality is bisexual, my gender identity is a female, my gender is transgender, . And I was like totally confused. So people are expanding this creating more groups and staying in those groups only. Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV

inevitably intertwined with power relations (Brekhus 2003; Puri 1999). Brekhus (2003), for instance, in his ethnography of suburban gay men, pushes both identity theory and gay and lesbian studies in queer directions. Identities — sexual or otherwise — he demonstrates with his data, are neither stable nor unified across time and space; they vary in “duration, durability, and dominance” (Brekhus 2003:28-29). Brekhus utilises the gay suburban case to establish the queer theory — “contrary to the public perception of a unitary, easily identifiable, and coherent way to be gay (or to be any other identity), there are multiple ways to present and organize a marked identity” and “there is considerable conflict within identity categories about how to perform one’s identity” (Brekhus 2003:11). Aiba puts this whole debate about the proliferation of identities into these lines:

A: You may call me a Kothi or a Pathi but I am an MSM for sure. I take up my identity depending upon my partner and client.

R: But how do you feel?

A: Truly speaking I am a kothi.¹²⁷

Between the two extremes of *Kothi* and *Panathi*, there is another group referred to as *doparatha* or *duplies* or a *double decker (DD)*, a slang referring to their dual roles, who play both roles of penetrator and penetrated. According to *Kothis*, these males do not possess the ‘macho’ characteristics expected in a *Panathi*, they should, therefore, be *Kothis*. But this group of men do not remain tied to one kind of sexual act and perform both roles of *Kothis* and *Panthis* (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001) Majority of male sex workers fall in this category and they call themselves ‘versatile’. Thus a versatile male sex worker plays all roles (active-passive, top-bottom) and does not want to miss any clients. A further differentiation has been discussed by Purkayastha (1999) among *Kothis*. Those who do not show ‘normative’ feminine demeanour are called *kari-kothi* and those who do not show outward feminine demeanour are termed *lahari*. A large proportion of *kari-kothi* are married and their problems are associated with either no sex or less sexual satisfaction with women and this leads them to seek sex outside marriage.

¹²⁷Kothi bolo panthi bolo msm to hu hi. mai jaisa samne wala hoga mai waisa hi roop leleta hu. But how do you feel? Mai sach baat batau mai kothi hu. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

Gay and Bisexual Framework

The idea of sexual identity was first formulated within the homosexual context when German lawyer, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, developed the idea of homosexual identity as a distinct entity and assumed heterosexual as its counterpart. The term 'homosexual' was coined in 1869 by K. M. Benkert, to refer to eroticisation, fantasy and sex between people of the same sex. This category became popular in the 20th century with the work of British Sexologist, Havelock Ellis (Halperin 1989:15). The term 'gay' which emerged many years later was initially used as a code word among homosexuals. The first public use of the word has been documented in 1938 in the movie *Bringing Up Baby* (ABVA 1991:19). Self-identified homosexuals who were involved with gay subcultures started using the term 'gay' to refer to them in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. Around 1960s, the term 'gay' achieved a bold political identity with the Stonewall rebellion¹²⁸.

The gay and bisexual framework of sexual identity emerged in India with the emergence of gay-identified immigrants in Britain and the US. Self-identified gays looking for long term relationships came up with the idea of gay communities and movements in developed western societies (Drunker 2000:19). Impressed by such developments, the Indian gay immigrants started organising themselves in the Diaspora. But being a racial and ethnic group, they were subjected to prejudice and discrimination within the White gay community. To overcome discrimination in both patriarchal South Asian society and racial White gay communities, the South Asian gay devised new terms of identity. Rejecting the Eurocentric sexual identities, new discourses of sexuality about the variety of experiences and desires started emerging among South Asian gays. Consequently, the term 'alternative sexualities' became popular among the gay community. They used the term 'alternative sexualities' to refer to any sexual behaviour other than procreative and penetrative heterosexuality. It was an attempt to move away from the

¹²⁸The Stonewall Riots which is also called the Stonewall Uprising took place on 28th June, 1969 in New York City. It all started when New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club situated in Greenwich village in New York City. The raid led to a riot among bar patrons and local residents as police used force to haul employees and patrons out of the bar. The protest lasted six days between patrons and law enforcement outside the bar. The Stonewall Riots served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the United States and all around the world

colonial notion of sexuality and launch other expressions of sexualities around scripture, arts, life histories and so forth in South Asian countries (Joseph 2005:135-136).

Many groups surfaced in the Diaspora and India in the early 90s who adopted Indian languages to articulate the term 'homosexuality' in a culturally suitable manner, while others aimed to label it in a way different from the West. Groups with Hindi and Urdu names like *Dost*, *Sakhi*, *Khush* and *Sneha Sangama* became popular. Similarly, some other subjects which are likewise popular among same-sex groups are trust and hope (*Aasra* and *Aarambha*). It is significant to mention here that the first newsletter on same-sex sexuality which was published outside South Asia was called *Anamika* which means 'nameless' in Sanskrit (Kumar 1990).

This discussion shows that these collectives and groups used 'alternative' terms to describe their sexuality socially, unlike the use of the word 'gay' or 'bisexuals'. All these collectives were chiefly started by politically aware, educated middle and upper-middle-class gays to build their identity as members of an exploited minority who have openly accepted their homosexual identity. Thus, the transgenderal identity transformed into gay identity among this urban middle class. Their sexual identity became an approach for group formation and cohesion in order to deal with discrimination (Joseph 2005: 136-137). Gay identity is not very popular among street-based male sex workers who feel more comfortable with indigenous identities of *Kothis*, *Pathis* and so forth. This interview in Gayatri Reddy's study of sexual identity among *Kothis* and *Panthis* based in Hyderabad clarifies the confusion to some extent:

...not like that. It is not fixed like that. It is not that *Panthis* cannot become *kothis* and vice versa. After all, we are all gays (Reddy 2005:156).

Thus, gay identity is a kind of universal nomenclature common across all men who are in same-sex relationships; they may play the role of *Kothis*, *Panthis* or a double decker depending upon their positioning, situation and demand. In the recent past, the dimension of discourse on bisexual identities has grown as a result of a positive attitude toward bisexuality. The criticism of the dichotomous view of sexuality and the surfacing of a multidimensional viewpoint also contributed towards such a change. Slowly bisexual identity has been acknowledged as a sexual identity, separate from the gay identity.

In principle, gay groups and networks have accepted and approved of this difference and have started providing spaces for bisexual people. On the other hand, bisexually oriented men have started to claim and assert their right to a distinct identity both within the gay community and outside it (Fox 2003).

'MSM' Framework

The emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s as a major socio-economic and health challenge had accounted for terrifying consequences for MSM in general and MSWs in particular. In the beginning, when the HIV infection was detected in the US among the gay population, health professionals concluded that HIV is a disease of gay people and therefore the nomenclature GRID5 (Gay related immunodeficiency syndrome) was formulated. Later on, when the virus was detected in other population groups, the nomenclature was reformed and changed to AIDS (Altman 2013). But by then gay were already categorised as a 'risk group', among others. This labelling as a 'risk group' further pushed them to margins and made it very hard to work with them. Discrimination and intolerance against homosexuality and AIDS drove same-sex sexualities to invisible locations, making it impossible for any intervention to reach them (Maluwa, Aggleton and Parker 2002). HIV-positive gay individuals disinclined to disclose their positive status and take treatment for fear of further exclusion and discrimination. And when sex work was attached to this doubly marginalised group, they become virtually non-existent.

While there were attempts going on towards developing schemes and policies to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS worldwide, many Asian and African countries raised sharp objections to accept the programme for gay groups. The reason offered was that 'gay is a western problem and our culture does not have such a thing!' This was true about India too (Joseph and Dhall 2000:165). Anti-sodomy law existing in these countries made it difficult for the government run programmes to come up. The government stand on this issue was either complete silence or plainly denying the existence of such groups in India. In 1992-93, Global Programme on AIDS (GPA) conference in Geneva encountered tremendous pressure from the African/Asian governments. As a result, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was forced to coin a new term, 'men who have sex with men' (MSM), to denote any sexual behaviour among men (Young and Meyer 2005). In

various societies, MSMs do not consider themselves a gay and a large percentage of them are married or engage in sex with women also. Dasgupta and Purkayastha (1996) who were engaged with a project for MSMs in Kolkata made this observation about the MSM group:

Most men in India do not have sexual identity. It is only in the past few years that something called a 'gay identity' is emerging. However the word 'gay' is probably being extended and not transposed. Most men who call themselves 'gay' are married or desire to be married. For them being 'gay' means being erotically aroused by men. (Dasgupta and Purkayastha 1996:10)

The dispute was built up through theoretical examinations that showed irregularity between sexual behaviour and sexual identity (Doll 1992:2). Many of these irregularities were sorted out with the coinage of the phrase 'men who have sex with men'. Everyone had recognised the risk of HIV involved in same-sex sexual relations and therefore this new phrase was acceptable to all groups since the term talked about a behavioural category and not an identity category. Later on, this phrase was modified by sexual health professionals as 'males who have sex with males' to include all male-to-male sex in all age groups. But UNAIDS (2000) still prefers to use earlier phrases even though it recognises this new modification (Joseph 2005).

With time, the phrase 'MSM' began to be used as a collective social identity of all males who have sex with other males irrespective of their personal identity. Individuals who were uneasy with gay or transgender self were happy with this new non-intimidating phrase (Khan 1999b: 12). Slowly same-sex sexualities started assuming the 'MSM' identity at the individual level. In the past three decades, in the wake of the worldwide AIDS crisis, there has emerged a global public health movement chiefly organised around male sexuality. Here the focus has been sexual behaviour rather than the sexual identity of the participating men. It is here, in this context, that the discourse of alternative sexual identity, which is largely a Western construct, is found to be inappropriate to provide HIV/AIDS-related health services to men in the South Asian context. These men rather identify themselves as MSM. I believe that there might be some justification in rejecting the concepts popularised by West as essentialists. Thus delinking sexual identities from sexual behaviour and rejecting these identities in favour of new nomenclature which is more cultural specific will again essentialise it. For example, a Kothi is

a feminised male who is a passive, receptive partner in a same-sex relation. While in the field I was told by many male sex workers that “we are different from MSM”. How do male sex workers and men who have sex with men differ? Dhanush explained:

MSM has a simple rule — he is only interested in men and he identifies himself as either a gay or an MSM. They are least interested in females and least interested in money. MSM don't want that someone should pay and then they will have sex. In comparison, male sex workers do not identify themselves as either gay or bisexual. There are many MSWs who sell sex to the MSM community and earn their livelihood but do not identify as MSWs. These MSWs sell sex to both men and women but they rarely belong to the LGBT community. They cater to both male and female clients. Then there are self-identified MSM who are into sex work. MSM MSW are doubly marginalised, they face stigma because they are MSM and also because they are MSWs. And therefore they don't identify themselves as MSM. Moreover, if I say that I am a straight man and I will have sex with a man then he will be more interested in me. But if an MSW will say that he is gay and he sells sex then the client will say that you are gay and you will enjoy our sexual encounter and you also want money.¹²⁹

Nikunj, a gay-identified male sex worker further explained the distinction between MSM and MSW:

An MSM will go with anyone whom he is interested in. He has a choice and he is ruled by his desire. An MSW, on the other hand, has no choice. So if demand arises he will service an old client also even if he does not like it. Moreover, an MSW has to keep himself clean and presentable so that clients may like him.¹³⁰

After dealing with these frameworks of sexual identities, it becomes pertinent to look at the debate over what all constitute sexual identity and how it differs from sexual behaviour. And most importantly, do male sex workers have a sexual identity or is it just role playing for survival?

¹²⁹MSM ka simple funda kya hai ki usko sirf ladko mei interest hai they identify themselves as a msm or gay. They are least interested in female, least interested in money ki koi paise de to hum sex kare. MSWs apne ko mostly gay identify nahi karte aur na hi bisexual identify karte hai. Bahut saare aise MSWs hai agar mai paise kama raha hu msm community se sex work Kar ke to wo apne aap ko identify karega hi nahi. These MSW sell sex to both men and women but wo rarely LGBT community se belong karte hai. They are like ladke aaye to ladko ko bhi karuga and ladki aayi to use bhi karuga. There are self identified MSM also who are involved in sex work. MSM MSW are doubly marginalised, they face stigma because they are MSM and also because they are MSW. Isliye wo Apna MSM identity chod rahe hai. Moreover agar mai boluga ki mai straight ladka hu aur Tere saath sex karuga then you will be more interested in me than I am gay. Agar mai bolu ki gay hu aur sex worker bhi hu tum bologe ki arre tum to Gay ho tum to enjoy bhi karoge aur paise bhi chahiye. Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV

¹³⁰ Msm usko to maine yaha par dekha hai jata rahta hai kisi ke saath bhi kone khopche mei . dekho jo free mei karta hai wo apni talab ke liye karega par waha par choice hoti hai ki mai iske saath karuna mai budhe ke saath nahi karuna par MSW ke case mei koi choice nahi hoti aur use apne aap ko thoda saaf rakhna hota hai taki client use pasand kare. Date of Interview 10/6/18 at GAURAV

How Sexualities are Constructed and Presented

By 7 and 8 standard, I started feeling that I was different and by the time I was in 10th standard, I knew that I was different. I bought a phone for the first time and it had an internet connection. Then, I did not know what it (his sexuality) was called– gay or something else. Therefore I typed ‘boy to boy sex’ and then I came to know about various terms like gay and all. But still, then I did not know a lot. Later I came to know about ‘top’, ‘bottom’ and ‘versatile’. How do I identify myself? Versatile. I have little interest in girls.¹³¹ (Satyam, a versatile male sex worker)

By the age of 13-14 years, they feel that it is different for them. Ishq, Samay, Rishi, Aiba, Aapaa they all talked about a similar experience. Though they were initiated into sex at a younger age, sometimes at a young age of 8-9 years, but they did not know that it was ‘not normal’ or ‘gay’. They were just doing it. Aiba told about growing up differently and his realisation about his sexuality.

From childhood, I had different hobbies. All my friends used to call me to play cricket, hockey, to ride a bicycle. But I would play something very different from all these, with girls, like arranging the marriage of my dolls, hopscotch, snakes and ladder. And it was not my fault. My mother used to dress me up like a girl in frocks till the age of 10 and 11 years, use to tie my hair with clips. All boys of my age, at that time, use to wear shirts and half pants. When my friend used to play with me, intentionally, they would fall on me and then would apologise. But I used to get different feelings and then my friends began to tease me as gay.¹³²

Many scholars have argued that children do not recognise their sexuality in the early years (Mallon and DeCrescenzo 2006; Skougard 2011). They begin identifying gender differences at an early age of 3 or 4 years old and by the time they are 8 years old many of them become familiar with gender differences (Scougard 2011). Aiba was raised differently by his parents and slowly friends and neighbours started pointing out this dif-

¹³¹Saatvi aathavi tak samajh mei aanae laga tha aur jab tak mai dasvi mei gaya mujhe pata tha ki mai kya hu. Mujhe pata tha ki mai alag sa hu. Maine ek phone kharida tha aur usme internet connection bhi tha. tab mujhe pata nahi tha ki usko kya bolte hai, gay bolte hi ya kya. Tab maine type kiya boy to boy sex kar ke daala, phir mujhe ye sab term gay waigairha pata chala. Par usme bhi lekin jaada nahi pata tha phir baad mei pata chala ki top bottom aur versatile hote hai. How do i identify myself. versatile. Thoda interst hai ladkiyo Mei. Date of Interview 6/12/17 at GAURAV

¹³²Actually kya hua ki bachpan se hi mujhe alag shauk tha, mere jitne bhi friends hai mujhe match khelne ko bulate the hockey khelne ko bulate the cycle chalane ko bulate the par mai insab se hatke kuch ladkiyo ke saath aur hi khelta Jaise gudda guddi ki shaadi karata, langadi khelta, saap sidhi khelta . Aur isme galti meri bhi nahi hai meri mummy mujhe 10 -11 saal ki umra tak mujhe frock dalte the mere baal aise lagate the aur uspar clip lagate the, mujhe umbrella frock phanate the aur meri umra ke saare ladke shirt half pant pahnte the. Wo jab bhi mere saath kuch khelte the to jaan bhuj kar wo gir jaate the aur phir mujhe push kar ke bolte the sorry yaar lag gaya, par mujhe alag hi feeling aane lagi aur wo bolne lage ki tu aisa hai tu gay hai. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

ference to him. So, was this a free-flowing feeling or there was a particular moment when Aiba realised that he was different?

Even though I liked playing with girls, I started liking my friends but I could not tell them. When I was fourteen years old, one of my friends asked me why I did not have any girlfriends. I told him that I am not interested in girls. Then who are you interested in? I said I want to kiss a boy, I want to kiss you. My friend became very angry and said that he will slap me for saying that. He felt that I had lost my mind.¹³³

One perplexing issue which emerged in this interview is while Aiba was wooing his friend, initially, his friend was furious, he even promised to woo a girl for Aiba. But since Aiba was interested in men, he decoded this arrangement, thus – if one wants to be a doctor but his father wants him to be an engineer and if that boy becomes an engineer but would he be really interested in this job, because his heart lies somewhere else? This perplexing issue is part of everyone's life. The manner in which Aiba brought out the conflict between subjective desire and societal (parental) desire is interesting. His reflection shows how subjective desire, despite giving in to societal desire, continues to operate. This inverted order, if desire reinforces the idea of performativity. Aiba underlines the force of subjective desire through an example of choice of career. In reply Aiba's friend told him that:

I have respect for you and I always address you with the utmost respect. But if tomorrow we have sex together then this respect will fly away. I will start addressing you casually. Because of your gay feelings, you will eventually have relationships with different men and you may go with another man leaving me. Moreover the day your family will come to know about your identity then they will throw you out of the house.¹³⁴

Aiba spoke about his feelings to his friend where he described where his heart actually lay. But his friend, who has been socialised in our heteronormative social system, felt that having homosexual desire will result in loss of respect for Aiba. It is important to note here that as masculinity and femininity are not fixed properties of male and female

¹³³Kuch bhi ho khlena kudna ladkiyo ke saath accha lagta tha par mujhe mere dost log acche lagne lage. Par mai unko bol nahi sakta tha. Jab mai 14 saal ka tha to mere dost ne kaha ki kya yaar teri koi girlfriend nahi hai to maine bola ki nahi mujhe ladkiyo mein interest nahi hai. Bola kyo aur phir kisme interest hai? Maine bola ki mai chahta hu ki mai kisi ladke ke saath karu , mai tujhe kiss karu. Mera dost gussa ho gaya bola ek chamaat maruga, paagal ho gaya hai kya tu. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

¹³⁴Abhi mai teri izzat karta hu tujhe aap bolta hu par kal agar mai tere saath sex karuga to saari izzat khatam, aap se tu ban jayega. Teri izzat nahi rahegi. Aur jo tere andar ye gay waali feeling hai us wajah se tere ko alag alag mardo ka shauk ho jayega aur phir kal tu kisi aur ke saath chala jayega. Aur jis din tere ghar waalo ko pata chalega us din tujhe ghar se bhaga dege. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

bodies, the meanings and expectations for being men and women differ both historically and across interactional settings. Normative expectations for men and women maintain gender inequality, as strictures of masculinity push men to “do dominance” and strictures of femininity push women to “do submission” (West and Zimmerman 1987). By disclosing his homosexual desire to his friend, Aiba confronted and defied the normative expectations for men and women by our society.

But eventually, Aiba had his first relationship with this very friend. Later, he was put into night school at St Michael school where he used to be scared. There were older boys in the school who would bully younger ones. So whenever they ask him anything he would always answer sheepishly. Then these boys came to know that he was scared of them. They started bullying him. These boys took him to reclamation ground/ lalmitti (in Bandra West) and sexually abused him. Then in Aiba’s word: “Slowly I got used to all of this and I became very open about sex and my sexuality”.¹³⁵

There is no linear or straightforward explanation for how sexualities are experienced and realised. Life histories and one’s experience seems to play an important role. No one is born a gay or kothi. It is a realisation which comes with time when they interact with family, peer, school, and neighbours. Similarly, Ishq describes his experience of realising about his sexuality:

I did not get the opportunity or time to understand this whole thing. Since I was 11 or 12 years old I was having sex with boys but it was nothing. There was a boy in my area whom I liked a lot and I was deeply attracted to him. My friends from the locality would ask me if I have any girlfriends. Then I would get very confused. Since I did not like girls I was perplexed that why they are asking me about girlfriends. I like boys but no one ever asked me about them. So this is how I used to feel initially¹³⁶

Thus when Ishq was asked about having a girlfriend, this was his first encounter with heteronormativity. Gradually one will work out that having a girlfriend is normal but he

¹³⁵Dheere dheere apan ko in sab ki aadat ho gayi aur phir apan bahut khul gaya. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

¹³⁶Mujhe ye samjhane ka mauka hi nahi mila. Jab se mai 11–12 saal ka tha ladko ke saath hi sex hota tha mera wo Jaane anjaane mei hota tha. Phir ek ladka tha meri area mei wo mujhe bahut pasand tha, mai bahut attract hota tha. Jo mere friend the ajoo bajoo ke wo mere se puchte the ki teri koi girlfriend nahi hai kya to mai bahut confuse ho jaata tha, ladkiya to mujhe pasand hi nahi hai to ye log mujhe uske baare mei Kyo sawaal puch rahe hai mujhe to ladka pasand hai uske baare mei Kyo nahi puch rahe hai, ye sab cheeze hoti thi. Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

was interested in boys. No one ever asked him if he had any boyfriends. Another group of informants have different dilemmas – they experience desire for both men and women. Dhanush, Devo, Shiv, Nikunj, Akash have experienced sexual desire for both men and women. Many informants like Dhanush and Akash were into same-sex relations for many years and experienced a change in their sexual attraction later. Dhanush realised about his bisexuality two years back when he was visiting Bangkok:

Identity is not fixed. It happens (sex). I don't have to do anything. When I went to Bangkok for a conference we went to the red light district. There was a separate area for female sex workers and I got diverted and I liked women (female sex workers) there but before that, here in India, I liked men all the time. There were two-zone — male and female and every time I entered the female zone.

Sexuality is not fixed and they explore their desire at every moment. According to Akash, it is about 'a call from inside and its fluid'. Sexual fluidity means flexibility in ones' sexual responsiveness and experiencing desire for both men and women irrespective of their sexual orientation. Sexual fluidity is not a new concept. There have been many instances of sexual fluidity in the scientific literature for many years. It is just that instead of being explicitly theorised it is submerged in data. Some of the oldest evidence of this flexible, changeable articulation of sexuality were brought out by sex researchers (Diamond 2009). One of the earliest studies is by Erich Goode and Lynn Haber in 1977 where they investigated same-sex behaviour among college women who otherwise identified themselves as heterosexual. They concluded that some of these women were on their way to becoming lesbian whereas for many it was an adventure and a quest to seek freedom (Goode and Haber 1977). Likewise, Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz studied 150 men and women who were bisexual. They discovered that many of their respondents were into same-sex relations for many years and others have experienced a change in their sexual attraction (Blumstein and Schwartz 1977). Anthropologist Gilbert Herdt (1984) published the distinguished account of ritualised homosexuality among adolescent boys in Melanesia. This practice of same-sex encounters between young boys was carried out only during their adolescent years. This was based on the belief that it will help them attain full maturity as young adults. So, once the young boys were adults, same-sex relations ceased to exist and after marriage, the same boys had heterosexual relations only with their wives (Herdt 1984). Diamond (2009) while discussing this anthropological account, observes that such quick and sudden developmen-

tal transition and departure from same-sex encounters to heterosexual encounters demonstrates that the Western notion of fixed sexual “orientation” is culture specific. This cultural notion of fixed sexual orientation in the West has been reviewed extensively by Evelyn Blackwood. She viewed this notion of fixed sexuality as a limitation. Now, these discussions are bringing us close to the social constructionist perspective to sexuality which re-emphasises the role of social interactions and cultural ideologies (Blackwood 1985; Plummer 1975).

In one of extensive studies based in San Francisco with groups of gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual people, Martin Weinberg, Colin Williams and Douglas Pryor found a consistent change in sexual attraction among their respondents. Researchers concluded that “sexual preference is not always a fixed phenomenon” (Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor 1994:163). Another interesting finding was that gay, lesbian and heterosexual groups reported less recurrent change when compared to their bisexual counterparts. Weinberg and colleagues recognised the anchoring effects of claiming a particular sexual identity as the reason for this variation. Each sexual identity has “definable boundaries that can restrict the ability or desire to explore change”. Weinberg and colleagues further concluded that some degree of fluidity is a general characteristic of sexuality.

There is conflict about bisexuality as an identity in research that deals with the topic. Moore (2005) argued that bisexual individuals were unpredictable and lacked consistency about their sexual behaviour when compared to heterosexuals and gay/lesbians. Many non-heterosexual women have started using the label “bisexual” to identify themselves rather than lesbian/gay identities (Savin-Williams 2005). Bisexuality as a sexual identity has also been assumed increasingly by individuals who like to deconstruct standard models of sexual identity since bisexuality reflects increased fluidity and plasticity than heterosexual or lesbian identity (Blumstein & Schwartz 1990; Rust 1992). This plasticity helps the person to overcome and avoid cultural and social prohibition and rejections. Thus leading two lives in separate domains with distinct sexual identities takes care of the rejection and mental trauma. And in the process, this bisexual identity interrogates us not to envision a “third” sexual identity, but rather, to render powerless and weaken sexual identity itself.

Male sex workers in India who sell sex to other men are victims of intense cultural exclusion and rejection. Leading separate lives with distinct sexual identities is a good survival strategy in this homophobic environment. Michel Foucault (1991), who recommends liberating people from this very idea of sexuality which is nothing but a system of social control. Male sex workers who do not identify with any existing identity paradigm have liberated themselves from the social hegemony. But there is a proliferation of identities where people with same-sex desire may be a Kothi or a Panthi, or a double-decker or top or bottom or versatile, or gay or bisexual or MSM or nothing at all. Aiba, a Kothi-identified male sex worker stated:

My favourite role is that of a kothi. Whenever I have to go like a panthi there is this weird feeling which I really don't understand. I don't get the feeling and desire.¹³⁷

The focus, therefore, should be on the sexual role they like to play rather than the identity marker which again essentialises the category. Aapaa, a kothi-identified male sex worker, describes his role-play in a very 'Bombay' style:

I am Vidhya Balan (a famous Bollywood female actor) in front of my clients and Dharmendra (another Bollywood actor popular for masculine representations) at home.¹³⁸

Aapaa described two of his important roles played by him – one at the workplace and the other at home. There may be many more such roles. We are all 'on stage' performing and there is no true self underneath various roles that one performs in various contexts. Aapaa also felt that being a man, he had a choice which was not the case with women in his house. Thus homosexual behaviour (not identity) is not the key marker of identity for men in India rather it is the visible male identity that is a true marker of their identity.

I always think that if God had made me a woman then by now I would have been a mother to two-three children and would have been cursing my kismet. Being born as a man I have many choices. I am making people dance to my tunes. But girls have no choice. I have my sisters who are married and they were never asked before their marriage was fixed. Whatever we are doing, we have a choice. When we are doing sex work, we first assess our client. When we fall in love we always try to find some good boy. Now look at our sisters, all have three kids each. Husband can inflict any kind of violence

¹³⁷... mera favourite role kothi role jab panthi ban Kar jana padta hai to ek ajeeb si feeling hoti hai. Chee baba ye kya hai, bas ye samjho feeling nahi aati (Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV)

¹³⁸Client ke samne mai Vidhya Balan ban jati hu aur ghar mei Dharmendra ban jata hu. (Date of Interview 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

and they will have to bear it. But if someone tries to manhandle us we will give them back.¹³⁹

Does this double identity create a feeling of annoyance and irritation among male sex workers? Samuel, a 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker stated his dilemma:

R: Does your identity troubles you?

S: Every day, every moment. How will I survive I do not know. I am living as if I am no more alive. I am tired of this life.¹⁴⁰

Samuel was a bright young man and I suggested him to go for counselling but he felt that nothing will come out of such counselling sessions. His family did not even know that he worked as an outreach worker at GAURAV¹⁴¹. Maintaining the image of a heterosexual man is pertinent for male sex workers to survive in a heteronormative society. They have two separate identities — one which is visible and markedly masculine and the other is hidden homosexual identity. Samay, a kothi-identified male sex worker discussed his experience:

No Imran (Samay's boyfriend) is not an MSM. He stays nearby in Bandra, he is married and he has a child. His wife does not know a thing about him (about his same-sex behaviour and their relationship). Imran told me one thing that if he will call a man (dressed in a pant-shirt) even at midnight to stay with him, his wife will not say anything. He further told me that if I grow my hair long and put earrings he will not even allow me to stand near his house. Because if a feminine kothi comes to his house then people will talk but if a man dressed in pant-shirt will come then they will think that he is a friend and they are smoking or drinking or studying together. I can come to his house while his wife

Agar Khuda ne mujhe ladki banaya hota to mai do teen bachho ki maa hoti aur apni kismet ko kosti. kyo ki ladka hoke mere paas dero choice hai, mai jaise chahu waise logo ko nacha rahi hu, par ek ladki ki koi choice nahi hoti, meri kudh ki bahene hai un sabki shaadi hogayi hai, par kabhi bhi unse puch kar unki shaadi nahi ki gayi. Hum jo bhi kar rahe hai choice se kar rahe hai. Sex work bhi karte hai to accha insaan dekh kar hi karte hai, love bhi karege to accha boyfriend dekh kar hi karte hai, Abhi humari baheno ko dekho, sabke teen teen bachhe hai, pati kaisa bhi zulm kare sab sahna padta hai. Hume koi zulm kare to hum uski maa bahen ek kar dete hai. (Date of Interview 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁴⁰Life kaise jee pauga, aage mera kuch hoga. Mai aise jee raha hu ki meri life Khatam ho gayi hai mai thak gaya hu. (Date of Interview 7/06/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁴¹mujhe nahi lagta ki kuch hoga. Aap jo bhi bolo family cant accept us unhe to ye bhi nahi pata hai ki mai yaha par job karta hu pata chalega to na jaane kya hoga.

is around and he will not be afraid because I cannot do anything with his wife (since I am only interested in men).¹⁴²

The visible masculine identity is used here as a camouflage to hide a sexual behaviour/identity which is a social taboo and stigma. Men who are masculine use their visible gender identity to mask and survive. The body is a semiotic as well as a physiological system - gender is mapped onto the physical/biological body. The individual's sense of what it is to be masculine/feminine is therefore derived directly from the operations of prevailing contemporary discourses. These discourses create and offer “discursive subject positions” – epistemological spaces for individuals to occupy, they bring about a kind of textual role-playing. Discourse is not a complete closed system even though discursive practices affect every person, there is always the possibility of resistance to specific discursive regimes. The manner in which the gendered subject positions are made available to us, in such a powerful way, that individuals usually struggle to live up to their "genderedness," to reproduce the replication of the discursive model in everyday life. The discourse of gender difference is a powerful ordering, shaping, and delimiting of the field of human possibility. Although no actual male may ever reach the discursive version of maleness (nor a woman the corresponding ideal of femininity), these images at least partially shape, and frequently oppress the lives of thousands of real members of both sexes (Horrocks 1994:143-145). Thus, male sex workers despite having a homosexual orientation do not give up the “genderness”, the discursive version of maleness due to constant replication of the discursive model. The fear of stigma and loss of respect are such daunting factors that homosexual desires are pushed and masked so that discursive version of maleness is a visible marker of identity.

¹⁴²Is Imraan an MSM, nahi wo MSM nahi hai par usne bola hai ki teri kushi ke khatir kabhi bhi bula lena mai badle mei usko maaslish waalish deta hu, wo idhar hi Bandra Mei hi rahta hai, shaadi hogayi hai , uska ek bachha bhi hai. Uski wife ko uske baare mei kuch pata nahi hai. Usne mujhe ek baat bataya, bola ek baat sun pant-shirt wala ko raat mei 12 baje bhi ghar par bulayega, ghar par rukayega to bhi biwi kuch nahi bolti, agar tu hi baal badha liya hai, kaan mei pahna hai to mai tujhe apne ghar ke saame bhi nahi khade hone doonga aur agar koi hilta doolta mere ghar mei aayega to log baat karege, arre koi aaya, dedh ghante se darwaaza band hai, aur agar pant-shirt wala aaya to abe dost hai andar hooka, daroo pee rahe hai, padh rahe hai, TV dekh rahe hai. Tu meri biwi ke samne mere ghar par aa sakta hai, baith sakta hai, khana khaa sakta hai aur mujhe koi dar bhi nahi hai. Waise bhi tu kya kar sakta hai meri biwi ke saath. Tu dost ki tarh aa, jo bhi harkat kar akele mei kar biwi ke samne mat kar. (Date of Interview 25/06/16 at GAURAV)

While in the field in 2016, I noticed a trend where few kothi-identified male sex workers became transgender (male to female). I started this conversation with Ishq who was a kothi-identified male sex worker about why kothi are becoming TG.

I am a kothi and I am like a woman. I like to wear sarees, dress up, put on makeup and dance. Kothi becoming TG know their likes and desire and when they dress up in sarees they derive great pleasure. They want to continue this and therefore they go (to become a TG).¹⁴³

When the same question was put up to Samay, another kothi-identified male sex worker, he explained it:

Let us assume that everyone at my home come to know about my identity and they do not want to stay with me. In this situation, I cannot stay alone. Later, I may be thrown out of the house. I am homeless and I have no place to go. At this time, let us assume, I meet a Hijra sex worker and he takes me to his home. This Hijra sex worker will explain that family is nothing and he was also thrown out by his parents. He will further explain — do not get operated, don't go for nirvana, see even I have it, just grow your hair long and come and stay with us. You will earn 3000-4000 comfortably...I am getting good money and they are good people so why should I stay with such a bad family.¹⁴⁴

Is it good money that is pushing kothi to join TG groups?

No, MSWs have more options because a man selling sex cannot be identified by his looks. TG cannot carry out work anywhere. Even when a man is found with a TG sex worker their friends make fun of him — why man! I saw you in Kalanagar in the bushes with a Hijra. Moreover, you cannot bring a Hijra home. And they create a lot of ruckuses.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³Jaise mai ek kothi hu, to mujhe pura ladies ki hi cheeze hai aur wahi pasand bhi hai, saree, dress pahana, makeup karna, dress karna, dance karna. Kisi kisi ka kya hota hai ki yaar mai to aisa hu. Saree Pahna to usko jaada hi achha lag gaya, usko wahi phir continue karne ko rahta hai aisa phir wo chale jaate hai (Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁴⁴Mere ghar par sabko pata chala, aur ghar walo ne bola ki agar ye ghar par rahega to mai bhi nahi rahuga, sab log jab ghar par nahi rahege to apun akele kya karega, baad mei sabne usko nikaal diya, aise waqt par wo yaha waha bhatak raha hai to, tab usko ek dhandhe wali mili (SATLEWALI) aur boli arre chod, aise kuch nahi rakha maa-baap mei, mere ghar walo ne bhi mujhe nikaal diya tha, meri maan, operation mat kar, narvaan mat ban, mere paas bhi hai bas humare saath aaja, baal badha, roz ka teen chaar hazar rupayee kamayegi. Dekh humlog bhi sab nakli lagayee hai. Panthi ka panthi aur Hijra bhi ban kar rah, rahne ko mere ghar mei rah, 4000 rupyee uske khaana peena sab usi mei hoga. Is wazah se aadmi soch raha hai ki katane ko nahi, roz ke itne paise, aur aise log mil rahe hai to Kyo koi itne bure parivaar ke saath rahe. (Date of Interview 25/06/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁴⁵ MSW ke paas jaada option hota hai. Unhe koi pehchan hi nahi sakta. Par ek TG har jagah kaam nahi Kar sakti hai. Manlo aap ek TG sex worker ke saath ho to dost log aapka mazaak banayenge —kya be maine tere ko kala nagar ke jhadiyo mei ek Hijra ke saath dekha. TG ko ghar par laane mei sharm aati hai. Aur wo log shor bhi karte hai, paisa kam diya to wo dhol Bazza degi log azoo bazzo se aajayege. (Date of Interview 25/06/16 at GAURAV)

The binary division of gender affects our understandings of sexuality. The popular image of the homosexual man or the lesbian woman is that of an “invert”, a term invented by Havelock Ellis to imply that a gay man is a feminine/effeminate man, and vice versa. This image appears to be derived from the “binariness” of gender — masculine being the opposite of feminine, the two genders being seen to form two sides of the same coin and thus as naturally coming together in sexual communion. The insistence on binary division, on human beings as either/or, makes the phenomenon of homosexuality hard to assimilate within the discourses of gender and sexuality because this kind of activity cannot represent the coming together of opposites. Thus homosexuals are read as inverted (Brewis, Hampton, and Linstead 1997:1283). It is evident, then, that homosexuality casts serious doubts on the “binariness” of gender by bringing multiple dimensions to gender and sexuality.

Dismantling the Monolith of Masculinity

Connell defined hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answers to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy” (Connell 1995:77). These practices confirm the domination of women by men as well as the domination of some men by men who hold the power. Subordination and marginalisation of certain masculinities is also part of this. In this context gay masculinities have been marginalised and subordinated historically to ensure the hegemony of compulsory heterosexuality. Many view homosexuality as the negation of masculinity and all homosexual men are effeminate. Given this assumption, antagonism toward homosexual men may be used as one of the parameters to define masculinity. This has been captured by Herek (1986) in the proposition that “to be 'a man' in contemporary American society is to be homophobic - that is, to be hostile toward homosexual persons in general and gay men in particular” (Herek 1986:563). The resulting oppression of gay men, as Pleck (1980) observed, provides a symbol for all cases of hierarchy among men. Herek's formulation captures the significance of heterosexual-versus-homosexual relations for heterosexuality. In the same historical process, same-sex sexual contact between men was termed illegitimate by dominant groups of men, and hegemonic masculinity was thus redefined as explicitly and exclusively heterosexual. Closeted gay men enjoy the general advantages of the masculine gender. In the Indian scenario, men who have sex with men are generally oppressed, but they are not definitively

excluded from masculinity. Rather, they face structurally induced conflicts about masculinity—conflicts between their sexuality and their social presence as men, about the meaning of their choice of sexual partners, and in their construction of relationships with women and with heterosexual men. These dilemmas of male sex workers constantly disturb them and feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, guilt, injustice always mire their everyday life.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) both accept that the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is highly contested and they reexamined the concept of hegemonic masculinity with all its criticism and debates. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools (Kessler et al. 1982); in a related conceptual discussion of the making of masculinities and the experience of men's bodies (Connell 1983); and in a debate over the role of men in Australian labour politics (Connell 1982). The high school project provided empirical evidence of multiple hierarchies in gender as well as in class terms. Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was used in education studies to understand the dynamics of classroom life, including patterns of resistance and bullying among boys. It was used to explore relations to the curriculum and the difficulties in gender-neutral pedagogy (Martino 1995). It was used to understand teacher strategies and teacher identities among such groups as physical education instructors (Skelton 1993). The concept also influenced criminology. All data reflect that men and boys perpetrate more of the conventional crimes and the more serious of these crimes than do women and girls. Moreover, men hold a virtual monopoly on the commission of syndicated and white-collar forms of crime (Messerschmidt 1993). The concept was also employed in studying media representations of men, for instance, the interplay of sports and war imagery (Jansen and Sabo 1994). Because the concept of hegemony helped to make sense of both the diversity and the selectiveness of images in mass media, media researchers be-

gan mapping the relations between representations of different masculinities (Hanke 1992). The concept of hegemonic masculinity also proved significant in organisation studies, as the gendered character of bureaucracies and workplaces was increasingly recognised. Ethnographic and interview studies traced the institutionalisation of hegemonic masculinities in specific organisations (Cheng 1996; Cockburn 1991) and their role in organisational decision making (Messerschmidt 1995). Gutmann (1996), studied “machismo”, the masculine identity of Mexican men. Gutmann shows how the imagery of machismo developed historically and was interwoven with the development of Mexican nationalism, masking enormous complexity in the actual lives of Mexican men.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has influenced gender studies across many academic fields but has also attracted serious criticism. Evaluating the principal criticisms, the authors defend the underlying concept of masculinity, which in most research use is neither reified nor essentialist. However, the criticism of trait models of gender and rigid typologies is sound. The treatment of the subject in research on hegemonic masculinity can be improved with the aid of recent psychological models, although limits to discursive flexibility must be recognised. The concept of hegemonic masculinity does not equate to a model of social reproduction; we need to recognise social struggles in which subordinated masculinities influence dominant forms. Peter Nardi in *Gay Masculinities* (1999) argues that contemporary research on men and masculinity treats masculinity not as a normative referent but as a problematic gender construct. Nardi attempts to understand men and masculinity through this lens, providing a comprehensive understanding of gender and gender relationships in the contemporary world. Nardi observes that gay men exhibit a multiplicity of ways of "doing" masculinity that can best be described by the plural form "masculinities." Some enact the strongest of masculine stereotypes through body-building and sexual prowess, whereas others express a less dominant form through spirituality or female impersonation. Many simply blend the "traditional" instrumental masculinity with the more "emotional" masculinity that comes merely by living their everyday lives when they are hanging out with their friends and lovers, working out at the gym, or dealing with the oppressions related to their class and ethnic identities. In recent years, it has, thus, become theoretically important to speak in terms of "masculinities" rather than use the more limiting phrase of “masculinity.” Thanks in part to postmodern ideas, diversity and difference are ac-

knowledge and privileged over a unifying, shared, homogeneous concept. No longer can we justify describing gender in terms of "femininity" or "masculinity," as if there were only one set of feminine or masculine roles. What becomes relevant is understanding people in terms of the various ways they enact masculinity or femininity and the multiple forms this take. It is in this context that a book focusing on how gay men "do" masculinity emerged. Working under the assumption that gay men display a type of masculinity different from heterosexual men already points to a plurality of masculinities. Yet, to automatically assume that all gay men contest, modify, or challenge heterosexual masculinity—or for that matter, that they all enact the same masculinity roles—does not take us beyond monolithic concepts of gender. It does not adequately reflect the reality that gay men are as diverse as all other groups of humans and do not act, think, believe, and feel alike. Class and racial differences alone challenge any possibility of unifying masculinity among gay men.

Matt G. Mutchler (2000) in his essay *Seeking Sexual Lives* focuses on the sexual behaviour of young gay men in the era of HIV/AIDS. It examines the sexual stories told by 30 White and Latino gay men between the ages of 18 and 24 based on data collected from semi-structured interviews. Four dominant sexual scripts (romantic love, erotic adventures, safer sex, and sexual coercion) frame their sexual experiences. These stories illustrate how gay male youth use and adapt gendered sexual scripts encountered in particular social, cultural, and situational contexts. The author examines how interpersonal dynamics, social contexts, and masculinities shape and constrain their sexual experiences. The findings suggest new approaches to studying sexualities based on sexual scripts and queer and gender theories and accounting for agency and constraint. The author has tried to show how these young men learn and use sexual scripts; how their erotic lives are accomplished through learning and innovating sexual scripts and behaviours in complex, diverse social contexts. He has highlighted ambiguous and problematic stories as well as those narrated by these dominant patterns. This work draws on recent developments in sexual scripts theory (Laumann & Gagnon 1995), theories of gender (Connell 1995; West & Zimmerman 1987), and research on ethnicity and sexuality (Almaguer 1991; Diaz 1998). The theoretical approach is informed by social constructionist and queer theorists' assertions that sexuality is socially and culturally produced in complicated and pluralist ways (Plummer 1981; Weeks 1986). He has further analysed

how these men practice erotic lives shaped and constrained by gendered sexual scripts and by ‘masculinity tensions’. Through the process of analysing these data, the author has developed and defined the concept of masculinity tensions as sites where gay men experience conflicts, contradictions, ambiguities, and struggles in and between their experiences of gendered sexual scripts.

How Male Sex Workers ‘Do’ Masculinity

Masculinity tension is a common theme in all narratives of male sex workers. Male sex workers constantly experience contradictions, ambiguities, and frustration between sexual scripts and experiences. For instance, Rishi was in a romantic relationship with a boy who was the most important person in his life. When Rishi came to know that his partner was cheating on him he was shattered:

For the first time, I felt the pain of a wife cheated by her husband. Men are always cheating and I am waiting for a day when women will cheat their men. But I did not lock myself in the house, I wanted to tell my partner that it did not bother me and I entered into sex work. Now every day I have a new partner ¹⁴⁶

Entry into sex work was his way of doing away with romantic love and relationship. Instead, he became a member of an adventure-erotic lifestyle. So the next question which comes is how male sex workers perceive and enact masculinity? Male sex workers exhibit multiplicity of ways of “doing-” masculinity that can best be described by the plural form “masculinities”. In fact, what they do (having sex for pleasure or love) is very close to the masculinity script but the problem is who they do it with (a man) and how they do it (anal sex). Connell (1992) says that gay men often seek other men who embody masculinity. The clients of male sex workers mostly prefer masculine, good looking male bodies. The materiality of maleness is the most sought after trait. This holds true for male sex workers also who always talks about the strength and good-looks of their client. The client is always seen as masculine and virile. His sexual prowess is something which male sex worker always talks about. Donaldson made this observation in the following lines: “it is not ‘gayness’ that is attractive to homosexual men,

¹⁴⁶ pahli baar mujhe ehsaas hua ki ek wife ko kaisa lagta hoga jab Uska pati use cheat karta hai. Mard hamesha cheat karte hai par mujhe us din ka intazaar hai jab aurate cheat karegi apne patiyo ko. Par is ke baad maine apne aap ko kamre mei band nahi Kiya. Mai apne partner ko batana chahta tha ki isse mujhe koi fark hi nahi pada hai. Aur Phir maine bhi sex work join Kar liya. Ab har roz mujhe ek naya partner milta hai.

but 'maleness'. A man is lusted after not because he is homosexual but because he's a man (1993:649).

In *Understanding Masculinity* Chopra et.al (2000) argue that most men make a distinction between sexual pleasures on the one hand and masculinity as a role, on the other. Men talk about '*masti*', loosely decoded as sexual play or playfulness and this has no serious consequences in their lives. *Masti* is structured as recreational, not 'real' sex. Nevertheless, as soon as sex enters the sphere of procreation, it gets associated with one's positions in the sexual act, that is, of penetration (man) and being penetrated (woman) bringing in the whole issue of masculinity. This is noteworthy within MSM relations, where the dichotomy of active and passive are recreated within same-sex sexual encounters. Within the politics of penetration, the '*Panthis*' or the active, penetrative partner of the gay dyad is placed as more masculine than the '*kothi*' who is feminised and is penetrated. However, the transgendered *kothi* is bisexual so in the gay dyad, he is penetrated but in sexual relations with their wives they are masculine and it is their sexual relations that reopen the question of fluid sexualities.

After closely studying the rate cards of all 34 respondents who were part of this research I found a wide diversity. Rishi, Noor Daniel, Dev, Satyam, Dhanush are good looking tall men with good build and a sense of fashion, dressing up in the latest style; they are constantly working on their bodies and looks. According to Rishi one can only last in sex work until one has good looks and good body. Those who are either too fat or too thin are not in demand. Rishi charges rupees 5000 for two hours and rupees 2000 for just going out (escorting) and these rates are non-negotiable. This rate is in contrast to the rates of Aiba, Aapaa, Kumar, Ishq and Samay who identify themselves as *kothi*. They are effeminate in their behaviour, want to dress up like women and are ready to negotiate their rates and often they do not charge if they like their client¹⁴⁷. By and large male sex workers play a passive role in their sexual encounters with clients, hence, a *kothi*-identified male sex worker ideally should be more in demand as they like to play passive roles. Narratives of male sex workers illustrate a different state of affair. Mas-

¹⁴⁷ Refer to chapter 2

culine bodies are more in demand than effeminate one. Why do clients prefer straight looking guys? Dhanush explained:

The client wants manly body who can play both top and bottom roles. Clients feel that if they want feminine sex then there are female sex workers (FSWs) and if a feminine boy is playing a top role then it will look quite strange that as a feminine looking man he has taken an active position. The client's sense of masculinity will suffer a blow. Similarly, if the client is playing a top role with a feminine MSW then the client will feel that this person is so feminine and it would be better if he does this with a woman. What is wrong with me! So preference is for straight looking man. Client is satisfied when he gets a feeling that he is doing with a real man.¹⁴⁸

Thus, from the above discussion one wants to put forward an argument that cultural scripts seem to play a crucial role in the lives of male sex workers. Though there is no desire or attraction for sex with women but pressure from family and fear of being tagged as an emasculated self pushes them into heterosexual relations. Male sex workers solicit and enjoy sexual encounters with their male clients. Thus sex work for them serves two purposes — as a means of livelihood and an articulation of their same-sex sexual desires forbidden by society. This may be responsible for a loose economic exchange between a male sex worker and his client. Thus we have witnessed this cultural uncertainty surrounding same-sex relationships. But we have also witnessed differential attitudes towards same-sex sexual relations by male sex workers and their clients. While clients are not so concerned about their sexual encounters with other men, male sex workers reported constant dilemma and mental stress. The transgenderal role played by male sex workers creates a dilemma about their real identity. This also results in an increased probability of being discovered by family and society. Another reason for this tension is their work status that is, sex work. For the good proportion of male sex workers, sex work is a survival strategy. For most, it is a practice enforced by poverty and deprivation. These existing boundaries are based on social class, education, economic power and gendered behaviour. Clients do not socialise with male sex workers except in sexual environments. Male sex workers do not share their sexual identity or work identity with family members. Therefore, they have compartmentalised their lives. These

¹⁴⁸Manly banda jo top aur bottom dono ka role play kar sake unhe wo chahiye. They are like agar feminine sex karna hai to there are FSWS , aur agar ek feminine ladka is playing top then it will look weird that he is so feminine and he has taken an active position , so my masculinity will be nowhere. If I am playing a top role with a feminine guy then I will feel Chee yaar ye to itna feminine hai is se accha to mai ladki ke saath kar lu. What is wrong with me. So preference is for straight looking man , then I will be satisfied and mujhe rahega ki mai ladke ko hi Kar raha hu. (Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV)

identities are clearly separated by time and location as well. It is not impossible, therefore, for a man to have several identities: a park identity, a street identity, a home identity, a family identity, and of course a marriage identity. Classifying men who have sex with men as gay men or homosexuals, or even as male sex workers can be problematic. While there are clear identities such as *kothis*, *panthis*, and even *do-parathas* or *double-deckers*, these identities are spatially as well as behaviourally constructed. They are not clearly delineated. What do male sex workers think about masculinity or lack of it? A kothi-identified male sex worker Aapaa became unusually agitated when a discussion about masculinity came up. Since I had interacted with him for an hour and a half this was the first instance when he had lost his placid demeanour:

I lack masculinity? We go to the gym so that we look good and we get more clients and not to show our masculinity. People (bodybuilder kinds) who think that we (gay) are not masculine...¹⁴⁹

Then he became agitated and started abusing ‘masculine men’ taunting them about their size and stamina. He regained his composure after sometimes and stated:

God has not made anyone perfect. Everyone has some flaws or shortcomings. But everyone can see our flaws because we move around like this (their attire and manifestation) express ourselves and remain who we are. What is going on behind closed doors no one knows. But because of our jokes and bantering people locate and identify us and call us names like ‘gud’ and ‘mamu’ (popular slang for gay). We disclose our identity a little and therefore people identify us and abuse us.¹⁵⁰

Samuel, a 19-year-old gay-identified male sex worker, felt that playing double life was difficult and there was constant tension that someone will disclose his identity to family and others:

I do not think that I am perfect. Living two lives is not easy. Playing straight at home with family and a gay here at the workplace. I am always afraid, someone will see me. We kill

¹⁴⁹Mardangi ki kami hai? Hum log gym bhi jaate hai to isliye jaate hai ki acchhe deekhe, thode aur log mile aur apni mardangi deekhane ke liye nahi. Ye jo log bolte hai na ki ye body builder log ki ye gudhh log to bas aise hi hai then he started abusing them about their size and how they cannot full fill the desires of their partner (wife). Tabhi unki aurat unke pass tikti nahi. (Date of Interview 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁵⁰Khuda ne kisi ko bhi perfect nahi banaya hai. Sab mei kuch na kuch kami hai, lekin hamari kami sabko isliye dikhti hai kyo ki hum aise ghoomte hai aur sabke samne jaise hai waise hi hai. Band kamre mei kya hota hai kisi ne dekha hai kya, par hum log thoda hasee mazaak karlete hai to log bolte hai ki Guddh hai mamu hai. Hum Hamari identity thoda sa kholte hai isliye log hame aisa bolte hai. (Date of Interview 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

our souls and try to be a man. Guilt, shame, honour — these are the words that haunt us.¹⁵¹

Nikunj, a 28-year-old gay-identified male sex worker, described his fear and tension:

I am always afraid that I may end up doing something which will create doubt in their minds. It is always there in my mind. Therefore, I always speak in a strong masculine voice. They should never doubt me. I, therefore, control my body and hands movements. These are the ways to protect my identity. As the place changes, I change my role too.¹⁵²

From the above narratives it is quite apparent that for a man to enjoy the privileges of his membership to the dominant gender, he will have to present himself in a particular manner to friends, family and significant others. This dramaturgical task guides the members of this “man” group to do certain things to put a convincing manhood act (Schwalbe 2005). This requires mastering a set of conventional signifying practices through which the identity “man” is established and upheld in interaction. Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) argue that the dramaturgical task of establishing creditability as a man and as a member of the dominant gender group is aided by having a male body. Because of the conventional association between maleness and manhood, a male body is a symbolic asset. It is normally taken as a sign of qualification for membership in the category “men.” However, it is neither necessary nor sufficient. Therefore, if one wishes to enjoy the privileges of membership to the group “men” then he must signify possession of a masculine self. This self is, however, only a virtual reality, a dramatic effect, or a consequence of how an actor’s appearance and behaviour are interpreted by others (Goffman 1959)

Homosexual desires are kept wrapped up so that the privileges enjoyed by being men in the family and community remain intact. But several instances were narrated by male sex workers where the mask slipped and role play was aborted. In one incident Durg, 19 years old male sex worker recalled an incident where he was caught cross-dressing at home. One day when everyone was gone out for work and Durg was alone at home he

¹⁵¹Beacuse mai apne ko kabhi perfect nahi samajhata hu. Maine galti kar di hai. Do life jeena easy nahi hota. Ki straight life mei kuch aur idhar kuch aur. Dar ke jeen padta hai. koi dekh lega kuch ho jayega, jo hamari aatma hai usko maar ke hum mard banne ki koshish karte hai. Samne se pata chal jayega, sharam, izzat yahi sab chalta hai . (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁵²Dar lagta hai ki kuch aisa na kar doo ki unko doubt aayega. Wo deemag mei rah jata hai. Is-liye ekdam kadak awaaz, unhe lagna nahi chahiye ki ladki hai, hands ke jo movements waigairha hai usko bhi control karna padhta hai. Ye sab tareeke hai apni pehchaan ko bachane ke liye. Jaise jagah badalta ha waise hi mera role bhi badalta hai. (Date of Interview 7/12/17 at GAURAV)

found a saree of his mother along with a few pieces of jewellery. Durg closed the windows and door and wrapped the saree and put on the jewellery and makeup. Then he clicked few pictures and then there was a knock at the door. Durg froze:

Bhai open the door! My sister called. I spoke in a strong manly voice — ok! Wait! I am changing. I am in Bathroom. Bhai I can hear you near the door please! Open the door! I was so afraid that afternoon. I quickly changed, took off the jewellery but makeup was still there and one earring was still dangling from my ear. She saw me and said — what is this nonsense! What are you up to brother? I said that it is nothing.¹⁵³

Durg is pursuing his bachelor in Banking and wants to have a career in banking. He is the first in his family to pass his class twelfth exam. His parents have a lot of hopes from Durg. But Durg has a constant fear of slipping off his manly-masculine mask which he wears at home and in college. Durg is worried about his final placement in college. He said:

I know I look like a girl and even the way I talk it is somewhat girlish. I need to work on my body and the way I speak. I need to look like a man because I do not want to fail in my interview. Everyone is very hopeful and also want this job desperately. I know many people who get irritated with people like us (homosexual). They hate us and if I encounter someone like this on the interview board then I do not know what will happen.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³Bahut experience Kiya hai maine, pata hai ek baar sab log ghar se bahar gaye hue the, aur ek baar mujhe saree pahanane ka tha. Meri bahan ka farewell party tha school Mei agle din, mummy ne ek saree nikar ke rakhi thi aur meri bahan school chali gayi thi aur doosre din uska farewell tha. Aur wo saree, maine khidki band Kiya darwaza band Kiya aur ha mai ghar mei akela tha. Aur mai mirror ke samne gaya aur maine mirror ke samne saree pahna, mereko aata tha saree pahanana. Mai bahan log ka dekh kar, bahan log kaise kar rahe hai au dekhte dekhte maine sab seekh liya. Phir maine pahana maine jewellery pahana Nath pahna, bahut achhe se dassing kiya, baal bhi bade hi the mere. Phir maine photo waigairaha click Kiya tahi taph taph taph taph ...bahan aagayi. Mai bola ab mai kya karu. Bolti hai bahi darwaza khol bhai darwaza khol. Mai bola haan ruk ja do minute, ek dum mard ki awaaz mei bola ki do minute ruk jaa change kar raha hu, bathroom mei hu. Bolti hai ki agar tu bathroom mei hai to darwaze ke pass se awaaz kyo aarahi hai. Arre mai tere ko bata raha hu ki mai bathroom mei jaa raha hu do minute ruk ja. Meri to ekdam se phat gayi phaphat change kiya, jewellery waigairaha to rah hi gaya tha, kaan waan ka. Phir jab mai bahar aaya to wo kuch kar rahi thi. Wo Capaat se kapde nikal rahi thi, maine saree bathroom Mei hi fold kar lya aur mai aaya aur table par rakh diya saara. Jewellery nikala aur side mei rakh diya tabhi bhi usne lipstick dekh le aur boli ki kya hai faltoogiri. mai bola arre kuch nahi re mai aise hi bas masti kar raha tha. (Date of Interview 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁵⁴Mere papa ki to naak uchi ho gayi. Mere ghar mei barvi ke baad koi padha hi nahi hai, mai pahla hu ki jo aage badha hai. Aur banking karne wala koi nahi hai. Abhi lagta hai aise ki jab 15 wi mei pahuchuga jab tab kya hoga, kahi na kahi se to mai chalkata hu na girl mafik, mera talking karne ka behaviour to wahi hai jab mera final placement ke liye interview hoga to mere ko sab puchege, mera knowledge, mere ko develop Karna padega, thoda to boy ke jaisa lagna mangta hai. Kahi na kahi dar lag raha hai ki agar mai interview Mei fail ho gaya tab kya hoga, bahut umeede hai sabko aur mujhe bhi. Mai aise logo ko janta hu jinhe apan jaise logo se ekdum chidh aati hai nafrat karte hai phir mera kya hoga. (Date of Interview 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

When a similar enquiry was put up to Satyam, a versatile (bisexual) male sex worker he replied:

No, it never occurred to me that I lack masculinity. I have mostly stayed with straight boys and no one is pure straight. There is no boy who has not had sex with boys. I can say this with full confidence. You check Facebook, there is no boy whom I cannot woo and have sex with. Being straight is a gimmick and facade. I am gay but only those who are acquainted with me know this. It is a world of performance. When I will present and showcase myself then only someone will know who I am. ¹⁵⁵

He added further:

I go to the gym because I am fond of a good body and because I want to look good. It is good for my work also. Later I want to work in TV serials on the DD1 channel. I know people there and that is why I am interested in the body building. ¹⁵⁶

According to Rishi, a versatile male sex worker, masculinity tension is not so important.

There are other more important issues like survival:

It's not like this. Mumbai is one city where you cannot survive without money so we don't think too much when we are doing it. But later on, we feel guilty but then we compromise with the situation. ¹⁵⁷

Noor, another versatile male sex worker deconstructed the notion of masculinity and power and according to him:

Nowadays one who earns has all the power in the house, everyone listens to him. Even a father loses his power and control if a son earns 25000 rupees a month then he is the most powerful at home. No matter father is elder but it is the son who is earning and therefore power is in his hand. ¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ nahi aisa kabhi bhi deemag mei nahi aaya hai, mai adhiktar sraight ladko ke saath hi raha hu lekin koi bhi pura straight nahi hota. koi aisa ladka nahi hoga jisne ladke ke saath sex anhi kiya hoga. Mai daawe ke saath kah sakta hu likh ke. Aap Facebook check kar ke dekhiye aise koi ladka nahi hai jisko mai patana chahu aur sex kar ke na chodu... straight hona sirf ek deekhawa hai, mai ek gay hu, Duniya walo ke liye jo mere ko jaanta hai sirf wahi jaanta hai ki. parde ke duniya hai ye. Jab mai apne ko deekhauga, pesh karuga tabhi to koi samjhega na ki mai kya hu. (Date of Interview 6/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁵⁶Nahi mai gym jata hu, wo mere ko shauk hai acchi body ki, personality acchi deekhe, wo mere kaam ke liye bhi accha hai. Mai baad mei serial mei kaam karna chahta hu DD1 par, meri pehchan bhi hai isliye mai apni body banata hu. (Date of Interview 6/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁵⁷Aisa kuch nahi hai, mumbai is one city where without money you cannot survive, so we dont think too much when we are doing it. But later on we feel guilty par hum haalat se samjhauta Kar lete hai. (Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁵⁸aaj ke jamane mei jo kamaa raha hai ghar par usiki hukumt chalti hai usi ki baat mante hai, baap ki bhi nahi chalti hai, agar beta 25000 rupayee Mahine kama raha hai to ghar pe usi ki chalegi, baap bhale his badaa hai par chalegi to bete ki hi. (Date of Interview 20/12/17 at GAURAV)

I have dealt with masculinity tensions of male sex workers and I can clearly delineate three responses to this tension. Kothi-identified male sex workers who were effeminate and played transgenderal roles with clients experienced dilemmas, contradictions, ambiguities, and frustration. Aapaa's reaction was the manifestation of his frustration. Gay-identified male sex workers were constantly trying to mask and camouflage their homosexual desire so that their masculine self is unharmed. Bisexual male sex workers did not show masculinity tension like Kothi and gay male sex workers. They remained concerned with survival and equated masculinity with financial security emphasising their breadwinning role. At this juncture, one can see the 'performative' aspect of sexuality among male sex workers.

Their performance as an MSW with a client at a cruising spot and as a heterosexual man at home is quite real as they experience them in terms of their personal and social consequences. Though these are performances, there is hardly any choice as evident from their interaction. A system of compulsory heterosexuality exerts enormous social pressure on male sex workers to "perform" the appropriate gender, a *Kothi* in the park and a 'man' at home, with two distinct sexual identities. *Kothi* playing the role of enchantress to attract male clients is nothing but social pressure where their 'man' clients want to have sex with another man but do not want to jeopardise their masculinity and want to maintain their hegemonic masculinity. Male sex workers are practical in their approach. They know that they have two distinct identities and they live each identity in a distinct style. Though these two lives create conflict in them they know that nothing much can be done to overcome this conflict. As they experience this conflict they know that there are no ways to override this societal pressure and conception of masculinity. For a male sex worker to enjoy the benefits that emanate from membership in the dominant gender group, he must present himself to others as a particular kind of social being: a man. I believe that there is more to the sexual identity of male sex workers. The process of dividing life into many compartments is a good attempt by MSWs to survive.

Conclusion

The question of gender and sexual identity transcends the division based on anatomical and physical differences. Mere two categories, that is, male and female do not offer an answer to understand a vast area of overlap. It is in this overlap that categories like ef-

feminine male and masculine female can be understood. It is here where male sex workers can also be located and understood. The “dramaturgical” term of Ervin Goffman is useful to understand further complexities which result from the compulsion to conceal effeminate male identity and masculine female identity by means of performativity. A recourse to dramaturgical approach for subversion is a pragmatic response from male sex workers who would otherwise face more discrimination, harassment, victimisation, stigmatisation and criminalisation. Such performance becomes part of everyday life to such an extent that male sex workers internalise the multiplicity of identities. Moreover, they also routinise switching from one role to others depending upon the social milieu. Such complexities cannot be explained by the erroneous binary division of male and female. The heteronormative division also fails to recognise the underlying tension and different subjective erotic cum sexual desire and behaviour. The fluidity framework offers a broader and wider base to understand homosexuality in general and male sex workers in particular not only from anatomical plus psycho-physical angles but also from various other theoretical standpoints. Carl Jung’s analytical viewpoint lays strong emphasis on this very idea of dynamism which cannot be frozen into fixed and static identity especially when it comes to the domain of gender and sexuality. He, through the idea of “anima” and “animus” breaks the polarity and underscores the overlap by insightful reference to the interplay of the embedded feminine into male and masculinity into female. Jungian’s answer to the vexing question of identity trouble which results from the conscious or unconscious manifestation of feminine behaviour in male or masculine behaviour in females lays the foundation for resolution. From here I will move to explore families of male sex workers in my next chapter. Investigation of the relationship between the male sex workers and their family takes one close to a virtually untapped terrain of social tension. Family is thus an inevitable category for understanding this social reality which constitutes part of the everyday life of male sex workers. An enquiry into family directs one to other sub-terrains of family like marriage and procreation. It seems important to look at family beyond the fact that it is simply an interface between the larger society and the individual members.

CHAPTER 5

Male Sex Workers: In the Family, Out of Place

In the previous chapter, I attempted to locate the lost identities of male sex workers in the binaries of gender and sexuality. A recourse to performativity as a subversive tactic is a pragmatic response from male sex workers who would otherwise face stigma and discrimination. Such performance becomes part of everyday life to such an extent that male sex workers internalise the multiplicity of identities. One important aspect of this multiplicity of identities is family. This chapter locates male sex workers in the family setup and kinship units and tries to understand their ties with significant others in the family. Some important questions which this chapter addresses are — how do male sex workers perceive and identify themselves as a part of family and kinship units? Do male sex workers view family as a support system or as a barrier to their homosexual identity? Do MSWs feel stereotyped or stigmatised by family members? This chapter further explores the outcomes of compulsory marriage for male sex workers who are either homosexual or bisexual.

Family is a fundamental constituent in the institutional fabric of our society. The family never operates in isolation rather it is influenced by religious, economic and political institutions. To understand the larger dynamics of the family we need to understand family in a societal framework. In fact family is the building block of our larger society and both are influenced by each other. In the contemporary world, family has been a highly contested term and there have been rising concern about the ‘crisis of the family’. In the recent past, with coming out of gay and other LGBT group members there has been growing anxiety about the alteration of this basic structure called family. Description and portrayal of gay and lesbian generally do not view them as part of ‘family’ and kinship units. They are generally regarded as nothing more than their sexual identity which is viewed as lustful and promiscuous. In contrast, heterosexual identity is always linked with everlasting kinship ties and enduring associations. This results in anxiety among parents and kins of LGBT youth who are believed to be the breaker of these continuity and long-lasting associations. Family as space is always on guard against anything alien or foreign (behaviour). In such circumstances, many LGBT

youths prefer to move away from their biological families and have newer ties based on friendship and community feeling. Thus many scholars have described family as something broader than the traditional relationships based on lineage, alliance and marriage, referring instead to kin-like networks of relationships based on friendship and commitments which are 'beyond blood' (Wakeling and Bradstock 1995). Such networks might also incorporate selected blood relatives. They may or may not involve children. But whatever the particular patterns, they have cultural and symbolic meaning for the people who participate or feel a sense of belonging in and through them. Goss (1997:19) opines that everyone has the right to define significant relationships and decide their significant relationship who may count as family. If this is the case, something is clearly stirring in the politics of the family, and in particular in the lives of those historically excluded from family life. We are witnessing the development and public affirmation of 'families of choice' (Weston 1991).

Male sex workers deal with multiple challenges at various fronts. They often remain entangled at the centre of cobwebbed challenges which are the outcome of their sexual identity, work identity and can be mapped out in connection with their clients, peer, neighbourhood, employer, state and so on and so forth. One strand of this cobweb leads one to a major quarter — family. Investigation of the relationship between the male sex workers and their family takes one close to a virtually untapped terrain of social tension. Family is an inevitable category for understanding this social reality which constitutes part of the everyday life of male sex workers. An enquiry into family directs one to other sub-terrains of family — like marriage and procreation. It seems important to look at family beyond the fact that it is simply an interface between the larger society and the individual members. In the words of Hannah Arendt (1998:28-29) family is the manifestation of the larger society and society is in fact super-human family in form of collective families which cater to collective house-keeping. House-keeping is here taken in the sense of a particular social order For the maintenance of this social order, family can be seen as working as a social unit of control and primary surveillance agency besides its caring role up to a certain stage. Family has thus remained enjoined upon with a serious concern towards the maintenance of continuity. However, its age-old preoccupation with this continuity is undermined due to various factors. Male sex workers' responses to the idea of family, marriage and procreation expose one of such factors which seem

to undermine the idea of family, marriage and procreation. This chapter underlines the nature of relationship which the MSWs have with their parents and family. I am building on this chapter through the narratives of male sex workers about their relationship with their families and the families of the MSWs have not been contacted or interviewed at any point. Family evokes a thought of a social space which is familiar. However, this very familiar social space becomes unfamiliar, in the case of male sex workers who create such familiar space in completely unfamiliar space based on a different notion of the family which undermines the age-old meaning of family. The chapter tries to understand the familial life of male sex workers in the light of various scholarly claims. Engels' (2010) suggestion, for instance, provides a framework in this regard that family itself is not natural, it is rather development of a particular stage and a form of human association on the basis of blood relationship and for Engels, the family form was the product like religion, politics, culture of successive mode of production (Engels 2010:25-26).

Most of us are born in families if not all and thus from the beginning we are part of this web of relationships. When I interviewed male sex workers about their familial relationships and how they respond to personal issues, one of the informants, Rishi, promptly replied that “family and society is too much of an interference¹⁵⁹”. Durkheim talks about the ecstasy of being part of kinship and how the social is beyond the individuals. Why do certain people disassociate themselves from this ecstasy? According to Satyam, a bisexual male sex worker, “society is there outside me but I am constantly reminded that I cannot escape¹⁶⁰”. This is the reality for all male sex workers I interacted with. They try hard to stay away from the society they are part of. Therefore loneliness is their constant companion. Sam, a 19-year-old gay-identified male sex worker said:

Normally I don't stay at home. I leave home early morning and come back late at night around 11-12 O'clock¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁹ ye ghar parivaar jhamela hai aur kuch nahi. (Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁶⁰ mai duniya se pare hu par phir bhi hum bach nahi pate hai. (Date of Interview 06/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁶¹ mai ghar par bhi jaada nahi rahta mai subah ghar se nikalata hu to seedhe raat ko hi jaata hu ghar 11 -12 baje. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

Thus there is a constant need to find friends and support who will understand them. According to Sam, he did not stay at home because he was scared of the constant interrogation by his sisters. To avoid their constant probing he preferred to stay away and only went back home when everyone was asleep. When male sex workers are with family they have to behave a socially appropriate manner. According to Krishna:

When I visit my parents in the village I cut my hair short, wear a shirt, take off my studs which I otherwise always wear ever since I have pierced my ears. I also try to keep my hands in my pocket so that I don't move them too often. It's not easy, you see.¹⁶²

Thus they have to wear a societal mask and act a role to conform that they are part of this social reality. But the constant gaze of the social makes them uncomfortable and many of them prefer to be lonely, rather than to be with family and kin who ask uncomfortable questions and are always pointing out mistakes. In all their narratives, male sex workers have been yelling that “we want to be free from the societal gaze”. They quest for aloneness because gaze disturbs them. They are not comfortable in social and familial gatherings. The most important reason for this is discomfited mental state due to their sexual and work identity. Their families address them as *hijra*, *gud* and *bailee*¹⁶³ which are derisive words to focus on their emasculated feminine identity. Male sex workers who were part of this research come from lower economic strata and financial constraints along with a sexual identity which is stigmatised and tabooed, sex work remained the only option to earn little to remain afloat. Out of 34 male sex workers, none have shared about their work identity to their family and there is interminable fear that their family will come to know someday. Therefore there is a sustained effort to stay away from family so that their secret remains safe. Still, I observed that most of them have not shunned their familial responsibilities. They were still part of their family and took up responsibilities expected from an adult son of the family. They remain affectionate towards their family, parents and siblings and were busy planning a better future for them.

¹⁶²abhi mai jab bhi gaon jata hai, baal katne ka. Phir udhar jake shirt pahno. Aur mai apne kaan ke studs bhi nikaal deta hu. Aur bas hamesha haath Jeb mei nahi to phir idar udhar jata hi hai. Apan log ka life easy nahi hai. (Date of Interview 12/8/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁶³ Hijra is transgender person (male to female); Gud is a slang used for effeminate males; Bailee is a Marathi term for men who are like women (bai is ‘woman’ and lee is ‘like’ so it is someone who is like a woman).

In India, there are emotional and exceptionally strong ties within the family. Here, the family is not limited to biological parents and siblings but includes an extended family with grandparents, aunts, uncle, in-laws, nephews and nieces, and distant cousins. This extended family system remains great social support and emotional anchor in times of distress associated with daily lives. But this is just one aspect of their life. Many times the personal choice and desire of an individual are subsumed within family needs and desire. The person becomes a replica of his family with no personal desire or identity. In this context, there can be little space for personal identity as a fundamental means of self-definition (Kakar 1989). When questions about family were raised, Male sex workers shared two kinds of relationships — they have taken up the responsibility of families like taking care of daily household expenses, education of younger siblings, marriage of sisters, house rent, electricity bill, LPG gas bills and groceries bills, mobile and TV recharge and other responsibilities. At the same time, there were narratives of separation, running away, no communication, avoidance and in few cases complete renunciation of the family. Most of the problems in the lives of male sex workers are due to heterosexism and homophobia. When we combine dominant gender norm which define masculinity and femininity to this discriminatory practices the outcome is a troubled individual who wants to escape society and its judgemental gaze.

Deconstructing and Defining Family

There have been several ongoing debates about family as an institution and how it should be structured so that it may perform the productive role. Families with gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender members are common in our society but do they have access to family in the same way as a non LGBT member or the ‘normal-straight’ members of the family have? How do LGBT members of family affect and are affected by the institution of the family? Prior to the engagement with the discussion, we need to define family and find out if such definitions have scope for LGBT members. Nancy J. Mezey in her work *LGBT Families* raises this pertinent question and opined that families are socially and not biologically constructed. Thus families are the outcome of social, political, cultural, economic and historical context in which those families exist (Mezey 2015:2). In our Indian context, we can see how families have changed through different time period as well as in different geographical locations. Powell et al. (2010) while addressing the pertinent question of how to define family and who will be the

members of this social group will have huge implications for individuals within the family. Mezey (2015) defines family as:

Family is a social institution found in all societies comprising two or more people related by birth, law, or intimate affectionate relationships, who may or may not reside together. (Mezey 2015: 4)

In this context, it will be interesting to see the legal definition of family which includes within its fold individuals who are connected through bloodlines or legal ties like marriage, adoption, legal guardianship. Judith Stacey in her work *In the Name of the Family* dealt with the concept of an LGBT family. While defining the concept of the LGBT family, Stacey raised a few pertinent questions like — Are every single member of LGBT families gay? Or does the presence of just one gay member colour a family gay? (Stacey 1996:107). Kath Weston (1991) in *Families We Choose* argued that LGBT members of the family have been “exiles from kinship” and the moment someone claims a gay or lesbian identity it is viewed as a rejection of family and departure from kinship (Weston 1991:22). Thus the dominant theme is that ‘family’ and ‘LGBT’ do not go together. According to Mezey (2015), such portrayals are outcomes of two key assumptions — gays and lesbians cannot have children and LGBT generally reject and get alienated from their families. So amid this rejection and alienation how do we conjure gay or lesbians as members of families. Baca et al. (2011) in their work, *Diversity in Families* agreed that defining LGBT families is difficult because it is individuals who have sexual identity and not families they are part of (Baca et al. 2011:429). Generally in a family, members may have different sexual orientations or identities. Furthermore, sexual identities may change over a period of time where at one point one may identify himself as gay but may explore later that he is in fact a bisexual. One of the informants, Dhanush, who identified himself as a bisexual, said that until about two years back, he would identify himself as gay but when he went to Bangkok for a conference he explored the term and realised that he was in fact a bisexual male. Thus defining an LGBT family is difficult. Allen and Demo (1995) define LGBT families by the presence of one or more LGBT adults in the family. Mezey (2015) defines an LGBT family as

two or more people related by birth, law, or intimate affectionate relationships, who may or may not reside together, and where the LGBT identity of at least one family member impacts other family members in some meaningful way (Mezey 2015:5).

Going by Mezey's definition of LGBT family I am dealing with 34 LGBT Families. Therefore, through my interaction with 34 male sex workers, I have tried to understand their interaction with their families. When a child is growing up, parents are in constant interaction with them taking care of and providing love and affection. Hence the families are familiar with their children. Out of 34 male sex workers, only one, Durg, came out to his family. So how important is coming out? Are families and parents completely unaware of their child's orientation? Or they know but still do not want to see and acknowledge it. In the next section, I will focus on these pertinent questions.

Secrecy of Identity, Coming Out and Familial Response

Boxer, Cook, and Herdt (1991) define coming out as "the process by which one declares his/her identity to be 'homosexual' or 'gay' or 'lesbian' to family, friends or others who assume the person to be 'heterosexual'" (Boxer, Cook and Herdt 1991:59). Thus through 'coming out' a person develops a feeling of 'wholeness' through creating a kind of compatibility between his inner self and outer presentation of that self thereby bringing out the inner into the outer so that their private identity becomes a social reality. Weston (1991) in her pathbreaking work *Families We Choose* argues:

Closet symbolizes isolation, the individual without society, a stranger even to self". Its imagery is consistent with the atomistic conceptions of a society in which individuated actors must struggle to communicate and gain legitimacy for private truths. In the process of coming out, a person hopes to leave behind the extreme self-consciousness alluded to by the man who joked that he came out to his parents because he was tired of remembering to edit pictures of his lover out of his slide shows (Weston 1991:165)

Thus coming out is generally seen as a normal and positive – though not necessarily required – interpersonal accomplishment (Cain, 1991; Beaty, 1999). Typically, lesbians and gay males reveal their sexual orientation to one or more friends before any family members are told (D'Augelli & Hershberger 1993; D'Augelli & Patterson 2001). This does not suggest that coming out to parents is unimportant; rather, it is because of its significance that youth are cautious about initiating this disclosure (Savin-Williams 2001). Of total of 34 male sex workers, only Durg, a gay-identified male sex worker came out to his parents and family. A 19 years old graduation first year student who has been selling sex from the age of 14 years was excited when the Supreme Court verdict on section 377 was pronounced in 2018 and he could not hide and control his enthusi-

asm and told his parents about his sexual identity. He was brutally beaten up by both parents and his father has not spoken to him after his coming out. For the rest 33 of them, it is the same narrative.

No, no MSW's life is not so simple. To come out at home is just not possible especially in India. There is no acceptance. We have to keep in mind so many things like our family, relatives and our close friends. Yes, some people do come out but their families are educated and progressive (Rishi, a versatile male sex worker)¹⁶⁴

The process of coming out is not easy and there are many factors which play a role in disclosing their sexual identity to significant others. Haas et al. (2011) in their paper *Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations* argued that the very first step in this entire process of coming out entails accepting ones own identities. Afterwards, they begin revealing those identities to select family members and close friends. Such processes are often stressful and the amount of internalised homophobia and external support a youth has will often shape the coming out process. The case of 33 men, who have not shared their identities with family and kin points towards a lack of familial support and high incidents of homophobia. Do they share their identities with anyone at all? Manoj, a male sex worker, informed me that they generally share their sexual identity with their gay friends. Even this sharing with gay friends is not uncomplicated. First, the male sex worker tries to understand whether the friend with whom he is sharing his identity is trustworthy. One main reason for this mistrust is several incidents where gay friends or partners, after a breakup, have either disclosed or have blackmailed the partner with threat of disclosure to their family. In the case of Samuel, 19 years old male sex worker who was in a relationship with a boy from the Thane district of Maharashtra. Initially, they were happy together but later Sam discovered that his partner is 'psycho'¹⁶⁵ (description by informant) and he cannot continue with him. But his partner wanted to marry him. Samuel was just 15 years old at that time and he panicked. Samuel tried to make him understand:

¹⁶⁴nahi nahi, MSW ki jo life hai wo itni easy nahi hai, ghar par open hona matlab apni India mei to possible hi nahi hai ... nahi acceptance nahi hai, bahut saari cheezo ko, hum family ko dekhte hai, rishtedaro ko dekhte , aur apne friends ko dekhana padta hai. Hanh par bahut saare log hai jo open ho jaate hai lekin unki family narrow mind nahi hoti. (Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁶⁵ the term 'psycho' is loosely used in Mumbai and many parts of India to refer to someone who is a psychopath or socially dangerous. In case of this partner, Samuel shared that on one occasion his boyfriend broke a beer bottle on his head and would frequently indulge in such dangerous acts to scare Samuel

I told him that it is not so simple, we have to think very carefully and plan, it is not so easy. But my boyfriend told me to come to his place with all my bag and baggage to stay with him. I tried to explain to him that what if you turn me out of your house after a couple of months and then my family will never accept me.¹⁶⁶

After this incident, Samuel started avoiding him. His boyfriend started blackmailing him. He had Samuel's sister's mobile number and he warned Samuel that he will reveal their relationship to his sisters. Samuel panicked:

I was very scared, I did not know what to do and then I locked my door and I cut my veins. By mistake it was the main vein that was cut, the blood flow was not stopping. Then my sister came and I was taken to hospital...later when my sister asked me when I was alone, I told her everything and showed her my chats also.¹⁶⁷

But life became very tough and harsh for Samuel. He was on constant vigilance by his sisters and family members after his disclosure:

My sister removed my names from all virtual chat groups and she destroyed my sim card. She elicited a promise from me that I will not be part of such activities in the future and will not maintain any relationships with anyone. There will be no chat, no conversation and no meeting with any gay men. Since then my family doubts me. My eldest sister was suspicious about me from the beginning and now after this incident, she tightened her grip. They have been trying hard to make me 'straight'.¹⁶⁸

Then after few months his elder sister, whom Samuel is fearful of, came to know that Samuel still maintained his association with gay men and she became very furious.

I and my elder sister do not get along. She just wants that I should work and take care of myself and my family since I am the only surviving male member of the family. Now, whenever she is angry she will tell me—you are gay, pick up your bag and leave...It does not bother us. Our father did not do anything for us so what are you going to do. You just

¹⁶⁶ Mai bola ki ye itna simple nahi hai sab soch samajh kar karna padta hai. Wo bola ki mai kuch nahi jaanta kal ko tu jayega aur apna saara bag-waig leke idhar aajayega. maine usko samjhaya ki maan lo ek do mahine baad tumne mujhe nikaal diya to aise mei meri family to mujhe bilkul bhi accept nahi karegi. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁶⁷ Mai bahut dar gaya samajh nahi aaraha tha ki kya karu aur phir maine apna door lock kiya bahar ka aur maine apna nas kat liya. Aur galati se mera main nas kat gaya tha aur mera khoon hi nahi rook raha tha . didi andar aagayi mai ek kone mei chup gaya aur sab mujhe dhood rahe the. Phir mai mila aur hospital gaya baad mei...Lekin meri beech wali bahan ne baad mei akele poocha ki sach bol haath kyo kaata tha tune, maine usko sab kuch bata diya, uske chat bhi deekhae. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁶⁸ Didi ne sab group se mera naam hata diya, sim card tod diya aur mere se promise liya ki mai aaj ke baad ye sab nahi kaurnga. Didi boli ki meri kasam aaj ke baad tu kisi gay ke saath koi sambandh nahi, koi chat nahi koi baat nahi koi milna joolna nahi. Tab se mere upar doubt chalu hai pure ghar ka. Badi didi ko to hamesha hi shak hota tha mujh par aur iske baad to wo bahut strict ho gayi. Sab mujhe straight banane Mei lag gaye. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

leave...(long pause). There is an enormous problem in my family and it is never going to get better.¹⁶⁹

Kekana and Dietrich (2017) studied 6 young black gay men who have not disclosed their sexual orientation to their fathers in Johannesburg, South Africa. They explored the outcomes of non-disclosure for father-son relationships and found that coming out or disclosure is unnecessary and may have negative reactions. Similar studies by Green (2000) and Vincke and Heeringen (2002) suggested that disclosure is not necessary and may be lead to poor psychological functioning. In fact non-disclosure of their sexual orientation by gay men provides them with a sense of security against negative reactions from their parents (D'Augelli et al. 2005; Legate et al. 2012). Durg and Sam's experience with their families clearly shows that any kind of disclosure, both planned and unplanned, may result in violence, abuse and psychological trauma for these young men.

These kinds of narratives are very common in the lives of male sex workers. They are constantly doubted and always under surveillance by their families. There is no recognition in the domestic space and therefore there is a constant quest to search for a space where they may get accepted and loved like a regular family member. Samay is a kothi-identified male sex worker who stays with his family comprising of mother, father, four elder brothers and their wives and children. When he was asked if his family knew about him (sexual identity) he replied:

Yes they know that I carry a ladies bag, I carry condoms and I work with MSM people. They always tell me to keep my hands straight and why do I move so much.¹⁷⁰

So these are narratives where the family 'almost' knows everything about the sexual identity but no one wants to talk about it, it's better left like this — an open secret. Samay further shared that when he joined Humsafar Trust (HST), an organisation for gay and MSM men in Mumbai as a peer educator, his brother was not happy and he told

¹⁶⁹Mera aur badi didi ki nahi jamta hai. Uska bas ye hai kaam kar apne ko sambhaal, humko dekh, ghar ka ab tu hi bacha hai. Abhi to har baat par tu gay hai bag Utha hame koi fark nahi padhta. Jab baap ne kuch nahi kiya bhai ne kuch nahi kiya to tu kya karega. Tu chala ja bag leke , ye aur wo bas yahi sab. ...(long pause) family ka bahut problem hai aur ye kabhi teek nahi hoga. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁷⁰Ha Itna to pata hi hai ladies purse rakhta hai. Condoms carry karta hai MSM logo ke saath kaam karta hai to Itna to pata hi hai, hamesha bolte hai haath seedha rakh hilana jaroori hai kya. (Date of Interview 25/6/16 at GAURAV)

their mother that ‘he is half gay and if he will join HST he will be completely gone’. But Samay was determined and therefore his mother allowed him but warned him to be careful. After a few weeks when neighbours and friends started talking about his joining HST, one of Samay’s brother’s friends came home and asked his brother that why did they allow Samay to work at HST because everyone in the locality is making fun of him. Then Samay’s brother confronted Samay:

At home they are on constant vigil. One day I was confronted by my elder brother about my work and timing. I told him that job gets over by 6 pm and after that I spend around 2 hours on site. Brother asked me: so what do you do on site? I distribute condoms. Then my brother derided – “Oh! so you distribute condoms to hijras like you.” Now they all talk among themselves that, leave it, it’s his life what do we have to do with it?¹⁷¹

Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker, is originally from the Nasik district of Maharashtra. He left home a few years back and now stays alone in Vasai. When I asked him about his family and if anyone in the family knows about his sexual identity, Ishq said:

I: No, no one in my family knows about me. They know that I am girlish and I like to dance but they do not know that I sell sex and I have relationships with men. Moreover, my family is uneducated so they don’t understand all this.

R: Has anyone ever questioned you about your looks or your mannerism?

I: No, they have never questioned me but they know that I am a little ‘wo¹⁷²’ type. So they don’t ask me but tell me to control my behaviour.¹⁷³

Not sharing one’s sexual identity with close family does not mean that it is boxed or closeted. D’ Augelli et al. (2005) found that parents of gay adolescents who showed more gender-nonconforming and less masculine behaviour in childhood are more likely to suspect that their children are gay. From mothers’ reports, many gay children engaged in cross-dressing during their childhood at around three or four years old (Green

¹⁷¹Mai bahi ko bola ki aare wo aise hi masti karte hai. Bhai bola ki agar koi kuch bhi bola to mai ek ek ki haddi tod doonga. Par ghar par sab chaukanne rahte hai. Ek din bade bhai ne mere kaam ke baare mei pucha. Mai bola ki kaam to 6 baje khtam ho jata hai uske baad mai site par condom baatne jata hu. Tab mera bhai bola–kya re tu apne jaise hijdo ko condom battha hai kya. Ab to sab bolte hai ki chod na usi life hai upne ko kya Karna hai. (Date of Interview 25/6/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁷² ‘wo type’ is generally vocabulary used for MSM and gay men in India. Either such terms like ‘wo’ is used or they are referred by various indigenous slangs like chhaka, gud, mamu, hijra.

¹⁷³Nahi family mei kisi ko bhi nahi pata hai. Bas thoda sa girlish hu, dance vaigaraha kar leta hu bas itna pata hai par mai sex work karta hu, ladko ke saath sambandh rahkta hu ye sab nahi pata hai. Aur meri family Thodi si uneducated hai to unhe ye sab cheezo ka pata hi nahi chalta hai. Kabhi koi sawal nahi kiya ki aise Kyo rahte ho, Kyo chalte ho? Pucha nahi hai par unhe pata hai ki ye thoda sa wo type ka hai itna puchte nahi hai mujhe bas bolte hai ki control mei raha kar. (Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV)

1976). Salzburg (2004) in his research with parents of adolescent gay and lesbians found that some parents had a sense of awareness about the sexual identity of their sons. The chief sign emerged from the gender non-conforming behaviour and effeminate qualities of their sons. Thus, how a person expresses his or her gender identity plays an important role in understanding his/her sexual orientation. American Psychology Association (APA) defines gender expression as the way an individual presents his or her gender through culturally structured behaviour and attitude that is based on biological sex (APA 2012). Kothi and gay-identified male sex workers Samay, Aiba, Aapa, Ishq, Durg, Sam, Krishna and Neel shared that in their childhood they would play with girls or would play games that were typically played by girls and would participate in doing household chores. Such behaviour was seen as effeminate by family and kin. Aiba recalled his childhood and told me:

Since childhood, I had different hobbies. My friends would call me to play cricket and hockey or to ride a bicycle. But I would play something different with girls like playing with dolls, or langadi taang (hopscotch) and snakes and ladders. ¹⁷⁴

When such gender-nonconforming behaviour was displayed by these young boys it led to negative reactions from family members and peers. The peer would tease them and call names. Parents would constantly remind them to 'behave normally'. This led to distress and confusion about their identity. They would be called hijra, gud and bailee by their parents and peers. Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker recalled how his father would call him a bailee and it would hurt a lot.

It would hurt a lot when my father would use such harsh words in my childhood. They were unable to understand me and did not make efforts to understand me. Whenever my father would say those harsh words it used to hurt a lot. We are not so affected by outsiders. I strongly feel that parents know about their child (sexual identity) but they do not want to admit or acknowledge it.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴Actually kya hua ki bachpan se hi mujhe alag shauk tha, mere jitne bhi friends hai mujhe match khelne ko bulate the hockey khelne ko bulate the cycle chalne ko bulate the par mai insab se hatke kuch ladkiyo ke saath aur hi khelta Jaise gudda guddi ki shaadi karata, langadi khelta, saap sidhi khelta . (Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁷⁵It use to hurt a lot when my father would say those things in my childhood, bahut hurt Hota tha. Samajh nahi rahe hai aur samajhne ki koshish bhi nahi Kar rahe hai. Papa bolte the to bahut bura lagta tha, Bahar walo se Itna fark nahi padta. Mujhe lagta hai ki har maa baap ko pata rahta hai ki unka bachha kya hai bas bolna nahi chahte. (Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV)

Seidman (2002) argues that the geographical location where coming out occurs reflects the politics, cultures, identities and ideologies of that place and influences how homosexuality is lived out. In a typical setting coming out takes place in a heteronormative culture where two rigid binaries (male/female) have hegemonised dualistic thinking. In the recent years, LGBTQI rights have been recognised and traditional notions of sex are being interrogated. Several societies are establishing a post-closet era, characterised by greater social acceptance and visibility of different genders and sexual identities. But such developments are mostly part of educated middle and upper middle class social groups. Many male sex workers stated that their parents were uneducated and did not understand such behaviour. In fact parents have just one word for such behaviours — Hijra, bailee. Male sex workers are still part of a geographical location where rigid binaries of gender and sexualities are considered normal and natural and any transgression is deeply ostracised.

Male sex workers constantly negotiate their sexual identities with family, relatives and ‘straight’ friends so that they may maintain their image in our heteronormative society. Narratives shared by male sex workers point towards a constant battle to survive and sustain in family and larger kinship units. Organically they have not come out to their family but there is a constant reminder from family and friends that they are different and homosexuality is not our culture. So there is a constant battle of negotiation and contestation. There is a lot of reasoning and reflection as to who are the people they are going to share their feelings with. In such a scenario can they trust and rely on someone? Do they have any support from family?

In Search of Home: Being Part of Family and Kinship Units

Home is conceptualised as a place which gives us security, love, affection and somewhere we belong. Most of us grew up in some kind of home and have experienced the feeling of belongingness. While male sex workers were recalling their childhood memories, their stories from childhood gave a different picture of the home. As I traced life stories from childhood to adulthood what was noticeable was how this visual of home as a secure place with loved one undergoes a major shift. Thus many male sex workers migrated from their childhood home to Mumbai looking out for jobs and some ‘freedom’ to live the way they want. Weeks et al. (2001) conceptualise two kinds of home in

their book *Same Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and Other Life Experiments* — the one in which we grow up with our family of origin and other is the one we create through ‘settling down’ and forming a family of our own. In Indian society, many married men stay with their parents and unmarried siblings. In the recent past, quite a few men, after getting married, start living separately with their wife away from parents and siblings. While tracing the lives of 34 male sex workers, I recorded that 15 of them stay with their families of which 4 are married. 19 male sex workers stay by themselves in some kind of rented accommodation on sharing basis with friends or boyfriends. Out of 19 MSW one is a divorcee and the rest 18 have never been married. At this point, I want to understand the kind of relationship these 34 individuals shared with their immediate family and parents. Through a few life stories, one wants to understand how familial relations unfold when one or more members of the family are gay or homosexual.

Neel was born in Mumbai in the late 1980s in Andheri (East). He was the youngest in the family after two sisters and one brother. He belonged to the Sutar community and his father was a carpenter by profession. When he was about 6 years of age his family had to leave Mumbai after riots broke out post Babri Masjid demolition in 1992. The family went back to Rajasthan and bought some land and started farming. The early life was calm and peaceful. Though young Neel would show different tastes and preferences unlike his elder brother but there were no serious consequences. Moreover, Neel would never do anything in front of his father or elder brother. According to him, he would try to stay straight. But he has different tastes and desires unlike other boys of his age:

My sister used to stitch clothes and sometimes to check the measurement she would ask me to try those clothes. I would wear those clothes for maybe just two minutes but I would love myself in those clothes even if it was for just two minutes. We would sometime also wear ghaghara and visit our aunt’s house and stay with the women of the house and have fun. Since we use to be dressed up as women with veils no one would recognise us¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶Mai apne papa aur bhai ke samne ye sab nahi karta tha. Seedhe hi rahta tha. par meri didi kapde silti thi to kabhi kabhi maap ke liye mujhe wo pahanhe ko deti thi, 2 minute ke liye hi pahanta tha par mujhe bahut achha lagta tha un kapdo ko pahan ke. Hum log kabhi kabhi ghagra bhi pahante the , mera ek dost bhi tha mere saath, hum dono wo ghaghra pahan kar chunar leke apne bade papa ke ghar jaate the aur wahi baithte the. , baith ke rote the. Mazaak karte the. Kyo ki hum ghooghat kar ke jaate the to kisi ko pata hi nahi chalta tha, waha par badi mummy ki bahu hoti thi mai jaake unko chidhata tha, mazaak karta tha, majee se baat karte the. (Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

After Neel failed his 10th board exam he was sent to Mumbai where his elder brother and cousins were already working as carpenters. While Neel was staying with his cousins in their house, one of his cousin's friends had sex with Neel. Then another boy also had sex with Neel. After few days, these boys told Neel's elder brother that his brother is a 'bad-character' boy. At that moment Neel was brutally beaten up by his elder brother with a wooden plank. He was injured and was taken to hospital where he remained for a week. Later he was sent back home to Rajasthan. In the village, Neel stayed for two years. He never stepped out of his house since the news about him being a 'bad character' boy spread like wildfire in the village and everyone in the village came to know about him. After two years Neel was again sent to Mumbai for work. Neel started staying with his cousin's family. One night he slept in the warehouse with his cousin and in the morning when he came back to his cousin's house for breakfast, his sister-in-law interrogated Neel if he did something with his cousin. According to Neel he could not take any more of this insult and left home for ever:

There was so much mistrust against me and it would hurt, I had already stayed in exile in my village for 2 whole years. How much more do I have to take?¹⁷⁷

It has been 15 years now and Neel has not visited his home. Now he stays in a rented room with a friend. He cooks Gujrati food in the morning in a house where he works as a cook and later in the day he carries out sex work. Life is better now and Neel feels that no one judges him now, he is gay, he is a sex worker and he is happy. Thus family lacked trust and in turn, Neel could not develop the trust and consequently, they disintegrated.

The next life story is of Garry, a 30 years old gay-identified male sex worker originally from Kerala. He has not visited home for more than 7 years. Why did Garry leave home and did not visit even once in the last 7 years? According to Garry:

When I was a young boy I was a loner, and I would not play with anyone. Rather I will be on my own. I was different from the rest of the boys in my locality. All boys will make fun of me.

¹⁷⁷ aisa sochte hai sab mere baare mei, koi jara bhi trust nahi kiya. Mai do saal vanvaash kaat ke aaya hi tha gaon se. ab aur kya karta. Ise jaada nahi le sakta tha. (Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

Garry has a maternal uncle who used to stay close to his house. Garry was initiated into sex by this uncle which was forceful and against his will. Initially, Garry would not be able to understand anything but slowly he started comprehending that whatever his uncle was doing to him was not right. He would feel helpless. He tried to tell his mother but she could not make any sense of the situation. Gaurav's father was not keeping well and his mother used to be stressed about his father and about running the house. Another difficulty was how a young boy of 10 years can explain the sexual abuse to anyone. Since the father was not keeping well, there was a lot of stress in the family. He also tried to tell this to his elder brother but he too could not understand him. When Garry finished his 10th then one day while he was sitting alone on the terrace of his house his uncle found him alone and came and started fondling him. According to Garry at that moment he was very furious and in the moment of sheer fury, he pushed his uncle from the terrace. Uncle was injured but he survived. Unsurprisingly, uncle never told anyone that it was Garry who pushed him. Rather he shared with everyone that his foot slipped and he lost balance. After this incident, Garry became more aloof and after finishing his 12th exam he migrated to Ahmadabad first and then Mumbai. There is a great amount of anger in him because his parents could not protect him when he wanted them. According to him " my mother did not try to understand me... but she should have".

Dhanush, a 31 years old bisexual male sex worker, was not staying with his family at the time of the interview and had left home in 2015. Dhanush and his family both stay in Mumbai not very far from each other. The family is under impression that Dhanush stays in the hostel and is pursuing his PhD in Biotechnology. Dhanush was always a shy boy since childhood and would hardly interact with anyone. He was initiated into sex by an older boy who stayed in his neighbourhood whom Dhanush would visit every day to watch television. He was eight years old and did not understand whatever was happening to him. But he did not like this act but never told anyone in the family. Besides his mother and father, he has one elder brother and an elder sister. He joined sex work while he was pursuing his graduation from one of the colleges in Mumbai. According to Dhanush, his family is aware of his sexual identity but they have never interacted face to face with each other in the family about this issue. Dhanush revealed:

I had words with my sister and I told her everything that I have a boyfriend and we are planning to stay together.

He further told his family that after finishing his PhD he planned to join post doctoral fellowship and this will take another 3 years. By then, according to Dhanush, he will be 35 and at such age one will hardly get a girl to marry. Though they lived in the same city there was very little communication with family. Dhanush visited his family once a week and such visits were usually very brief where he went late at night and left early morning.

According to Dhanush:

I am more comfortable here (Gaurav organisation) maybe because it is a space where I can express myself as I am, no acting no role-playing.

Bowlby's theory of attachment (1969) argues that primary caregivers are the main source of attachment which in turn guarantees survival of infant and child. This attachment system is more active during the time of crisis and stressful situation. Attachment is developed after unbroken interaction with caregivers and help in the development of temperament in young children. Accessibility and responsiveness of caregivers are crucial factors in the development of attachment. The "secure" child has positive models of the self and others because the primary attachment figure has been accessible when needed and responsive in an attuned and sensitive manner to the child's needs and capabilities. Consequently, the securely attached child can regulate emotion, explore the environment, and become self-reliant in an age-appropriate manner. The "insecure" child has an inaccessible and unresponsive primary caregiver, who is intrusive, erratic or abusive. It was consistently narrated by male sex workers that one or both parents were unresponsive and they were 'not there' for them. In fact there were incidents of rejection and verbal and physical abuse by parents. Many of them left their homes due to the unresponsive attitude of parents where they were not there for them. These young men underwent trauma for being different and were constantly reminded of their looks, behaviour and actions. Somewhere, parents failed to understand their children and eventually, the bond weakened.

Amitesh is a bisexual male sex worker who has been into sex work since 2001. His mother passed away when he was a young boy and his father is paralytic. He has a younger brother and a sister. Brother is terminally ill and the younger sister is married.

There was no earning member in the family. Amitesh, therefore, left home in search of a job to support his family. Thereafter he entered into sex work at the young age of 18. His brother-in-law found out when a friend of Amitesh revealed his sexual and work identity to his brother-in-law. One day when he was visiting his sister he was confronted by his brother-in-law:

My brother-in-law told me that if I disclose your identity to the family your life will become a living hell. Therefore, do not ever show up. Stop coming here. I have not visited this brother-in-law of mine since then and I have never spoken to him.¹⁷⁸

Weston (1991) quotes Blanche Wiesen Cook's (1977:48) work who observed that all popular representations exclude lesbians and gay men from "the family". This is based on the assumption that "gay people do not love and do not work". Thus, same-sex sexualities are reduced to their sexual identity and sexual identity is only understood as sex alone. Gay sexualities are viewed as 'unbridled lust and the limits of individualism' (Weston 1991:22). Weston argues that if heterosexual relationships forms everlasting lifetime relationships through kinship ties, same-sex sexualities isolate individuals from one another and from kinship relations. Therefore, same-sex sexualities are seen as antithetical to family. According to Weston, even researchers have not been able to come out of this tendency to locate lesbians and gay men outside the kinship circle. Weston refers to the study by Manuel Castells and Karen Murphy (1982) of 'spatial organization of San Francisco's gay community'. Castells and Murphy framed their analysis using two mutually exclusive categories— "gay territory" and "family land" and it was demarcated in such a manner as if two exclusive groups existed and gays and their family can never come together or live alongside (Weston 1991:105).

Weston (1991), Nardi (1999) and Bailey (2013) discussed how LGBT groups create their 'families of choice' where friendship holds special meaning to them rather than their blood relations. Weston claims that it is the possibility of rejection by the family of origin that makes non-heterosexuals aware of the fragility of blood ties. Although some authors claim that 'families of choice' are created as substitutes for rejective families of origin (Mizelińska et al. 2018), Weston emphasises that such families are not 'second

¹⁷⁸mere jija ne mujhe bola ki agar maine ghar mei bata diya to teri zindagi bat se battar ho jayegi. Isliye aaj ke baad dikhayee nahi dena, ye tera aana jaana sab band kar de, mai aaj bhi wo jija se baat cheet nahi karta

best' and may be important points of reference also for individuals accepted within their biological family (Weston 1991). Nardi (1992) argued that gay friendships are not merely a form of the family for gay men and lesbians, but friendships are also a political statement. And unlike most heterosexual friendships, gay friendships have a sexual dimension that calls into question not just the meanings of sexuality in society but also the construction of gender roles in culture. Since social approval from significant others is missing in the case of same-sex relationships, for gay men and lesbians, their friendship and relationship come to their rescue so that they may survive with a positive sense of self and fulfil the void created by non-supportive families.

Anthropologists have named such 'families of choice' as 'fictive kin' i.e 'people to whom you feel related but with whom you have no 'blood ties' (Rothman 1989:4). Weston (1991) is of opinion that all kinship is 'fictive' in the sense that definitions of relatedness are socially constructed. Weston (1991) in her pathbreaking ethnography with eighty racially and ethnically diverse groups of gay and lesbian individuals explored their families of choice. The chosen kin would share resources including food and money, will stand by each other in events of crisis or illness, would plan holidays together and even raised children together. In some cases, they would maintain kinship relations with their partners even after the end of romantic relations.

Schneider (1968) in *American Kinship* challenged the bloodlines and biological relatedness as the basic foundation of kinship. Schneider argued that Western models have naturalised sexual reproduction as the origin of kinship but he believed that intimacy and love is key to kinship. Schneider's idea paved the way for restructuring and bringing out the possibility of other forms of family. This fictive kinship is quite noticeable in the case of Kothi and Hijras in India. Kothi used kinship terms to describe their relationships with their friends and companions. Thus relationship terminologies like Aapa, Didi, Tai, Mausi, Bhabhi¹⁷⁹ are often used to describe their friendships.

To argue that heterosexual people "naturally" have access to family and in contrast, homosexuals drift towards a life of solitude and loneliness is one way of linking kinship

¹⁷⁹ Aapaa is sister; Didi is again sister in Hindi; Tai is aunty in Marathi; Mausi is maternal aunt in Hindi; Bhabhi is sister-in-law in Hindi

with procreation. This association treats homosexuals as members of a non-procreative species set apart from the rest of humanity (Foucault 1978). Going by the narratives of 34 male sex workers, I observed that the sexual identity of male sex workers has created a rift between them and their families. But all male sex workers did not leave their families and went away. Out of 34 male sex workers 15 stay with their families. If we probe the existing relationship, then yes, there are problems. The constant reminder from family members and sarcasm, insult, mockery and stigma associated with their sexual identity has pushed them away from family. Of the 19 male sex workers, who did not live with their families and have migrated to Mumbai in search of a job, 3 of them have denounced their families completely but the rest 16 visit home from time to time. Thus family did not provide them with the same kind of support and affection which a heterosexual son receives from his family. They have been pushed to the margins of familial relations but majority of them are still part of it.

There may be two reasons for these everlasting familial ties. In Indian society, people still do not have the freedom to express their gender non-conforming sexualities to family and others. It is taboo and one will invite social ostracisation if any kind of revelation is made. Moreover, the gay and lesbian movement is still not very strong in India and is limited to the educated middle class. Gay men from lower socio economic strata do not get support and affection in case of fallout with family. In the course of my fieldwork, I interacted with few activists who are working on the rights of sexual minorities in India and they feel that we are still far from a society where one can express his/her same-sex sexuality and will still receive the same respect and affection. We are a homophobic society in the garb that 'this is not our culture'.

Anthony Giddens (1991) in *Modernity and Self-Identity* argues that:

In circumstances of uncertainty and multiple choice, the notions of trust and risk have particular application...trust is directly linked to achieving an early sense of ontological security. Trust established between an infant and its caretakers provides an 'inoculation' which screens off potential threats and dangers that even the most mundane activities of day-to-day life contain. Trust in this sense is basic to a 'protective cocoon' which stands guard over the self in its dealings with everyday reality (Giddens 1991:3)

This lack of trust proved to be fearful and threatening for these men. Families failed to give them a safe and secure home. In fact they were ridiculed and insulted and were

constantly reminded of their lack of masculinity. At this point, I want to bring out the narratives of those male sex workers who stay with their families to understand how did they feel being part of the family while staying together. Did they ever experience any kind of mistreatment or abuse by family members? Did their sexual identity ever hamper their familial ties? There are 15 male sex workers who stay with their families like Samuel, Durg, Rishi, Samay, Aapa, Aiba, and chintan and their life stories follow a similar pathway. I have discussed Sam's story in the previous section. At the age of 6, he witnessed the death of both parents, sexual abuse in the orphanage, where he was sent after the death of both parents, and after his family came to know of his sexuality, he was constantly taunted by his elder sisters. Durg was 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker who came out to his parents after the Supreme Court verdict on Section 377. He was brutally beaten up by both parents and his father did not speak to him after his coming out. His father never left a single opportunity to insult him and belittle him. Durg revealed:

Yes, I stay with my family but my father does not speak to me. Whenever my father gets drunk and troubles my mother then I intervene and we end up fighting. Sometimes I shout back and then my father will taunt me that you are bailee why do you speak.¹⁸⁰

Later Durg explained that for one to speak in the family, one has to be truly a male. In Indian households only 'male' man can speak, a 'woman like man' cannot speak. That right only belongs to the man of the house. Rishi, a bisexual male sex worker, told me that life is not easy and they cannot come out like this. In fact they take extra care when they are around their family. According to Rishi, their behaviour varies as space shifts. Thus, when one is in his residential space, utmost care is being taken so that identities remain a secret. At the hotspot or in GAURAV one is what one wants to be but this changes completely as one enters his residential space. Rishi captured this shift of space in the following lines:

I take care while I stay in my locality, I don't swing and shake. We are three MSM from my area but the moment my station Borivali comes we become straight. You go to your house and I will go to mine. I belong to the lower middle-class family and I live in a

¹⁸⁰Haan mai unke Saath hi rahta huin par papa baat nahi karte baaki sab baat karte hai. Papa jab kabhi pee wee kar aate hai to mummy ko pareshaan karte hai, phir mera jhagda ho jata hai. To mai kabhi kabhi chillla deta hu tab mere ko bolte hai ki ye bailee tu Kyo bolta hai. (Date of Interview 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

chawl and therefore I have to keep in mind the neighbours and other locals because if the matter reaches my parents it will become a big problem.¹⁸¹

Nikunj is a gay-identified male sex worker whose family lived in Mumbai but he did not stay with his family at the time of interview. He left home and stayed in rented accommodation with few fellow workers. At the time of the interview, Nikuj informed me that he had left home a few months back only. He had been staying with his family but when his family became suspicious about him and started surveilling his movements, he became restless and felt like a prisoner and decided to leave home. He stated that:

In family and in our locality where we stay, we have to stay like a man. Now the place where I stay everyone knows that I work for an organisation working with gay and MSM people and I also disclosed my sexual identity to my landlord when I signed the agreement. So here there is no problem. Everyone knows about me.¹⁸²

D'Augelli et al. (2005) argue that the chief reason for concealing sexual identities and orientation include the fear of losing affection and intimacy of parents by gay individuals. In the same study, it was established that those gay individuals who had disclosed their sexual orientation to their parents have reported more incidents of victimisation from parents and family compared to gay individuals who did not disclose their sexual orientation to family and parents. Nikunj has left home but he visited his family once every week to meet his mother who stayed with Nikunj's elder brother. His experience with his family had been so bitter that he never wanted to go back to them. He explained:

I never want to go back because I do not want the same fights to happen again. My brother noticed few change in me and he would question me. I told him there is nothing but...¹⁸³

¹⁸¹Mai jaise hi apni locality mei pahuchata hu mai jaada hilta dulta nahi hu. Hum teen MSM hai meri area se par jaise hi mera station Borivali aata hai hum teeno straight ho jate hai. Tum apne ghar aur hum apne ghar, I belong to lower middle class family, hum chawl mei rahte hai so aaju baaju ke log ka bhi dhyaan rakhna padta hai nahi to parents tak baat jayegi to mental issues start ho jayega unka. (Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁸²Parivaar mei ya phir jis mohlle mei aap rahte waha par ladka ban ke rahna padta hai. Abhi mai idhar paas mei hi rahta hu aur is area mei sabko pata hai ki yah ek NGO hai gay logo ka aur maine jaise hi ghar liya tha to bol diya tha ki mai gay hu to is baat ko leke koi problem nhai hai aur waise bhi Kumar sir ko sab log jante hai to isliye yaha par koi problem nahi hai. (Date of Interview 10/6/18 at GAURAV)

¹⁸³Aur abhi mai Santa Cruz Mei akele rahta hu. Lekin mai parivaar se hafte mei ek baar milne jata hu. Mai kabhi bhi Wapas nahi jana Chahta hu kyo ki mujhe wahi jhagde phir se nahi chahiye. Mera jhagda mere bhai aur bhabhi ke saath hua tha, meri mummy bahi ke sath hi rahti hai. Actually abhi haal philhaal mere bahi ko kuch changes lage mere mei aur wo ek do baar bola to mai bola ki aise kuch nahi hai...(long pause). (Date of Interview 10/6/18 at GAURAV)

Family as support or barrier to ones Identity

‘We fight our battles every day but the one we fight with our families is the most difficult one’¹⁸⁴. So what happened when parents and close family become the reason for agony and misery. There is a noticeable trend of controlling of sexuality and non-normative sexual behaviour in the family. Fathers and elder brothers were found to be the main agents of control of sexualities for all 34 informants. Mothers of male sex workers were helpless, troubled and stressed because they were taunted for giving birth to an unmanly-emasculated son and were termed incapable of giving birth to a masculine and virile son. We have witnessed through times how women and their sexualities have been controlled by patriarchal male agents in society and have been treated as subordinate to men (Walby 1990; Millett 1977). Feminist scholars called attention to the conflicted and unequal aspects of family relationships, using the concept of patriarchy to highlight the family as the locus of domination by gender and age (Osmond and Thorne 1993). When the same agents of control and domination digress and indulge in non-normative sexual act i.e the son (man) of the house there is a big commotion. Other male members rush to take charge of the situation and try to control and regulate the unwanted behaviour. Surveillance and control of defying bodies are instituted so that the larger system of male domination prevails. Michel Foucault pointed out the personality type and roles that emerged through the classification of ‘acts’ as ‘hysterical women, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult’ (Foucault 1979:105). Thus sexuality became focused on the family. Sanjay Srivastava (2013) points out this process:

An entire range of experts (doctors, psychiatrist, priest, teachers, and so on) turned their attention to the family, advising against the perils of ‘bad’ sexuality and ensuring its ‘good health’. Through these processes, the family was both ‘sexualized’ and acted as an agent of sexualization. Further, the family became the benchmark of debates on ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexuality, and ‘healthy’ and ‘aberrant’ sexual behaviour (Srivastava 2013:5)

It is not just about sexuality but a larger strategy which will be foiled if men digress from heteronormativity. Gerda Lerner (1986) pointed out that the foundation for family patriarchy was the control of women’s “sexual and reproductive capacity,” which oc-

¹⁸⁴ Hum to roz hi apni ladai ladate hai par jab samne parivaar hota hai na tab humari mushkile badh jaati hai. Koi apne ma-baap aur parivaar se ladna nahi chahta hai. (Manoj, a male sex worker, date of Interview 15/6/17 at GAURAV)

curred “prior to the formation of private property and class society” (Lerner 1986:8). Men control women and their sexuality and thus they cannot give free rein to their own non-normative erotic desire. Thus, Male sex workers cannot fit in the family with deviant sexual behaviour. The outcome is censure and surveillance. Family is a site of procreation so that the next generation is ready to take their responsibilities and same-sex sexuality is about pleasure and erotica without procreative outcomes. Family as system will fail and therefore, to correct this deviance men of the house come forward with censuring. When a son is born in India there are certain parental expectations like he will be a productive member of the family and will take over as agent of control for all the women — sisters, wife and mothers if the need arise. But when a father sees a pansy and feminine son, he does not fit into the image of a son.

Thus family, as a social institution, is a brewery for patriarchal practices by socialising the young to accept sexually differentiated roles. In our culture the socialisation process differentiates the girl child from the boy child. Young boys are socialised to view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households. Most of the cases of violence and abuse in the families of male sex workers were triggered off by male members of the family like fathers, elder brothers and uncles. In the same situation, it is interesting to look at the role of mothers, sisters and younger brothers. Durg shared a heart-touching account of his relationship with his mother:

Amid all these tensions and woes the only good thing is my mother. When I came out to my parents, my father was throwing me out of the house but my mother handled the situation and she said that if he (Durg) is going then I will also go with him. My father does not speak to me and it still hurts me a lot. He told my mother that you gave birth to a bailee and then my mother cried. Now my mother has also started drinking alcohol... Do you know after accepting me what did my mother tell me – right now you are young, everyone will ask for you, you will get proposals from many handsome men. But later when you will be older then what will happen? Even a dog will not show interest in you.¹⁸⁵

Devo is a bisexual male sex worker who also runs a tailoring shop along with his mother. Devo shared that everyone made fun of him since childhood because he was differ-

¹⁸⁵Is sab Mei jo ek acchi cheeze hai wo mummy hai. Jab maine ghar par bataya to mera papa mujhe ghar se nikaal rahe the par mummy ne sambhaal liya boli ki agar ye jayega to mai bhi jaungi. Papaa abhi bhi baat nahi karte us cheeze ka Abhi bhi dookh hai. Direct bolte hai ki bailee ko paida kar diya phir mummy bhi bahut roti hai phir mummy ne bhi peena chalu kar diya. Pata hai accept karne ke baad mummy kya bolti hai ki tu na abhi ekdam kaula hai (kacchi umra) tujhe abhi sab poochege , tere peeche ek se ek ladke padege phir baad mei kya jab age ho jayegi, kutta bhi nahi puchega tujhe. (Date of Interview 12/12/18 at GAURAV)

ent from his friends and he never played any sports in school. But thanks to his mother, who always supported him, he is independent and happy:

My family always supported me. Whatever I wanted to do they allowed me. When I wanted to learn to stitch, my mother supported me and even now whatever I want to do she always supports me. Now I want to be a makeup artist and my mother told me that you do whatever you want to do. She has always supported me in everything otherwise everyone made fun of me taunting me—you are doing girlish work, stitching clothes.¹⁸⁶

Utpal, a 38 years old bisexual male sex worker who lived with his mother and younger sisters told that his mother supported him through everything. Utpal used to work in a dance bar as a she-male dancer. This was before dance bars were banned in Mumbai. He explained how he disclosed his work identity as a dancer to his mother and she supported him:

My mother has supported me a lot. When I used to work in the dance bar, people blackmailed me that they will disclose my identity to my mother. Initially I was scared and gave them money to remain quiet. One day I told my mother that I was a dancer in a dance bar and since I have started earning well some people were jealous of me and they might try to tell you stories about me. At the very moment one of the extortionists called me, then my mother spoke to him and there was a huge fight. But after that incident they stopped troubling me.¹⁸⁷

Weston (1991) observed similar trends in her work where both gay and lesbian in the study reported that mothers were more likely than fathers to understand them. Weston explained:

Gender came into play here in the form of cultural notions which assigned feelings to women and reason to men, and which credited women with responsibility for the maintenance of "family life." Expectations of motherly understanding and fatherly disapproval were also evident in the surprise some people registered when they described a father who had been "supportive" or a mother who became upset at the news of a child's gay identity (Weston 1991:173).

¹⁸⁶meri family ne hamesha support kiya hai mera. Jo bhi karna chaha karne diya jab maine stitching seekha to bhi mummy ne support kiya aur jo bhi karna hai usme bhi support hi kiya hai. Agar mai fashion designing Aage bhi makeup artist ka course karna hai, mummy ne bola hai ki tujhe jo karna hai tu kar. Usne mera hamesha saath diya nahi to sabhi log mera mazaak banate the, bolte the ki mai ladkiyo wala kaam karta hu, kapde silta hu. (Date of Interview 15/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁸⁷Mummy ka kafi support raha hai. jab mai kaam pe jata tha to kai baar logo ne mujhe blackmail kiya ki hum tere ghar par bata denge. Phir ek do baar paisa bhi diya par phir laga ki kab tak paise deta rahuga phir mai mummy ko dheere dheere bataya ki mai bar mei dance karta hu aur jab se meri thodi acchi kamayi ho rahi hai kuch log jalan ke maare mujhe pareshaan kar rahe hai. Mummy boli kaun log hai tabhi uska phone aagaya aur phir mummy ne khud phone liya aur baat ki phir kubh gaali galaung hua aur uske baad unka ye sab band ho gaya. (Date of Interview 28/12/18 at GAURAV)

Robinson, Skeen, Hobson and Herrman's (1982) study reported that gay men perceived their fathers to be more critical, impatient, rejecting and less sociable than their mothers. However, the fact that young gay men report having closer relationships with their mothers can be explained by traditional parenting roles. The familial roles where the mother is the primary caretaker of the home and the father is the financial provider may lead to children feeling closer, accepted, cared for and loved more by their mothers than their fathers (Skeen & Robinson, 1985).

Similarly younger brothers and sisters showed more empathy and understanding while dealing with their gay brothers. Satyam, a bisexual male sex worker from Ahmadabad, left home seven years ago. In Mumbai, he worked in a television production house initially. But when the daily soap *Utran* was shelved, he was without work for many months. His boyfriend, who also worked with the same production house, deserted him. Satyam was depressed and decided to go home for some time. Satyam had tattooed his boyfriend's name on his forearm. While Satyam was in Ahmedabad, his boyfriend called up on his mother's mobile phone and told her that her son was gay. His mother was furious. The younger brother came to Satyam's rescue and told their mother that "today is 1st of April and probably this friend of Satyam is playing a prank to fool us". Their mother was convinced but later in the night Satyam's younger brother confronted him

Brother whatever you are doing I am not going to stop you but please stay within your limits. You should not do something which will land you in problems later in your life. You have suffered so much from your boyfriend but now you should be careful. You live your life but do not do anything wrong. He understands me completely and supports me.¹⁸⁸

Similarly, Durg revealed that his younger sister knew everything about him even before he came out to his family and she never questioned him. In fact whenever he was in some trouble she stood by him. Likewise Noor, a bisexual male sex worker from Lucknow, left home more than ten years ago and had no contact with his parents. His only

¹⁸⁸bhai tera jo bhi life tu kar mai mana nahi kar raha hu par seema mei rah ke kar, tujhe aisa kuch na ho ki Aage chal kar tujhe koi problem ho, apne boyfriend ke saath rah kar tune itna jhela hai aisa phir nahi hona chahiye. Tu jo bhi kar galat mat karna, apni life jee.wo mujhe samjhata hai aur support bhi karta hai. (Date of Interview 6/12/17 at GAURAV)

point of contact was his younger sister who was married and lived in the Thane district of Maharashtra. According to Noor his sister never questioned him and accepted him.

Weston (1991) further observed that in the case of siblings, they were found to be more accepting than both fathers and mothers. She cited case studies where even if individuals have avoided coming out to their parents have often revealed their sexual identity to their sisters and brothers. Although siblings showed better understanding than parents but this did not make them less heterosexist.

One woman said she learned this the hard way when her sister spent months staring at her and crying after learning of her lesbian identity. Another man still felt the hurt of coming out to a brother who said everything was "okay" but asked him not to visit his children (Weston 1991:174).

In the case of Aapaa and Ishq, their grandmothers support them despite the family being antagonistic towards them. Aapaa is a kothi-identified male sex worker who lives with his family. While I was interviewing him, he informed me that in 15 days he would be going to Mecca for pilgrimage with his grandmother. They have a large family with 5 brothers, parents, and 4 sisters who are all married. Despite so many family members, his grandmother chose him to accompany her. Aapaa stated:

Then my sister told me that I should take my grandmother for Haj. They all trust me so much and have accepted me the way I am. My sister just called me. I will go to my grandmother's house in the evening. I have to apply for a passport.¹⁸⁹

The exuberance in his voice was discernible. Aapaa had been given a big responsibility to take his grandmother for Haj and there were very few moments in their life when they experienced such trust and reliance by family members. The common theme is to keep them away from all kinds of family decisions and do not involve them in familial responsibilities. Aapaa was, therefore, feeling elated as he was treated like a true member of the family where his sexuality did not come in the way.

¹⁸⁹aur meri didi ne bola hai ki tu dadi ko leke haj par jaa, itna vishwas hai sabka mujhpar. Mai jaisa bhi hu Sabne mujhe Waise hi accept kiya hai. Abhi Sister ka call tha. , dadi ke ghar mai shaam Mei jauga. , passport nikalna hai. (Date of Interview 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

Family and Marriage

“The good Indian son satisfying his family by marrying before 30...the good couple raising children”(Basu and Ramberg 2015:5).

Thus ‘good’ sexuality within the family is the reproductive sexuality that can produce a suitable labour force. According to Edmund Leach (1955:182-186), the baseline of rights and privileges conferred by marriage includes rights in labour and property, exclusive sexual access, lineage or the legitimacy of offspring and a “socially significant ‘relationship of affinity. Marriages have been standardised as patrilineal, monogamous and heterosexual but there are a multiplicity of conjugal and marital arrangements that have been socially and customarily accepted. The first reason — that marriage legitimates groups of people by legitimating their families — has been true throughout history, and as Cherlin (2004) noted, becomes even more important in times of social upheaval and change. As historian Nancy Cott (2002) argues, “by incriminating some marriages and encouraging others, marital regulations have drawn lines among the citizenry and defined what kinds of sexual relations and which families will be legitimate” (Cott 2002:4). Anthropologist Ellen Lewin (2004) added that not only do the entitlements of marriage mark legitimacy and authenticity of a relationship, but they also “mediate the ability to claim a particular identity in the context of one’s community, and they intervene in situations where shame may preclude naming one’s most important relationships” (Lewin 2004:1005). Thus, marriage legitimates people’s family lives — and therefore their very personal lives — in a way that no other institution does (Mezey & Boudreaux 2005).

Marriage is a social institution which is ever changing but is still considered the mainstay of family and society. It is strongly embedded in our socialisation and we grow with the reality that marriage is key to procreation and extension of family and society. As witnessed above, all male sex workers but one did not disclose their sexual identity to families. As a result there was a constant attempt to hide their sexual and work identity. When asked if they ever wanted to marry their partners or boyfriends the prompt reply was — “it is not possible in our country”. Literatures from India (Ashley Tellis

2014; Basu and Ramberg 2015) provide some accounts of same-sex marriage in India but it is still not common. In the same scenario heterosexual marriage is still considered the most sacrosanct of all social customs. Male sex worker who wanted to be in same-sex relationships, they revealed that it is not easy to forgo this ‘compulsory’ institution of marriage. It is one social reality which is difficult to deny or overlook. Bisexual male sex workers shared instances of sexual encounters with female clients or girlfriends and wanted to get married sometime in the near future. At the same time, kothi-identified male sex workers shared abhorrence towards sex with women. Since there were diverse sexual identities among male sex workers, some of them were fine with getting married while others could not in-vision being united in wedlock.

Many studies from across the Indian subcontinent argue that many MSM (men who have sex with men) also indulge in sex with women (S. I. Khan 1999, 2003; Khan and Sharmin 1999). It is pertinent to note this point especially in the light of the fact that many of these MSM identify as gay or kothi and sex with women is unimaginable for them. One of the informants used the expression “sex with woman ... chhee (an expression of disgust)” but also share that overcoming or disdaining marriage is not possible. In a survey by Khan (2003) with 235 male sex workers (MSWs) and 67 male clients conducted in Bangladesh pointed towards a relationship with both men and women by male sex workers. Further many male sex workers were married and if not married, had plans to get married to women partners in future. Marriage is one social reality they could not reject. Now, at this point, one is impelled to ask this question, that why is this marital relation so important?

Homosexual Desire and Heterosexual Marriage

Of 34 male sex workers whom I interviewed, four were married and one was a divorcee. Four married male sex workers were bisexual and one divorced sex worker was gay-identified. All five married male sex workers were older than the average age of the sample ranging from 30 to 42 years. For the remaining 29 male sex workers, there was dilemma, anxiety and persistent stress whenever the question of marriage came up. Why do people with same-sex desire enter into mixed-orientation marriage? According to Aslam, a married male sex worker, after marriage a man is generally seen differently by society, beginning with his own family. He stated that right after marriage he became

an adult member of the family. The attitude of the family members changed. He was being treated as mature, senior and taken ‘more seriously’¹⁹⁰. In the Indian social system, marriage marks the entry of man into *Grihasth Ashram* (family and household). After marriage men are considered mature and adult and this has nothing to do with the age at marriage, sometimes even an 18-year-old is treated like a full grown adult once he is married; his status in the society is uplifted. But what happens when you are not interested in marriage and pushed into marriage? Homosexual males who may not wish to marry, find themselves trapped between the desire to have sex with other men and the socio-religious obligation to bear the responsibility of a married family man. As biological males, they can carry out the sexual act and procreate and can prove their manhood to society. Most MSWs confessed that they will have to marry and accept the marital custom as part of the social reality. This created a dilemma for many MSWs who wish to oppose marriage but are controlled by social sanctions to conform. If they remain unmarried, they could lose the right to inherit property, could risk being considered unmanly and may lose love and affection of family members. At the same time, many male sex workers who are already married confessed the value of old age security provided by their children. These factors contribute to their submission to the obligatory marriage custom and procreation of children. Like in the case of Aslam, a male sex worker, who was married and he had three children. Simultaneously, he maintained relationship with 38-year-old Imitiaz, whom he called his life partner. When asked about his wife, this is what he had to say:

That is an eye-wash for the world. Parents and relatives force you into certain situations, my marriage was one such occasion. In our religion we can maintain four wives, so isn't this arrangement better for Kurshida? There will not be another woman in her husband's life.¹⁹¹

Here, in this case, marriage is just an eyewash for family and society. This arrangement suited Aslam because no one questioned his masculinity. Likewise Nikunj, a bisexual male sex worker who is married for the last 3 years revealed

¹⁹⁰ nikaah ke baad pure ghar ka nazariya hi badal jata hai. Aap ratoraat VIP (very important person) ban jate ho. Meri shaadu hui aur ghar wale sab meri baat sunne lage, izzat badh gayi.

¹⁹¹ mero shaadi bas duniya ko deekhane ke liye hai. Maa-baap aur rishtedaar log ne mil kar mujhe jhoke diya. Theek hai. Humare majhab mei hume chaar neekah ki manjoori hoti hai par yaha to mai bas Khurshida ke hi saath hu. Uski saut to nahi laya hu. Uske faayede mei hi hai ye rish-ta. (Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

I have a regular partner and I also go to gay parties during weekends. I am bisexual, 40-60 (40 per cent gay and 60 per cent bisexual) and I have no problem. For five days—Monday to Friday I am with my wife and weekends are mine. I do whatever I want to. My wife knows this. You know initially, I had to adjust a lot, it was difficult. I was not used to this.¹⁹²

Thus even when there is dilemma and confusion regarding marriage and heterosexual relations, the societal pressure and sanction pushed male sex workers towards marriage. The fear of being considered unmanly is the chief reason for many male sex workers. Aiba, a kothi-identified male sex worker when asked about marriage and his relation with women he replied:

A: First time when I realised that I am different, it's not normal I did not feel bad, rather I was happy because I am so different from others but I realised that I cannot marry... But I will have to get married and it is certain and I will have two marriages.

R: Why two?... Have you ever had any relationship with a woman?

A: No (with emphasis) never in my life... But I want two wives because if tomorrow someone questions me or my manhood then my two wives can proudly tell everyone that he has married two women and do you still think he is gay.¹⁹³

Aiba further shared that his family would not talk about his marriage because they probably knew that he was gay. So in this situation what would be his plan of action?

See I really want to get married so that people can also see that I am married and I have my own children¹⁹⁴

Aiba revealed that neighbours and friends in Mumbai are aware of his sexual identity and therefore, getting a girl for marriage would be difficult in Mumbai. So what is he going to do?

¹⁹² Mere ek partner hai aur haan mai weekend mei gay parties mei bhi jata huin. Mai ek bisexual hu 40-60 aur mujhe koi dikkat nahi hai dono ko manage karne mei. Hapte ke paanch din mai wife ko deta hu aur weekend mere hai. Tab mai wo sab kuch karta hu jo mujhe pasand hai. Meri wife ko pata hai iske baare mei. Shuru Mei ye sab manage karna bada mushkil tha, kafi dikkat hui par ab Gadi patri par aagayi hai. (Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV)

¹⁹³. Apan ko bura nahi laga , laga mai sabse hat ke hu par ek feeling aisi bhi hai ki mujhe shaadi nahi Karni hai. Par shaadi to Karni hi hai, jaroor Karni hai wo bhi do Karna hai doo (exclamation)

aiba: wo isliye Kyo ki Matlab mujhe aurato ke saath baat karna bahut achha lagta hai. Aur kal ko agar koi ungli uthaye to meri wife garv se bol sake ki gay hai isliye do kar rahe hai kya. (Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁹⁴Dekho shaadi to mujhe man se karni hai, karni hai, taki log bol sake ki ha bhai ye shaadi shu-da hai iski bhi aulaad hai (Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV)

I will try to bring a girl from some faraway village. Any girl will do but she has to be from a village so that no one should come to know about my identity. ..It is quite dangerous here, anyone will identify me¹⁹⁵

In another interaction with a bisexual male sex worker when discussion about marriage came up Akki, who was in a relationship with a man shared how the question of marriage kept haunting him on daily basis:

When they(parents) talk about my marriage I feel stressed since I have a regular partner. When I discussed this with my partner, he told me that you manage and live your life and look after your family and I will manage mine. My partner is not married but he asked me to get married as he will also get married in near future. We will still be together as partners. Stress is part of my life now and I don't know how I will be able to manage both married life and my relationship with my boyfriend. . . I have worked it out and I am going to give 20 per cent of my time here with my boyfriend and the remaining 80 per cent of my time will be devoted to my marriage¹⁹⁶.

In the case of Akki who is a bisexual, the dilemma was not so intense and he had worked out how he was going to manage his married life along with this work and a regular partner.

I am getting this constant pressure from my family to get married. Since my elder brother is already married and settled my mother wants me to get married soon. I am a bisexual and I can marry a woman and satisfy her. So I have told my mother to find a good match for me. In my family, my aunts' daughter is there, she is a nice girl and is close to my family and my mother likes her. I also like her and in our community cross-cousin marriage is permitted. Since I am bisexual I can get married and yes, I am going to get married. But one thing is very clear I cannot stop having sex with men. This will continue.¹⁹⁷

Higgins (2002) studied 26 gay and bisexual men, who were married to women, to understand the main reason for entering into heterosexual marriages. Majority of respon-

¹⁹⁵Door gaon se leke aayege usi se kar lunga kahi ki bhi chalegi par gaon ki, kisi ko pata nahi chalna chahiye. Yaha to bahut Khatra hai, koi bhi pahchan lega. (Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV)

1 When they talk of marriage I feel stressed since now I also have a regular partner. When I discussed this with my partner, he told me that tu Teri life ji mai apni jeeta hu, apne ghar walo ko dekh. He is also not married but kal ko mai bhi shaadi karuga, tu bhi karle. Hum phir bi saath mei rahege. ..Stress to rahta hai, ek saath dono life kaise balance akruga. So I have decided that yaha par mai 20 per cent doonga aur shaadi Mei 80 per cent doonga. (Date of Interview 23/7/16 at GAURAV)

¹⁹⁷Yes I am getting this pressure from family, my mom told me that you must get settled since your elder brother is already separate from us. Actually I am bisexual and I can marry and make a woman happy so I have told my mom ki agar koi ladki hai to dhoodh le. In my family my bua's daughter is there, she is very good, she visits and helps my mom, my mom also likes her, mujhe bhi acchi lagti hai, aur hamare Mei cousin se shaadi ho sakti hai. Since I am bisexual I can get married aur karuga, par mai stop nahi kar sakta ladko ke saath sex karna. Ye mera continuous chalta hi rahega. (Date of Interview 23/7/16 at GAURAV)

dents shared that marrying women seemed natural and they desired family life and children. Higgins argued that internalised homophobia was the leading reason for men to enter into mixed-orientation marriages. Ross (1979) studied reasons for entering into heterosexual marriages by gay men and found social expectancy and concern over homosexuality as the main reasons. Thus heterosexual marriages came as defence while fighting the homophobic world. Thus, Aslam, Aiba, Akash all know that they cannot fight society and therefore the easy way is to get married. Pressure from family and their expectations further pushed them to enter into this calculative arrangement where everything is planned — from the number of days to hours they are going to give in to this relationship to how they will keep their homosexual desire hidden from their family and wife.

Ross (1979) identified certain characteristics associated with gay men who were married to women. According to Ross (1979) homosexual young men generally come from small towns, do not accept homosexuality and have not come out to their families. These men have experienced guilt, shame and anxiety associated with their homosexual identity. Thus even if direct pressure to marry is absent, a high level of self-hatred and a negative view about homosexuality may lead gay men to attempt to adopt a heterosexual lifestyle and marriage. In the case of my interviewees, some of them came from small towns but many of them have been born and raised in Mumbai but none of the unmarried male sex workers shared their willingness to get married. Ross (1979) contention that men who do not accept homosexuality or those who showed some amount of guilt and anxiety about their sexual orientation were more likely to enter into mixed orientation marriage. My experience with 34 informants tells us that guilt and anxiety and non-acceptance of ones sexual orientation is part of the process of gay identity formation. Initially when these young boys figured out that they were different, it created dilemma and anxiety. Stigma and discrimination associated with their sexual orientation further complicated their realisation. But when they met other men like them, slowly they learn to accept their identity. Almost all male sex workers shared this dilemma which was part of their growing up and identity building process. There have been various models to explain the formation of homosexual identity (Cass 1979; Coleman 1982; Troiden 1977) and with each model, stages may vary but the pattern of growth and change is same for each one. Thus all homosexual identity formation takes place against the

background of stigma and stigma affects both the formation and expression of homosexual identity. Homosexual identity formation involves acceptance of the label 'homosexual' and 'coming out' to others and describing oneself as a homosexual. The disclosure takes place at various levels — self, to homosexual friends, heterosexual friends, family, coworkers and public at large (Coleman 1982). Thus the gay men Ross (1979) has been talking about were homosexual persons at a particular stage of their identity development. Such guilt and anxiety were more palpable among younger informants of mine.

At this point, we also need to keep in mind that 30 male sex workers were associated with a community-based organisation for MSM and MSW and they were trained in advocacy around gender identity and sexual orientation and they were sensitised and were comfortable about their sexuality. Lack of guilt and anxiety was more common among older male sex workers who have spent many years in sex work. Here I am quoting Samuel, 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker about his dilemma and anxiety associated with his sexual orientation. After his parents passed away he grew up in an orphanage run by a Christian missionary in Lonavala.

Everyone at the orphanage would call me gud and bailee and I also started feeling that I am one. I used to feel that I am the only one in this world who is like this and I used to be very scared that what if someone will come to know about me. They will beat me up or even do more worse things. When I came to Mumbai after completing my 10th board I met 2-3 boys in my locality who were girlish but they were so relaxed and cheerful. They were like me in looks and built but they were so carefree... I spoke to them after 2 weeks of contemplation. They introduced me here at GAURAV. Then I came to know that there are many like me.¹⁹⁸

Initially a homosexual person may be confused about his/her sexual orientation but after meeting people with similar orientation confusion gives way to identity assumption where there is tolerance and acceptance. This leads to a sense of commitment and identity disclosure (Cass 1979). Pearcey (2005) studied 20 gay and bisexual men's experi-

¹⁹⁸Har koi mujhe bulane lage aur mai dar ke rahne laga aur phir dheere dheere mujhe bhi lagne laga ki mai wahi hu. Tab mujhe lagta tha ki mai akela hi aisa paida hua hu aur phir mujhe bahut dar lagta tha ki agar kisi ko maloom pad gaya to kya hoga , wo log mujhe maarege ya kuch aur bura karege. Phir mai 10th complete kar ke yaha par aaya mumbai. Phir yaha par mujhe do teen friend deekhe jo to girlish the. Aur wo bindaas rahne ka. Mere jaise hi built tha par wo ekdam aaraam se rahte the. Usko dekh kar mujhe poora do hafta laga baat karne ko...Lekin phir maine us ladke se baat kiya usko bola ki tu jaisa hai mai bhi waisa hi hu. Phir baad mei wo mereko idhar (Gaurav) leke aaya. Tab phir mujhe laga ki mere jaise jaada log hai aur phir jaada knowledge bhi aagayi. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

ence of coming out to their wives and explored the attitude and behaviour before, during and after marriage. The most common reason shared by respondents for entering into heterosexual marriage is social and family pressure and a desire to have a ‘normal healthy life’. Utpal, a 38 years old bisexual male sex worker expressed that he would get married because he wants support and a child of his own.¹⁹⁹ Rishi, 25 years old bisexual male sex worker when was asked if there is pressure to get married he be-moaned:

Only today I fought with my mother since lots of my clients call up late at night she suspects that there may be some girl and so she has been forcing me to get married, any way. I am 25 and in our Baniya community by 23 we are mostly married. In future my problems are going to escalate.²⁰⁰

Why there is so much parental pressure to marry? According to Rishi, all parents want that their family should expand and proliferate and procreate. And in this pressure many do get married but those who do not get married disclose their identity to their parents. Here if parents are educated and liberal they understand and accept their child’s choice. Otherwise they have no other option than to get married. Situation is quite similar for everyone — kothi, gay, bisexual or without any identity tag. Situation becomes unmanageable for those Kothi who do not want to marry and in fact cannot imagine themselves getting married. Nagging by parents and grandparents to get married puts tremendous pressure on young minds. Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker who cannot imagine having sex with a woman, reflected on his everyday struggle:

It’s already going on in my family. No one scolds me but my grandmother is forcing me to get married. According to her, this is the age to get married and if I get any older I will not be able to find a decent girl to marry. She is putting a lot of pressure and is resorting to blackmailing. I don’t know how to explain to her or react to this... I am going crazy because of this and nowadays I am very depressed because of this. Sometimes I feel that I should get married for my grandmother but then how can I destroy some girl’s life for my grandmother’s happiness. I cannot give her the happiness which I want to give her so

¹⁹⁹Aage Jake mujhe ek support to chahiye ek baccha bhi chahiye.

²⁰⁰Aaj hi subah meri maa se ladayi hui hai. Kyo ki mai der raat tak jaagta hu Kyo ki bahut saare client mujhe raat mei hi phone karte hai maa ko lagta hai ki koi ladki hai. Wo mujhe bahut din se shaadi ke liye force kar rahi hai aur waise bhi mai pachees Saal ka hu aur hamare yaha baniya logo Mei to teish tak sabki shaadi ho hi jati hai. Aage aur muskile badegi. (Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

there is no point in me getting married. I cannot get married just to make my grandmother happy²⁰¹

How do they respond to such pressure from the family? Ishq revealed:

A lot of people live alone so I will also survive... Every day its the same record — your parents don't stay here, they are in the village. I want you to get married while I am still alive, you will also get a life partner, someone to share your life with. How long will you stay like this? I cannot tell her that I will not marry... I don't want to get married because I am not interested in girls so what will I do after getting married.²⁰²

We have witnessed differential attitudes towards same-sex sexual relations by Kothis and gay-identified MSWs on the one hand and bisexual male sex workers on the other hand. While bisexual male sex workers did not share such abhorrence to marriage as shared by gay and kothi-identified male sex workers. Kothis narrated constant dilemma and mental stress. There are two explanations for such attitudes towards same-sex sexual encounters. The first one, which has already been discussed, is about the trans-genderal role played by Kothis which creates dilemma about their real identity. This also results in increased probability of being discovered by family and society. As witnessed in case of Aiba who wants to get married to a girl from some faraway village so that the secret of his identity is safe. Simultaneously the pressure to perform as a man is immense. Kothi body is stuck between their desire and societal pressure to perform in a gender appropriate manner. The second possibility is related to their work, that is, sex work. For the good proportion of male sex workers, sex work is a survival strategy. For most, it is a practice enforced by poverty and deprivation. According to Shivananda Khan, family context and poverty are the two major parameters that shape the sale of

²⁰¹Abhi wahi issue chalu hai meri family mei. Koi datata to nahi par meri dadi ka bahut force chalu hai shaadi Kar shaadi kar. bolti hai yahi to Umar hai shaadi karne ki, umar jaada ho jayegi to ladki bhi nahi milegi. Bahut pressure daal rahi hai, emotional blackmail bhi kar rahi hai, mujhe samajh mei nahi aaraha hai ki mai kya karu, kaise samjhau. Infact wo abhi Gaon mei jaakar kisi ladki ki photo bhi leke aayi. Mera deemag to isi cheez se bahut out hai. Wahi cheeze se mai jaada depression mei rahta hu. kabhi kabhi mai sochta hu ki kar bhi lu mai ladki se shaadi dadi ki Khushi ke khatir par mai ladki ki zindagi to nahi kharab kar sakta na. Mai use jo Khushi dena chahta hu wo nahi de sakta to phir shaadi ka kya point hai. Mai sirf dadi ki Khushi ke liye nahi kar sakta wo sab cheeze. (Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV)

²⁰²Din raat uska yahi chalta hai. Mummy papa tere door rahte hai gaon mei, mai jabtak hu tu shaadi kar le to tera ek life partner mil jayega, sukh dukh mai koi saath dene wala hoga, tu kabtak aise hi rahega. ..I am facing this for past 1and half years in my family. Mai usko ye nahi bol sakta ki mai shaadi nahi karuga par mai usko bolta rahta hu ki paisa aane de wo hone de, aisa waisa to avoid this question everyday...Tu akeal kab tak rahega, shaadi karle settle hoja. Yahi umar hai shaadi ki. Aur mera problem ye hai ki mai shaadi hi nahi karna chahta hu, kyoko mujhe ladkiyo mei interst hi nahi hai to kya karu shaadi kar ke. (Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV)

sex (Khan 2006). These existing boundaries are based on social class, education, economic power and gendered behaviour.

Miller (1987) summarised issues faced by gay men who have been married and have children into five categories — relationship to self, wife, children, heterosexual world and the gay world. The question of self includes issues of sexual identity, isolation and internalised homophobia. About their relationship with their wife, the main issues are how to pass as a heterosexual male and denial of their sexual attraction to other men. With children, gay men encountered issues like how and when to disclose their sexual orientation to their children. With respect to the heterosexual world, gay men deal with expectations and rejection by the heterosexual world. In gay world, these gay men encounter approach-avoidance conflict i.e whether to be part of the gay world or to avoid it and how to deal with the stereotypes associated with the gay world. Further, if they decide to be part of gay world then there are difficulties in acculturating to the gay world. Many male sex workers know that marriage will not last and may result in a divorce but the pressure is immense to play their gender role as the son of the family. Dhanush, a bisexual male sex worker elaborated:

I have not shared anything with my family about my sexual identity. There is nothing to share. My family is uneducated so even if I want to share I cannot share this with my family. Many of us do get married but later there are lots of problems. And later it heads to divorce.²⁰³

Another noticeable trend was that no one wanted to marry their regular partner or boyfriend. Rishi lamented about the casual nature of their romantic relationships:

I wish I was a 'straight' man, I feel sad. Straight men have a different life, there is no tension. They have their families, everything is good and they stay happy. In our case, most of our relationships do not last. We do not trust our boyfriends and we take our lives very casually and even our partners are very casual.²⁰⁴

²⁰³Family I did not share anything with them share Karne jaisa kuch hai hi nahi. My family is uneducated, na chahte hue bhi mai ye nahi kar sakta , Hum me se kaphi log shaadi kar lete hai par phir baad mei problems hoti hai. Phir talaak ho jaata hai. (Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV)

²⁰⁴Kash mai strait banda hota , dukh hota hai, straight bando ki life hi alag hai, koi tension nahi Apna parivaar hai sab thik hai, maze mei rahte hai. Humare jaada tak relation to tik hi nahi paate. You dont trust your bf, life is casual, partners are casual. (Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV)

Probably it is this causal nature of the relationship which prevents them from going for a long term association with their regular partners and boyfriends. Out of 34 interviews, none of them narrated their desire to marry their partner or boyfriend. Rather there is a constant effort to hide this life from family and relatives. This in turn leads to poor mental health conditions for them. Samuel, a 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker shared his experience with his family which is full of woes and bad memories. Samuel stated:

My family does not know anything about gay people, they just know that being Hijra is a bad thing. So they keep telling me that listen you are not a chakka, you are just trying to be one so don't get into all this. I am told every day that I am roaming with my friends all night and I must make a final decision that whether I want my family or my friends. They threaten me every day, again and agin.²⁰⁵

Dhanush is a PhD in biotechnology and a male sex worker who stays in Mumbai with his partner. His parents also stay in Mumbai but Dhanush left his family 5 years ago when he joined University for his doctoral research. He told his parents that he was shifting to a hostel so that he may carry out his research properly. Since childhood, Dhanush has been a loner and after entering into sex work he drifted from family and now he visits his family once a month but even then it is more of a duty call than bonding with family. There is minimal communication among family members. So when he was asked if he plans to get married ever he replied:

No , because I will continue like this and I don't want unnecessary stress. I have already neglected my family and I don't want to keep my wife lonely and unhappy and I don't want to keep my child away from me. I am sure that if I get married this is eventually going to happen because if I have not changed in so many years how am I going to change in near future. There are meagre chance of this and I may try but how long can I try– one year, two years or say three years, and then what will happen. If after three years

²⁰⁵unko gay ke baare mei kuch bhi nahi pata hai unko sirf ye pata hai ki chhakke hona bura cheeze hai. Wo sirf ye bolte hai ki sun tu chakka nahi hai tu sirf ban raha hai ye sab mei mat pad . phir wo har roz ye bolte hai ki tu raat bhar dosto ka saath ghumata rahta hai tu ek final kar tu-jhe hum chahiye ki ye sab aur phir dhamki dete hai ki tu bag le aur niklo bahar, bag lo niklo bahar har roz baar baar. (Date of Interview 7/6/18 at GAURAV)

I again decide to come back here then what will happen. Just for myself, I cannot destroy someone's life.²⁰⁶

Aapaa is a gay-identified 37 years old male sex worker from Mumbai. His parents and family are aware of his sexual identity. According to Aapaa, his father once saw him with his partner in the bedroom. When I asked him about marriage he replied:

I did not get married because there is no guarantee that the lady who will come (the one I will marry) will not try to take me away from my parents like my sisters-in-law. Then there will be no one to look after my parents. This will ruin my life as well as my parents. Moreover, I am an MSM gay and if she comes to know about my sexual identity then it will be a problem. I am happy with my parents and they are also happy with me. My relatives keep telling me all the time but they hold no value for me. They do not look after their own affairs but they are bothered about other's households. If one wants to destroy his household then listen to your relatives.²⁰⁷

Most of them seemed to have no faith in marriage. Marriage does not hold any significance for them. But still they cannot refuse this custom of the alliance. There are frictions, tensions and moments of doubt, rejection and in few cases exile and renunciation. But the family still holds an important place for them. Male sex workers have not been able to have family of choice like that described by Weston and Weeks. Majority of them are part of their family of origin and are ready to compromise with their choices. Marriage is one such area of compromise.

Conclusion

After studying the narratives of male sex workers in the light of various scholarly works on the relation between sexuality and family, it becomes discernible that male sex workers go through the feeling of connectedness to disconnectedness owing to their

²⁰⁶No, I am like if suppose that mera same behaviour Aage bhi raha, I dont want unnecessary stress, ki wife ko bhi lonley raku ya phir bacche ko bhi alag rakhu., you know maine apne family ko neglect kar diya hai to mai nahi chahata ki mai wife aur bacche ko bhi ignore Kar ke life jiu. Agar maine shaadi ki to wo blame aayega mujh par and I am damn sure of that. Kyo ki agar mai itne Saal mei nahi change hua to ab kya change hunga. Chances abhut kam hai, mai koshish kar sakta hu, par kitne saal tak karuga, ek saal do saal teen saal, phir kya hoga, agar wapas ye roop aagya to phir to ho gaya. Just because of me mai kisi ki life kaise barbaad Kar sakta hu. (Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV)

²⁰⁷Shaadi nahi ki kyoki kya guarantee hai ki jo ayege wo mujhe unse alag nahi karegi, phir koi unka dhyaan rakhane wala nahi rahega. Usme meri bhi life kharaab hogi aur unki bhi. Doosra mai MSM gay hu aur agar kal ko usko pata chalega to phir kya hoga. Mai unke Saath kush hu wo bhi kush hai. Rishtedaar log bolte hai par mere liye unki koi value nahi hai, wo apne ghar ki nahi dekhte par doosro ke ghar ki cheenta karte ahi. Apne ghar ko agar aag lagane ka hai to rishtedaar ki baat suno aur agar nahi lagane ka hai to phir unki baat mat suno. (Date of Interview 3/12/17 at GAURAV)

sexuality and work identity. At the same time, the behaviour of family members changes from being accommodative to repulsive social space as soon as it catches any glimpse of non-heteronormative sexual tendency in its members. Such repulsive dimension often assumes a violent form. Consequently, many feel thrown out. It is therefore very common to find male sex workers who have left their family and home. Their visit to their family is also very infrequent and some even seem to have renounced their family in toto. As a result of such disconnectedness and feeling of being driven out, many male sex workers have formed a community on the basis of shared work and sexual identities. The relation which they seem to have developed with the community intends to blur the difference between the original family and this family which some scholars have termed “fictive kinship”. This development can be substantiated with noticeable transposition of familial terms into the formed community, *viz.*, *masui*, *didi*, *tai*, *bhabhi* (meaning mother’s sister, sister, aunty, sister-in-law respectively). Such development implies a change within the form and meaning of family which is understandable from the viewpoints of male sex workers. The apparent failure of the family to rise above the preoccupation with heteronormative sexuality, compulsory marriage, procreation and production has also resulted in a dent in structure and meaning of the family. The responses of male sex workers towards family, marriage and procreation accelerate this change. Although most of male sex workers have fallen apart from their families yet they find it difficult to part with the idea of family, marriage and procreation owing to tremendous familial and societal pressure upon them for strict adherence to the idea of family, marriage and procreation. Few could gather the courage to overlook such pressure and mark a complete departure whereas many of them seem to have succumbed to pressure. That is why most of them take recourse to performativity and lead a life of dilemma which also affects their mental and physical health. Having said that they feel driven out of family space due to their sexual orientation and work, there are some families, however, who continue to support male sex workers despite their sexual orientation and work. It is often that some members rather than everybody in family who continue to support male sex workers. Mothers, sisters, or younger brothers are more likely to support than fathers or elder brothers. It needs to be maintained that ‘coming out’ with regard to sexuality and tension related thereto seems resolvable but ‘coming out’ with respect to sex work and its concomitant tensions, does not seem to find any accep-

tance. Their life therefore remains shrouded in mystery. That is why many aspects related to MSWs requires more and deeper investigation.

In my last chapter I will understand various challenges in the lives of male sex workers. Same-sex sexualities carrying out work which is closely associated with shame, guilt, stigma, criminalisation and AIDS, makes them vulnerable to abuse and victimisation. The violence, stigma, and discrimination faced by male sex workers (MSWs) often find their roots in homophobia, or fear of homosexuality, as well as a general fear of those whose gender identity does not adhere to traditional gender norms. The chapter will try to develop a framework to see how the stigmatised identity of Male Sex Workers in discursive heteronormative society renders them invisible.

CHAPTER SIX

Discomforted Minds and Bodies: Challenges in the Lives of Male Sex Workers

The last chapter located male sex workers in the family setup and kinship units and tried to understand their ties with significant others in the family. The chapter explored some important questions like how do male sex workers perceive and identify themselves as a part of family and kinship units and do male sex workers view family as a support system or as a barrier to their homosexual identity? The chapter further explored the outcomes of compulsory marriage for male sex workers who were either homosexual or bisexual. This chapter explores and understands various challenges in the lives of male sex workers. Male sex workers carry out work which is very closely related to guilt, shame, stigma and their identity is viewed as pathologised. Stigma and discrimination associated with their sexual and work identity make them vulnerable to violence and abuse. This violence and abuse is rooted in homophobia. This fear of homosexuals results in an abusive response from the normative class. This chapter is an effort to understand the precarity of their existence. The chapter tries to develop a framework to see how the stigmatised identity of male sex workers in discursive heteronormative society renders them invisible. The resultant invisibility in turn leads to ontological concern in general and official discourse in particular in that they do not figure in the official data which amounts to the denial of their sexual and work identity based existence. Since the very existence is not ascertained in true form, it apparently raises epistemological concern with respect to this category i.e male sex workers. In other words, the robust intervention is not possible unless the extensive corpus of knowledge about their existence, number and issues are in place. Destigmatisation or prolonged counter-discourse may address this concern in considerable measure. Another important theme which this chapter tries is to see the mind and body of male sex workers in a non-dichotomous sense. Their existence as undesired others of the society due to their corporeal and mental non-conformity presses for the fact that their mind and body cannot be understood in isolation.

After more than three decades of grappling with the HIV/AIDS epidemic, service-providers, researchers, and policymakers think that social discrimination is simply confined to HIV risk and access to care and prevention. Stigma, discrimination, violation of human rights, poverty, heterosexism and homophobia are all modes of social discrimination (Maluwa, Aggleton and Parker 2002). Negative attitudes and violence toward gay men, MSM, TG and MSWs are condoned by the State and society in many countries. In such environments, MSM and MSW often face arrest for the overt articulation of their sexual orientation. Expression of same-sex behaviour in any form is subject to punishment by imprisonment in many parts of the world. Owing to the intimidatory attitude of law enforcement agencies and healthcare providers, MSM and MSWs tend to avoid access to essential services due for them. Moreover, corruption and harassment compound the problems of same-sex sexualities. Similarly, the rate of violence among MSM and TG, particularly those engaging in sex work, is a matter of concern. A vast corpus of the literature suggests that violence against MSWs increases their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Despite the fact that MSWs face numerous vulnerabilities related to violence, stigma, and discrimination based on their Sexual and work identity, health-related services are limited to a handful of programs. Moreover, many MSWs do not access health services mostly due to fear of disclosure or a general lack of knowledge.

In order to see a bigger picture, it is important to know that 78 countries criminalise same-sex sexual practices, with seven countries exacting the death penalty. In recent years, new legislation has emerged that further targets gay men and other men who have sex with men. These laws include overly broad criminal legislation that prescribes punishment for overt expression of same-sex sexual preferences or identities as well as the dissemination of information pertaining to same-sex relationships (UNAIDS 2014). In some countries, laws also ban organisations that represent or support lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals. These punitive laws further incite stigma, discrimination and other human rights violations towards gay men and other men who have sex with men. In Nigeria and Uganda, the adoption of new restrictive legislation has resulted in increased harassment and prosecution based on sexual orientation and gender identities. HIV outreach workers and services providers working with gay men and other men who have sex with men in these two countries have also reported heightened challenges in reaching this population. Some outreach organisations and health service

providers have stopped or reduced the scope of their activities owing to the fear of harassment and prosecution (Bekiempis 2014). In Nigeria homosexuality has been illegal for a long time and with the enactment of Same Sex Prohibition Act which regulates free speech and assembly, many feel that this has pushed the LGBT community and its allies deeper underground. This new law has the potential to damage the country which reels from the second largest HIV epidemic in the world. These reports are consistent with studies that have documented serious disruptions in the availability of and access to HIV and other health services following widely publicised prosecutions of gay men and other men who have sex with men. The passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda also triggered negative discussions in social media. The most worrisome signs included messages that advocated violence and that were highly discriminatory (UNAIDS 2014)

Stigma, Discrimination and Criminalisation of Male Sex Workers

A disturbing trend that emerged while interacting with male sex workers was stigma associated with their work and sexual identity and how a male sex worker tries to conceal his identity to protect his self esteem and self image. Various studies have brought to light how stigma is a contributing factor towards negative self-image, low self-esteem and depression. This, in turn, results in risky practices and a decline in availing of HIV prevention services (Meyer et al. 1998; Herek et al. 1998; Diaz et al. 2004; Saffren et al. 2009). The attitude of silence and secrecy towards MSM in general and MSW in particular and failure to address the issues of stigma and discrimination is providing an ideal ground for the escalated HIV infection among this group.

Stigma is viewed as the process of labelling, stereotyping, discriminating and devaluing within unequal power structures based on actual or perceived identity or status (Link and Phelan 2006). Erving Goffman describes stigma as the situation where an individual is deprived and disqualified from complete social acceptance. So a person who suffers stigma is “thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap (Goffman 1963:12). Goffman describes three kinds of stigma: First is the abomination of the body which includes all kinds of physical deformities. Second is ‘blemishes of individual

character perceived as 'weak will' and here he meant domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty like mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behaviour. The last category is the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion. These stigmas are transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family. The awareness of inferiority implies a preoccupation with such consciousness which causes a chronic feelings of the worst sort of insecurity. In other words, this can be linked with the enormous degree of anxiety among them. The fear of getting disrespected because of certain orientation means that one with a different orientation is always likely to feel insecure in contact with other people; and this insecurity arises, not from mysterious and somewhat disguised sources, as a great deal of our anxiety does, but from something which he knows he cannot fix. Now that represents an almost fatal deficiency of the self-system since the self is unable to disguise or exclude a definite formulation that reads, 'I am inferior. Therefore people will dislike me and I cannot be secure with them.'

Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (2003) argue in their essay *HIV and AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination: a Conceptual Framework and Implications for Action* that stigma and discrimination are characterised by cross-cultural diversity and complexity and therefore if we seriously want to understand this phenomenon then we will have to pay attention to these cross-cultural complexities and specificity. Parker and Aggleton further argue that Goffman's work on stigma talks about someone possessing 'undesirable difference' and this leads to a 'spoiled identity'. This analysis of Goffman is highly individualised where we characterise an individual in an unmediated way. The outcome is that these people are understood as negatively valued to the society. But according to Parker and Aggleton stigma plays an important role in production and reproduction of power and control. Hence some groups are valued over others and the devalued groups feel that they are inferior. Thus stigma is closely related to the working of social inequalities. In this particular case, gay and male sex workers have been socially excluded and there are different social forces—individuals, communities and states which are playing their role to create and reinforce exclusion in different settings.

In this regard, drawing on Michel Foucault is important to understand the relation between knowledge, power and notion of difference to engage with the issue of stigma and discrimination. While Goffman and Foucault were contemporaries and worked on overlapping subjects like deviance, mental illness, crime and punishment among other things but their point of origin were different. Goffman utilised the social construction of meanings through interaction whereas Foucault was interested in different forms of knowledge through distinct historical periods. He was keenly interested in the ‘regimes of power’, which were embedded in various knowledge systems, as well as the kind of control which was exercised by these systems over bodies. Foucault's works *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (1978) explains how modern European societies were characterised as a new regime of knowledge/power during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Foucault traced how in this new regime, physical violence or coercion largely gave way to social control or in Foucault’s term ‘subjectification’. But interestingly this social control was not exercised through physical force but through the production of conforming subjects and docile bodies. Foucault underlined how the process of social production of difference is linked to established regimes of knowledge and power. Therefore abnormal is necessary for one to describe and understand normal. Within this perspective, the making of stigma largely involves bringing out the considerable differences between categories of people and through this process they are inserted into the structure of power. According to Parker and Aggleton:

Stigma and stigmatization function, quite literally, at the point of intersection between *culture, power* and *difference*—and it is only by exploring the relationships between these different categories that it becomes possible to understand stigma and stigmatization not merely as an isolated phenomenon, or expressions of individual attitudes or of cultural values, but as central to the constitution of the social order. This new understanding has major implications for the ways in which we might investigate and respond to the specific issues involved in HIV and AIDS-related stigma, stigmatization and discrimination (2003:448)

Several researchers have found that male sex workers face violence, harassment, and discrimination all over the world. Their findings also point to the fact that structural violence—“stigma, discrimination, and violence widespread throughout society and its institutions”—make specific communities particularly more vulnerable to HIV infection. For example, Chakrapani et al. (2007) who carried out in-depth interviews with 18 *kothi*-identified MSM in Chennai, concluded that *kothis* face violence and aggressive

behaviour from various quarters like family and friends. This becomes even more serious when *kothis* are dealing with healthcare and legal systems. In the same study HIV-positive *kothis* reported more aggravated form of violence and discrimination.

In the study titled *Stigma Related to Sex Work Among Men Who Engage in Transactional Sex With Men in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*, Catherine E. Oldenburg, Katie B. Biello et al. (2014) studied the factors associated with the experience of stigma by men selling sex. The men experience stigma at two levels—being a sexual minority and sex work-related stigma. According to this research, the places or venues where male sex workers carries out work also decide the level of stigma experienced by a male sex worker. Sexual encounter at the cruising spots like a park, public toilets or streets was found to be associated with increased stigma. On the other hand, sex workers who carry out their work from home or hotel expressed lower levels of stigma. Thus public spaces which are associated with increased visibility are also associated with increased vulnerability. The research further indicated that social isolation and lack of social support are also related to the feeling of stigma. This was particularly noticeable in case of MSW in Vietnam, given that both male-male sexual behaviour and sex work are stigmatised and sex work is illegal. A person engaged in sex work may feel alienated from their social networks if they are uncomfortable discussing their sexuality or work identity. Another important finding is about the link between the disclosure of sexual orientation to healthcare workers and fear of sex work-related stigma. Discrimination towards MSM from the healthcare sector is particularly concerning, as health care stigmatisation is known to deter MSM from accessing services in the future (Thanh et al. 2012; Ma et al. 2012; Risher et al. 2013). Non-engagement in care predisposes individuals to a higher risk of poor health which include HIV and STIs (Ngo et al. 2009; Thanh et al. 2012). In the present study, almost half of respondents reported negative health outcomes like depression and stigma. Setia et al. (2010) reported stigma related to gender non-conformity and HIV in India among MSM and gay men.

Meyer (2007) showed that hiding sexual identity may be a source of stress among the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community. This is despite the fact that the aim behind concealment is to protect them from victimisation. Concealing sexual orientation becomes a practical ground for male sex workers. This observation has been substantiated

by Padilla et al. (2008) who studied 72 Dominican male sex workers on stigma, social inequality, and HIV risk. It becomes apparent from the explanation which gay and bisexual men extended that their economic need propels them to undertake sex work. But simultaneously, they hold dual identities by having girlfriends, wives, and children in order to avoid the effects of stigma and social inequality. According to them, it is “safer” to do this than admitting involvement in sex work or admitting being gay, bisexual, or TG.

The frequent incidents of violence which sex workers—female, male, and TG— face in their daily life make them accept this as an unavoidable “part of the job” (Amin 2005). In some countries, violence was experienced by as much as three-quarters of this population. For instance, a survey of 475 female, male, and TG sex workers across South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the United States, and Zambia found that 73 per cent experienced physical abuse and 62 per cent experienced rape (Farley et al. 1998). Likewise, a study of 70 freelance TG sex workers in Cambodia showed that rates of rape and physical violence perpetrated against them by the police reached 29 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively (Jenkins 2006). In the case of feminized individuals, that is, TG or those who take on the feminine “receptive” role in sexual relationships, the act of discrimination and criminalisation assumes a more brutal form because they have to face the double discrimination of being a sex worker and being feminine. Such observation is evident from the studies conducted in Bangladesh and Thailand (Guadamuz et al. 2006). In a country like Jamaica, adolescent gay males who engage in transactional sex said that they want to identify as female, but they avoid feminine looks due to fear of experiencing abuse and rape (Hanish 2006). The *kothis* of India undergo a high degree of oppression when the health providers insult them, refuse to serve them and breach the norms of confidentiality in their case (Chakrapani et al. 2007). If the police, in the Philippines and India, recover condoms from their possession, they at once treat them as sex workers just on the basis of such possession and target them for harassment (Amnesty International 2004; Jayasree 2004).

The literature also shows the link between the experience of sexual violence and a tendency towards high-risk sexual behaviour among MSM and TG as a consequence of sexual violence. Brazil, for instance, where a survey of more than 1,000 MSM pointed

in a similar direction, that is, those who reported sexual violence in the past also showed a relatively high risk for unprotected intercourse which is twice as high as MSM who did not experience violence (Camargo et al. 2002). Likewise, a study of 817 MSM in the Chicago area (United States) yielded similar result in which men who reported of recent unprotected anal sex were 1.6 times more likely to report abuse. Similar studies were undertaken across Brazil, Colombia, India, Kenya, the Philippines, and Thailand. As a consequence of such large-scale research, it was found that forced sex among young men, particularly those living on the street, has been associated with their perpetrating forced sex (Best 2005). In the United States, research among male, female, and TG sex workers determined a strong connection between sexual violence and having a sexually transmitted infection, an indicator of HIV risk and high-risk behaviour (Cohan et al. 2004). These data on the incidence of violence against MSM bears resemblance to the data on violence against women and its link with HIV.

In one interaction with a consultant of Maharashtra Aids Control Society Riji Nair about various challenges in the lives of male sex workers, she shared that one of the biggest challenges is that most of MSWs do not accept that they are into transactional sex. The fear of being labelled as a sex worker and disclosure, shame and guilt associated with the work is responsible for such behaviour. Since many of them do not disclose their identity hence any kind of intervention with respect to health is not possible. According to Nair, another major challenge is peer pressure. A good number of male sex workers enter into this work because their friends lured them into this. So the friend would generally tell:

See I am already doing it so you also do it, there is no problem, nothing happened to me and I am here for so long.²⁰⁸

HIV/AIDS, Health and Male Sex Work

Steven Seidman argues in the paper titled *AIDS and the Discursive Construction of Homosexuality* that AIDS has provided a pretext to reinforce homosexuality within a symbolic drama of pollution and purity. Thus AIDS has been used to reassert the notion that homosexuals are polluted figure. It has revealed the promiscuous homosexual de-

²⁰⁸Yaar mai kar raha hu tu bhi kar le, koi problem nahi hai, nothing happened to me and I am here for so long.

sire and dangerous and subversive nature. In the early 1980s when the first few cases of rare cancer among young homosexual males were reported, it led researchers to designate the term GRID (Gay-related immune deficiency) to this new syndrome. The popular media called it “homosexual cancer” and “gay epidemic”. Then popular “overload theory” held that the combination of drug use, poor health habits and history of sexually transmitted diseases as an outcome of sexual promiscuity (all these together labelled as “gay lifestyle”) breaks down the immune system. The AIDS discourse on homosexuality is a moral one. The juxtaposition of homosexuality and heterosexual romantic love carries a moral distinction between the dangers of homosexual promiscuity and heterosexual love and monogamy. As the principal victim of AIDS and also identified as its main perpetrator, homosexual men were doubly marginalised by the disease and by society’s response to it. AIDS served as an ideal pretext for upgrading the surveillance and oppression of homosexuals.

Available data show high HIV prevalence among young gay men and other men who have sex with men in several countries across the globe. Prevailing stigma, discrimination and punitive social and legal environments based on sexual orientation and gender identity, often compounded by the limited availability of and access to sexual and reproductive health services for young people, are among the main determinants of this high vulnerability to HIV among young gay men and other men who have sex with men. In India, AIDS is seen as the disease of sex-workers, truck-drivers and blood donors. Homosexuals are also responsible for a high percentage of HIV positives in the country. Now male sex workers, in this context, are treated as one of the high-risk groups. The prejudice has pushed male sex workers completely underground and at the same time Government does not want to acknowledge their existence. This neglected and marginalised population experiences endless violence and harassment and sadly they do not exist for policymakers and planners.

As per the recently released India HIV Estimation 2017 report, National adult (15–49 years) HIV prevalence in India is estimated at 0.22% (0.16% – 0.30%) in 2017. In 2017, adult HIV prevalence is estimated at 0.25%(0.18-0.34) among males and at 0.19% (0.14-0.25) among Females. The adult HIV prevalence at national level has continued its steady decline from an estimated peak of 0.38% in 2001-03 through 0.34% in 2007,

0.28% in 2012 and 0.26% in 2015 to 0.22% in 2017. The HIV infection in India is largely an outcome of sexual transmission and men who have sex with men are one of the high-risk groups (National AIDS Control Organization 2015; UNAIDS 2013). Estimates of the prevalence of HIV among MSM in India generally range from 7.0% to 16.5% (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/ AIDS, 2010; Thomas et al. 2009), significantly higher than the overall HIV prevalence in India of 0.22% (National AIDS Control Organization 2017). Male sex workers who face societal pressure, stigma and discrimination remain invisible and often ignored population and therefore at an increased risk of HIV and STI compared to the broader MSM population (Biello et al. 2016). A group of studies have found out that various factors related to sex work like fear and stigma, financial incentives for heightened riskier behaviour and poor access to prevention services all add up to this increased HIV prevalence among MSW compared to MSM and other high risk-groups. (Biello, Colby, Closson, & Mimiaga 2014; Chakrapani, Shunmugam, Newman, Kershaw, & Dubrow 2015; Oldenburg, Biello et al. 2014; Oldenburg et al. 2015; Shinde, Setia, Row- Kavi, Anand, & Jerajani 2009). Very few researches have sought to estimate the prevalence rates of HIV among MSW mainly due to the unavailability of any national data on MSW in India. Few studies like Shinde et al. 2009 have estimated the prevalence of HIV among MSW living in Maharashtra as high as 33.0%. Despite their increased risk and significant contribution to the HIV epidemic in India (National AIDS Control Organization 2015; UNAIDS 2013), MSW remain understudied when compared to female sex workers and the broader population of MSM in India.

Previous studies that have studied male sex workers have been mainly based in Mumbai and Hyderabad, two of the largest cities in India (Narayanan et al. 2013; Shinde et al. 2009). Shinde et al. (2009) through their study of 75 male sex workers identified an HIV prevalence of 33.0% and a syphilis prevalence of 28% among MSW in Mumbai. Using data from a study of MSM attending STI clinics in Mumbai and Hyderabad, Narayanan et al. (2013) studied 483 MSM which included 326 (67%) from Hyderabad and 157 (33%) from Mumbai. About one third (30%) were currently married and 39% were living with sexual partners; 80% were literate and 69% reported current use of alcohol/drugs. A majority of MSM (57%) self-identified as *kothis*: i.e., reporting a receptive anal sex role. Almost half (42%) reported having had sex with women in the past

three months. Condom use at last sex was relatively high for receptive anal sex (89%) with a male partner but decreased for insertive anal sex with males and females to 79% and 39% respectively. Of the total 483 MSM, two-thirds (69%) of the MSM had ever sold sex to male clients, though only 19% reported sex work as the primary source of income. The proportion of MSWs in the total MSM population was higher in Hyderabad as compared to Mumbai (84% versus 38%). The most common infections among all participants were HSV-2 (herpes simplex virus) (50.5%) and HIV (35.6%). The prevalence of these synergistic infections was higher among MSWs than other MSM (HIV 43.6% versus 18.1%).

The third group of studies have been undertaken in Chennai — the biggest industrial and commercial centre of South India. The focus of all these studies has been the prevalence of HIV and risk factors for HIV acquisition among the broader MSM community (Chakrapani, Newman, & Shunmugam 2008; Thomas et al. 2009). Thomas et al. (2009) studied 210 participants enrolled in an HIV clinic and found that 22% of the sample reported any unprotected anal sex in the past 3-months, and 8% tested positive for HIV. Thomas et al. further described that not having previously engaged in an HIV prevention program, having symptoms of clinical depression and lower self-efficacy as predictors for MSM engaging in unprotected anal intercourse, a key risk factor for testing positive for HIV. Despite this, limited research has examined behavioural factors and sexual risk specifically among MSW in India.

Recently Biello et al. (2017) conducted a study with one hundred MSW from Chennai, through a baseline behavioural assessment battery and found that *Kothi* was the predominant (77.0%) sexual identity of the sample. Nearly two-thirds (63.6%) reported having ever been tested for HIV (outside of the current study) and one-fifth (20.2%) for any STIs. Forty-one per cent reported that their only source of income came from sex work. The most common reasons for starting and continuing sex work were money (83.0% and 93.0%, respectively) and pleasure (56.0% and 50.0%, respectively). The least common reasons were to pay for drugs and or because they were coerced. Over two-thirds of participants (70.0%) reported being offered more money to not use a condom with a client, of which 74.2% report accepting the money to not use a condom. Two-thirds reported difficulty using condoms with clients.

Similarly, another group of studies that were published in 2006 includes Kumta et.al (2006) based in Mumbai and Sravankumar et.al (2006) based in Andhra Pradesh. Kumta et.al (2006) findings suggest that 12 per cent of MSM seeking voluntary counselling and testing services were HIV-infected. Similarly in Andhra Pradesh 18 per cent of the MSM screened in 10 clinics were found to be infected. It is in this context one wants to place male sex workers and understand the threat. It is immensely important to focus on the socio-cultural factors that play a massive role among MSM and MSWs. Even though male to male sex has recently been decriminalised in India, social stigma may hinder risk-reduction and access to HIV prevention interventions.

HIV infection among MSM has been increasing, especially in Asia. This figure needs to be viewed in the light of overall adult HIV prevalence which is 0.20 per cent compared to 2.7 per cent for MSM in 2017. The current prevalence rate among MSM is a matter of concern since prevention efforts have been ongoing for more than two decades. So the question which comes to our mind is why the infection is not declining at the same rate as for India. The interventions for High Risk Groups (HRG) include mainly single dimension modalities like condom distribution along with voluntary HIV counselling and testing, HIV education, and the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Making these services available to them will not ensure that the services will be utilised at the same rate. We need to understand the distinct social forces that shape the HIV risk environment to maximise the effectiveness of prevention interventions and heighten the acceptability of these programmes by MSM and MSW.

MSM and MSWs experience multiple legal, social and cultural barriers. Availability of health services alone does not guarantee its utilisation. MSM in India continues to be a highly stigmatized group. Despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality in India, MSM continues to face discrimination and violence in social, legal, and health care settings across the country. Stigma is most prevalent among MSM who demonstrate feminine traits, openly identify their sexual identity, have depressive symptoms, and engage in sex work (Thomas et al. 2012). Those who disclose their sexual orientation often experience family rejection, public humiliation, harassment by authorities, and discrimination by health care professionals (Thomas et al. 2012). Furthermore, MSM who engage

in sex work have been found to be vulnerable to psychological distress, ‘maladaptive coping’, social isolation and increased risk of HIV (Thomas et al. 2012). Social stigma and discrimination associated with gay identity prevent many MSM to come forward to seek health services. They cannot disclose their sexual identity to anyone and thus we have a large population of MSM who are constantly balancing their lives to survive. Many of them are married and have children.

It came to notice in the course of fieldwork in Mumbai for the present research that young boys sell sex. Since ‘Targeted Intervention’²⁰⁹ cannot register anyone who is below eighteen years of age, most of these boys remain unregistered. This makes it very difficult for any NGO or CBO which are running a Targeted Intervention (TI) to combat HIV prevalence among High-Risk groups (HRG) even though the peer educators (PE) do provide services to them whenever they meet them on the site (cruising spots). But such meetings are very infrequent. An interview with Satyam, a male sex worker who is also a peer educator with Gaurav, shed some light on this rising trend of entry of young boys into sex work:

In our community, everyone says that sex should be after 18 years of age but here boys in the age group of 12 to 15 are very active. Clients also look out for them. I know a twelve-year boy from Bandra who sells sex. Whenever he visits the site (cruising spot), we chase him away. Since he needs money, we cannot do much to stop him. Nowadays, most of the boys in sex work are less than 18 years. Although male sex workers of this age group are not registered with us, we do provide services to them. Without our services, they will land up in bigger problems. We cannot follow them up all the time owing to the registration problem but whenever we meet them on sites we do provide them services.²¹⁰

In a conversation with Rishi, details regarding the involvement of very young boys in sex work point to a worrisome picture. These details were about boys in the age group of 14-15 who have entered into sex work.

²⁰⁹ Targeted interventions are aimed at offering prevention and care services to high risk populations (Female Sex Workers- FSW, Male having Sex with Male- MSM and Injecting Drug Users- IDUs) within communities by providing them with the information, means and skills they need to minimize HIV transmission and improving their access to care, support and treatment services

²¹⁰Humari community mein sab bolte hain ki sex 18 ke baad par humare yahan sabse jaada sex work Mei 12 , 13, 14 , 15 Saal ke bachche hote hain, aur client bhi inhi ko chahte hain. I know one boy from Bandra who is 10 years old and is into sex work. Jab bhi site par aata hai hum use marte bhi hain aur bhaga dete hain, par ab kya karein, use bhi jaroorat hogi shaayad. Jyaadatar sex worker aaj kal to 18 se kam ke hi hote hain, ab hum inhe services to dete hain par unhe hum apne saath register nahi karte. Services isliye dete hain kyon ki uske bina wo daldal mein phas jayenge. Kyonki hum register nahi kar sakte to unhe har Waqt follow nahi kar pate, jab mil jaate hain tab hum unhe services dete hain. Date of Interview 6/12/17 at GAURAV

Nowadays very young boys of 14-15 years are selling sex. Sometimes I get offer from young boys like 15 and 16 calling me that baby I have a place please come to me. I have few young clients who are 20 years old. The life of a male sex worker begins at 15-16 and if you take good care then you can go on till 30 years. That is the life of male sex workers²¹¹

In general, young male sex workers selling sex to men are unaware of STI and HIV and other threats. However, such boys are most sought after among clients. Since they are young, clients assume that they are very likely to be clean (no diseases or infection). Under this assumption, clients ask them to go without condoms. It is for this reason that sexual encounters in the case of young male sex workers are very often without condoms and therefore there is a danger of health hazard involved in their case. It is already apparent from the foregoing discussion that matter becomes more complicated due to the fact that no NGO or CBO can register any minor for any HIV prevention programme. In other words, these young boys, particularly minor male sex workers, remain without organisational support.

Another perceptible trend was the belief among Muslim male sex workers that circumcision circumvents any chance of infection including HIV. Out of thirty informants, four were Muslims. They all showed similar beliefs when it came to the matter of sex work and risk related to HIV. It is important to take note of the following extract from an interview with Aiba, a kothi-identified male sex worker who follows Islam.

STI is more common among Hindu men compared to Muslim men because we undergo circumcision which helps to keep that area clean.²¹²

The lack of reliable and essential information accounts for increase in the cases of infection among MSM and MSW. The matter is compounded due to prevalence of misinformation. In this regard, details from an interview with Satyam are informative. Satyam drew our attention to the circulation of such misinformation:

²¹¹Aajkal to 14 -15 Saal ke bachche bhi sex work mei hain. Kabhi kabhi to mujhe khud bhi bahut chhote bachche phone karte hain aur bolte hai ki baby mere paas place hai aajao. Mera paas kuchh young clients bhi hain lagbhag bees saal ke. Waise bhi ek male sex worker ki zeendagi 15-16 Saal mein shuru hoti hai aur agar tumne Apna achchha dekh bhaal kiya to tum 30 saal tak jaa sakte ho. Yahi life hai ek male sex worker ki. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

²¹²Mai sirf aur sirf panthi dekhta hu. Waise bhi Hindus mei jaada STI hota hai Muslim bhai Mei ye kum hota hai. Kyo ki wo khatni karte hai Jisse wo area saaf rahta hai. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

Nowadays young boys sell sex for 100 and 200 rupees. But they don't understand anything about safe sex. There is lots of misinformation like Muslim boys think that if they are circumcised they will not contract HIV and STI. They think they are clean. But I have to explain them also.²¹³

Despite the high prevalence rate of HIV infection among male sex workers, many of them shared narratives about how clients would ask them to go without condoms. Noor, a versatile male sex worker recalled his experience of the tussle with clients who want to go without condoms. This is an everyday narrative of a male sex worker. Following piece of information provided by Noor is worth noting.

Most clients use it but there are still many who do not agree and then we have to tell them. Many of them do not want a condom. They know everything, they are old, they have had sex with many but they still do not want condoms. They do a lot of drama.²¹⁴

Having said that some male sex workers take care to avoid the risk of HIV and STD, it also came to notice that even health cautious male sex workers tend to feel deviated in case their clients offer them a larger sum of money to compromise with the safety. A group of informants also shared that their bargaining and negotiations hit bottom low when clients offer them more than MSW's asking rate. Akki, a bisexual male sex worker, throws light on this matter by presenting an anecdote from his own life:

My rate is 3000 Rupees for one encounter. Last week, one of my clients promised me 7000 to go for *hi fun* and avoid the use of a condom. I, for a minute, felt enticed owing to greed but I controlled myself. But I don't know how many male sex workers can really refuse such an offer. I guess, not many.²¹⁵

Another problem that is closely associated with high rates of HIV among MSM and MSW is the use of alcohol and drugs very regularly. When drugs and alcohol are combined with transactional sex, safety and health concerns are overlooked.

²¹³Abhi teenage ladke 100-200 mei bhi sex ke liye aate hai. Par unhe safe sex ke baare mei kuch bhi pata nahi hota hai. Unke beech mei bahut saree misinformation bhi hai jaise ki muslim ladke sochte hai ki unhe HIV aur STI nahi ho sakta hai. Unhe lagta hai ki wo bahut saaf hai. Date of Interview 6/12/17 at GAURAV

²¹⁴Adhiktar client to use karte hai par phir bhi kai aise hai jo maante nahi hai phir Hume bolna padta hai. Bahut se aise hai jinhe condom nahi chahiye. Unko sab pata hota hai, itne aged hai, kitno ke saath sex kiya hai par phir bhi condom nahi chahiye, natak karte hai. Date of Interview 20/12/17 at GAURAV

²¹⁵Apan ka rate 3000 hai. Peechle hafte mere ek client ne mereko 7000 dene ko bola aur bola ki hifun karna hai aur condom nahi chahiye. Ek minute ke liye bahut laalach aaya par phir control kiya. Par pata nahi kitne hai apni community se jo itna paise ko mana kar payege. Shayaad bahut kam. Date of Interview 23/7/16 at GAURAV

Alcohol, Drugs and Male Sex Work

One particular incident in the summer of 2017 in Mumbai while one was in the field pushed me to pay more attention to this trend of drug use among MSM and MSWs. This incident took place in the summer of 2017. One day when I reached Gaurav's office in the afternoon there was a heated debate going on among few members of Gaurav. The details of the incident unfolded when I initiated an enquiry into the ongoing tense discussion. The heated discussion was about a serious incident from the previous night where one of the registered members of Gaurav had passed away because of an overdose of drugs while servicing his client. He was eighteen years old male sex worker. Understanding MSWs in relation to prevalent drug abuse among them requires a great deal of pondering. Dejected with the real world wherein they experience disowned, drug abuse is seen as a mechanism to create a different world altogether. They make efforts to transcend the present consciousness which is replete with agonies. In the hallucinatory realm of new consciousness, all anxieties and agonies are forgotten. In other words, benumbing oneself through drugging is tantamount to killing of consciousness to escape the pain. The pleasure is imagined and is felt in a drugged state. However, drug abuse has also been known for claiming lives.

India has an estimated 3 million opiate users, of whom approximately 164,820 to 1.1 million are injectable drugs users (IDU) (Arora et al. 2008; UNODC 2009). Given this large population of IDUs, a relatively large population of dual-risk IDUs and MSM are likely to exist. The *National Behavioural Surveillance Survey (BSS) 2006* (NACO 2006) included behavioural assessments of 2,638 MSM in 10 sites across the country. Drug use rates among MSM were reported to be highest in the northern states compared to the southern states, with 60.4 per cent of MSM reporting ever injecting drugs in Delhi and 21.1 per cent in Bangalore, compared to 2.2 per cent in Chennai. In Delhi, recent drug use was common, with 30.4 per cent reported injecting illicit drugs in the last year compared to no respondents in Chennai or Kolkata reporting this practice. Similarly, 9.1 per cent of MSM in Goa and Gujarat reported injecting drugs in the last 12 months compared to again no MSM reporting this practice in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. Notably, injecting drugs has become more common in Delhi and Mumbai since the 2001 BSS was completed.

Many male sex workers selling sex may use alcohol and drugs with clients. There are health and safety issues for the sex worker, as being stoned, high or drunk affects judgement, risk-taking and an individual's ability to have sex. Some clients may offer the sex worker more money for doing drugs or alcohol, and some may even 'spike' a drink. Numerous studies support the view that unprotected sexual activity, unwanted pregnancies and venereal diseases are associated with heavy drinking and the use of illicit drugs such as cannabis or opiates. Stall *et al.* (1986) have reported, from a study of gay men, that 'unsafe' sexual activities were more likely to have occurred when those involved were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Several authors have discussed the complex connection between the use of alcohol, illicit drugs and AIDS risks. This connection is attributable to a host of social and psychological factors (e.g. Siegel 1986; Stall *et al.* 1986).

The review of the literature points towards a clear association between high-risk sexual behaviour and drugs. Thus we can draw main conclusions from the corpus of existing literature – first, that individuals are generally more likely to engage in high-risk sexual activities if under the effects of alcohol or other drugs. Secondly, people who have a propensity for some forms of risk-taking behaviour such drug abuse are also likely to indulge in other risky activities such as 'unsafe sex' practices (Adlaf & Smart 1983; Flavin & Frances 1987).

Types of Drugs

United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), World Drug Report 2009 list 6 major categories of drugs prevalent across the world. These are amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), Coca paste (or cocaine base), Crack (cocaine), Heroin HCl (heroin hydrochloride), Heroin no. 3 and Poppy straw. According to informants, drugs are very common among male sex workers. While interacting with Dheeraj, a bisexual male sex worker who has a PhD degree in Biotechnology shared that MSWs use drugs to enhance pleasure and there are many kinds of drugs in the market. Commonly they popularly call it 'hi fun' drugs. Meth, meow-meow, M-cat, cat, crystal, glass, MD, white, powder, stuff – whatever one calls them, all the names refer to the same class of drugs: amphetamines. These drugs can help elevate arousal levels while lowering inhibitions for several hours, sometimes days, at a stretch. But all amphetamines are not made the

same way. Though MDMA and meth are both amphetamines, they have vastly different effects. While MDMA gives you euphoria, energy, and sexual urges, meth is more toxic and impure, and the high is fast, piercing, addictive, and usually accompanied by hallucinations. But crucially, meth is also a whole lot cheaper. Standard rates for meth in Mumbai range from Rs 500–800 a gram, whereas MDMA will cost you Rs 2,000–3,000 a gram. With the rise of mobile applications like Grindr, it has become very easy to organise such high fun parties. Under the influence of these drugs, a male sex worker often finds himself at the risk of assault, violence and overdose of drugs.

The state of mind and self has a lot to explain why they go for drugs which are known for altering the mood. While researching I came across many primary sources especially newspapers where many stories about the rise of use of drugs in gay sex have been reported. GHB, more popularly known as date-rape drug, has become very popular among gay couples in parties. In London alone, 61 deaths were reported to have been caused by GHB during the period from 2011 to 2015. The drug made national headlines in late 2016 when a serial killer named Stephen Port killed four men he met on Grindr by overdosing them on the drug. Since then, several news publications across the UK have reported on chemsex and the devastating effect it has had on the gay community.

Chemsex refers to gay or bisexual men using drugs to facilitate sex with other men. Culturally, though, it has become a catch-all term for sex involving drugs and “chemsex parties”, where groups of gay and bisexual men meet up, get high, and have sex with one another. It's important to note that it's distinct from drug use which later leads to sexual activity: chemsex is where men take a certain drug or drugs *because* they are about to have sex. In the 1990s and early 2000s, drugs that were mainly used by MSMs were cannabis, which is a depressant, amphetamine (speed), methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA or ecstasy) and cocaine. Over the past decade, academic researches have charted the rise of two other stimulants: methylmethcathinone (mephedrone) and crystal methamphetamine (crystal meth). In addition, another depressant has also emerged: γ -hydroxybutyric acid (‘GHB’, sometimes taken as the prodrug γ -butyrolactone or ‘GBL’). These three newer drugs have given rise to a phenomenon commonly referred to as ‘chemsex’ (McCarty-Caplan et al. 2014). Recent evidence

suggests that 6.6% of gay men and bisexual men in England had used any of these three core chemsex drugs in the past 4 weeks.

Chemsex is a linguistic and sociological category loosely defined around the intentional combining of sexual activity and consumption of illicit psychoactive substances, in particular crystal meth, mephedrone and GHB/GBL (Bourne et al. 2015). While polydrug use—the use of two or more drugs within the same session— chemsex sessions do not necessarily include all these three drugs, many men engaging in chemsex also use other drugs (especially ketamine, ecstasy and cocaine) (Bourne 2015). Chemsex is not a unitary behaviour but a diverse set of sexual and drug-taking behaviours in complex interactions. Chemsex can include just two participants but often includes more and can take place in private homes (often facilitated by geospatial sexual networking apps) or in gay-specific sex-on-premises venues.

Illicit drugs (especially crystal meth) have been shown to be associated with condomless intercourse at both the individual and sexual session levels. Although not all studies find this association, and although causality is difficult to demonstrate, it is clear that chemsex is rarely safer than sober sex (Hegazi et al. 2016). Michie et al. (2011) have developed a consensus-based typology of the varying accounts of behaviours and activities to change them, in order to better plan and evaluate interventions. They demarcate three categories of sources of behaviour: opportunity, capability and motivation.

Opportunities include the physical and social frameworks that render certain behaviours possible. In the case of chemsex, these might include the availability of drugs, the physical spaces in which to engage (eg, homes, sex-on-premises venues), the new methods of contact that enable social connections like the geospatial mobile phone app. Capabilities refer to the psychological and physical capacities required to carry out a behaviour, which ranges from self-confidence to participate in group sex to the ability to maintain an erection over a very long sexual session. Focus groups of gay men using crystal meth at gay circuit parties in Miami highlighted the instrumental use of drugs in reducing body image anxiety, losing sexual inhibitions and facilitating social and sexual connection. Drugs can be used to remove the obstacles that make men less able to have the sex they want. Finally, motivation refers to the internal drive for behaviour. Or say, it calls

for understanding the interplay of sex, mind and drug. Motivations may be automatic and unmediated by conscious thought or reflective and involve taking a decision and forming an intention. By closely examining the factors that men value about sexualised drug use, we begin to build a picture of their motivations for chemsex. Understanding the motivations for chemsex, especially the benefits men perceive, is crucial to inform psychotherapeutic and clinical services that aim to support gay men to minimise harm while maximising sexual pleasure

The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS Report estimates that there are about 3.1 million MSM in India²¹⁶. NACO (National Aids Control Organisation) estimate the figure to 206007 and Maharashtra has the second-highest number of MSM at 22950 after Tamil Nadu which has the highest figure among all states at 31801(Annual report 2016–17 NACO). Almost one-sixth of these men are active on various gay dating applications. (Blue Lotus advisory's safe masti program). There are various groups who are interested in chemsex, or high fun as it is popular among MSMs in India. Interaction with Garry, a bisexual male sex worker from Kerala, explains how and why many male sex workers start taking drugs. In his words:

For me it's a different world, I forget all my worries, I become happy, I forget everything, I feel good.²¹⁷

But according to Garry, this sense of escape is very short-lived, feelings of guilt, shame, regret, and depression hit you the morning after:

Every time whenever I have done hi–fun, the morning after is very scary. I get suicidal thoughts. And to overcome that thought I drink or do drugs again.²¹⁸

Amphetamine use has been clinically linked to anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, psychosis, sexual dysfunction, and sleeping disorders (Hockenhull, Murphy, & Paterson 2017). When you add STDs and STIs to the overall picture, circumstances appear dire.

²¹⁶ Independent Evaluation of National AIDS Control Programme. Jaipur: Indian Institute of Health Management Research; 2007

²¹⁷mere liye ye alag Duniya hai, jo mujhe har gham ko bhula deta hai, apun kush ho jata hai. Sab bhool jata hoon. Achchha lagta hai. Date of Interview 23/3/18 at GAURAV

²¹⁸Har baar jab bhi maine high fun kiya hai, mera agli subah bahut ki darawani hoti hai. Mujhe bahut baar suicide ke khayaal aate hain. Aur phir use bhulane ke liye hum phir aur peete hain ya drugs karte hain. Date of Interview 23/3/18 at GAURAV

According to NACO estimates, approximately 4.3% to 14% of MSM are living with HIV across the world. Chemsex parties where unsafe sex and shared needles proliferate can become a hotbed for the spread of HIV and hepatitis (Gilbart, Simms, Gobin, Oliver, & Hughes 2015). To make matters worse, studies show meth may make antiretroviral treatment slightly less effective. Sexual dysfunction when not on the drug can contribute to a high rate of relapse, locking users into a morbid loop.

Further discussion with other members of the community about the usage of drugs within the community, one drug that was commonly mentioned in these conversations was 'poppers'. Poppers, inhalable alkyl nitrates, are popular in the gay community. The drug is reported to be used quite heavily in the US and UK. In a 2006 survey cited by AIDS MAP, some 40-50% of gay men in the UK reported using the drug for recreational purposes. External intoxicants like poppers are sold by peddler on gay dating apps like Grindr. They are also sold in clubs and exchanged between partners. The asking rate, as informed by informants, was Rs. 1500-2500 for a bottle. The code words used on the platform is 'high fun', 'stuff', etc. Even though the effect of poppers is said to last only for a few minutes, some people are reported to use it multiple times in a day, thereby becoming regular users of the drug over a prolonged period of time. In India, poppers are part of an underground drug culture used by the gay community in India that dates back at least to 2005. In the beginning, it was common among expatriates and the people of the elite class. It soon percolated down and spread among middle-class members of the community too.

Eldred Tellis, Director of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust and an Ashoka Fellow who has worked with the drug-using community for over thirty years, says drug abuse within the gay community tends to go even deeper underground because of the sheer stigma associated with being gay in India. Krish, a gay counsellor working in the NGO space, says poppers are mostly used by those who prefer to remain "passive". The alienation and stigma, of both their sexuality and their work status, is preventing the male sex workers from coming out and talking about this. This double stigmatisation is keeping the drug problem within the gay community buried deep underground. Many male sex workers who have been witness to the menace of drugs clearly stay away. So when one started this discussion on drugs abuse among male sex workers Satyam informed:

I have stayed with everyone, those who take charas ganjaa and afeem but I know my limit. You people sit and take I have no problem. Whenever here in the office (Gaurav) we have some party, then I know what I want, I eat and drink but stay away from drugs.²¹⁹

So why do then some male sex workers engage in drugs? According to them, their life is not easy. There is always a kind of turmoil churning inside them. One very disheartening trend which emerged from interactions was the failure of a romantic relationship, feeling of being cheated and not able to cope with the loss of the love of their life and hence alcohol and drugs to fight the loss and pain. Dhanush while discussing this cyclic trend adds:

This cycle is very common. This happened to me too. After every breakup, I would take alcohol and drugs but now it is not like this.²²⁰

So what role does alcohol or Durg plays? Does it reduce the feeling of loss and make them feel better. Dhanush sums it all up:

Alcohol makes you mentally stable because if you are into sex work then there is a long history behind it—financial or maybe something else. So you get a little relaxed mentally. Something better is going to happen in our future. Ultimately you get addicted to it and then it becomes a pressure for you. When I entered into sex work then I started with parties first, then drinks, then weed smoking and then drugs and everything else with it.²²¹

But at the same time, there are many sex workers who are not into drugs and who have to negotiate with their clients about ‘no drug use’ policy. According to them, there are many repercussions of drug abuse. In case the client is under the influence of a drug, his behaviour is often dangerous and deadly. The client turns violent and sometimes they do not ejaculate for very long due to the impact of the drug. In that situation, obliged male sex worker will have to prolong sexual encounters and keep on working till the client

²¹⁹Mai sabke saath raha hu Charas ganjaa, afeem lekin mujhe meri limit pata hai, tum log baith ke piyo mujhe koi problem nahi hai, kabhi yaha office mei log party karte hai na, to mai jaanta hu ki mujhe kya chahiye, mai khaata Peeta hu par Nashe se door rahta hu. Date of Interview 06/12/17 at GAURAV

²²⁰This cycle is very common. Ye mere saath bhi hua tha, aaj bhi har breakup ke baad mai alcohol leta tha drugs mei jaata tha, now abhi aisa kuch nahi hai . Date of Interview 05/12/17 at GAURAV

²²¹Alcohol mentally stable kar deat hai Kyo ki sex work mei aaya hai to uske peeche ek lambi history hai, financial ya phir kuch aur. Isliye thoda mental relax ho jata hai. Kuch to accha hone wala hai Aage ki life mei. Ultimately wo lat ho jati hai aur phir wahi ek pressure ban jata hai. Jab mai sex work mei enter kiya to mera pahle party start hua, phir drinks, phir smoke weed aur phir drugs aur wo sab kuch. Date of Interview 05/12/17 at GAURAV

achieves climax. It thus speaks a great deal about the economy of time and effort in sex work. Neel, a young male sex worker recounts his negotiation with the client before any deal is final:

Negotiation happens in advance and we make it very clear that if you will indulge in hi-fun then we will not let you do. Because in a sexual encounter, if a client has done hi fun then he will not ejaculate for the whole night and then I will be completely degenerate and will break down.²²²

Carrying conversation further I enquired if Neel has ever done Hi fun drugs:

No, I have seen so many stories, about group sex and those clients who do hi fun. I do not go with them because they can do anything. They sometimes try to kill also. Many of them mix it (the drug) in your drinks. I do not trust them for all these reasons. However, if a client wants to drug me he can do it in many ways.²²³

Drug use among male sex workers is very common even though there is a small proportion of them who completely stay away from drugs. Drug use among male sex workers increases the chance of sexually transmitted infection including HIV. At this juncture, if one brings in the issues related to mental health the situation gets quite grim.

Mental Health and Male Sex Work

In the course of the present research two incidents shook me hard and compelled me for serious enquiry in this direction. One Incident is related to the life of an eighteen years old young boy who lost his life to drugs. The other incident took place in the winter of 2016. One had reached Gaurav's office at Juhu Koliwada a little earlier than regular days. Amitesh, one of the key members of Gaurav's Governing board, was there in the office. He has been running a Targeted Intervention (TI) in Nagpur with MSM and TG for the last couple of years. He shared in detail the shocking incident of the rise in the numbers of suicides among the MSM community. He was sad because the previous night a young boy of 19 years had slit his wrist and passed away. He has been black-mailed by another boy from the community who was threatening him to share his inti-

²²²Negotiation to pahle hi ho jaata hai aur hum ye bhi bolte hai ki agar hi fun karoge to hum nahi karne denge. Kyo ki sex mei hi fun ke baad raat bhar wo ejaculate nahi karta aur meri to haalat hi kharaab ho gaayegi. Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV

²²³No Maine bahut saare logo ko dekha hai , group sex mei, aur jo log hifun karte hai mai unke saath jaata hi nahi hu. Aur wo kuch bhi Kar sakta hai, Maar dalte hai. Koi log drink mei mila dete hai aur isliye mai trust nahi karta hu. Agar client ko mujhe drug karna hai to wo kaise bhi dedega. Date of Interview 10/12/17 at GAURAV

mate photographs with his family who were unaware about his sexual identity. The boy could not take this continued harassment and finally took this extreme step. According to Amitesh, it is common among MSM men to take such extreme steps and in the last six months in Nagpur, he has been witness to 7 suicides among his community. But there are many incidents where these young boys try to commit suicide owing to the tremendous level of frustration with their closeted identity. Coming out is not an option for them as they fear that they will be ridiculed and they will be nothing but a laughing stock in their family.

From these two incidents, one understood that the lives of male sex workers remain precarious and full of misery and threats. There are issues related to both physical as well as mental health. In a study by Caputi et al. (2015), in the US, the key finding has been that gay teenagers are five times more likely to display a higher prevalence of suicide-risk behaviour compared to their heterosexual counterparts. It further shows that one in four or 40% of gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning (LGBQ) adolescents seriously considered, planned or attempted suicide compared to 15% of their heterosexual peers. Almost 25 per cent of LGBQ adolescents attempted suicide compared to 6 per cent of heterosexual groups. These figures are shocking and point towards a world which does not accept same-sex individuals.

While many male sex workers do not have mental health problems, low self-esteem, depression, self-harm and suicide attempts are common. Mental health issues may be aggravated by drug and alcohol use. Many male sex workers have experienced negative reactions because they are gay or bisexual. If referring someone for a service, project staff should make sure that the mental health practitioner is able to provide services to a sex worker in a non-judgemental manner. The voices of MSW informants affirm and reaffirm the narratives of stigma and discrimination which they experience at various fronts like family, neighbours, health providers, employers and the like. I strongly felt that a deeper understanding of issues around stigma and discrimination would help MSWs overcome issues associated with stigma and sexual risk, disclosure of identity and access to health care.

I observed a lack of facilities to address the mental health issues of MSW and MSM. Safren et al. (2009), in a study based in Chennai with the MSM group, found that 55 per cent of 210 participants screened in for clinical depression on a self-report measure. Some of the parameters for screening for depression included unprotected anal sex and a higher number of male partners, not being married, not having children, family not knowing about one's MSM identity, having paid for sex and perception that one is at risk of acquiring HIV. Kothi-identified MSM reported more incidents of depression, and if one places an MSW in this situation, it is clear that their lives are more precarious than MSM who are not selling sex commercially. In the case of MSW, the fear of contracting HIV infection is higher than those MSM who are not selling sex. Further, the stigma associated with the 'sex worker' identity is immense. Consistently, various studies conducted in the US have documented high levels of psychosocial stressors among MSM including victimisation, harassment, fear of rejection from friends and family, and discrimination (Herek et al. 1997)

One interviewee namely Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker, has been selling sex from the age of 15 years. He recounted his experience at a government hospital in Mumbai:

If a kothi will go for testing the doctor will comment that these people will indulge in sex for the whole night (the term used in Hindi was very vulgar hence omitted) and in the morning they are here for testing. If you hear this then you don't feel like visiting clinics again.²²⁴

Ishq explained that these sad narratives embody childhood memories that continue to haunt him to the date. The kind of questions they face is well demonstrated by Ishq in the following lines:

Why do you walk like this, put your Hands in your pocket when you walk, do not throw your hand all around, talk in a strong voice. Even at home, they will say a lot of things, like my father used to drink a lot and then he will say – why do you always behave like a chhakka, what will you do once you grow up? Why he is born like this. My father would tell my mother that what have you given birth to? I don't know what he will be once he

²²⁴Agar ek Kothi testing ke liye doctor ke paas jati hai to doctor bolta hai ki ye log raat bhar sex karte hai (term modified since original term was vulgure) aur phir din Mei yahan aate hai testing ke liye. Ye Sunne ke baad Kaun jayega hospital mei. Date of Interview 01/7/16 at GAURAV

grows up, definitely a Chhakka. Then my mother would tell me that see because of you I have to listen to all this. Why don't you stay nicely? ²²⁵

In the above interview, Ishq shared his parents' reaction towards his appearance, personality, clothes, body language and gestures. When father used to be drunk he would call him 'chhakka' which is slang for feminine-looking men or sometimes used for eunuch. Informant was undergoing two kinds of pressure there. One kind was that his appearance and behaviour were not approved by his father and he was ridiculed on a daily basis. Secondly, he also observed how his mother faced the wrath of his father for giving birth to an unmanly son. When Ishq introduced himself for the first time, he said '*aur mai aadha adura*'. This feeling of "not being complete or whole" causes low self-esteem. But can he do something about this? Ishq further explains his situation:

Now I am like this, I like to walk this way, like to speak this way. So what do I do? But I could not say anything to them (parents). They use to tell me and I use to listen to them. There were too many restrictions in the village. Now after coming to Bombay I have got some freedom. Now I stay nicely.²²⁶

In most cases, this is the most preferred way to cope with family pressure. Therefore, most of MSWs leave home and migrate to a big city for more freedom and avenues for work. But while interacting one realised that even though they have migrated for a better life but traumatic childhood experience continues to haunt them deep down. Going by Ishq's narration below:

My father's remarks would make me feel very agonised. Sarcastic remarks still resonate in my mind. It would hurt me very much (emotionally). Neither they would understand me nor would they try to understand. Outsiders' view of me will not impact me so much but when my own father would say such things I used to feel very bad. I feel all parents know what their child is like but they do not want to accept it or say it. ²²⁷

²²⁵Tu aisa kyo chalta hai, zeb mei haath daal ke chal, aise aise haat mat pher, kadak aawaaz mei bol. Ghar mei bhi kaphi kuch bol dete the, jaise papa bahut drink kar ke aaye to bol dete the, ye kya hamesha chhakke ki tarah rahta hai pata nahi bada ho kar kya karega, aise paidaa ho gaya hai ye. Maa ko bolte the ki ye kya paidaa kiya hai tumne pata nahi bada hokar kya banega, chhakka hi hoga, phir maa mujhe bolti thi ki dekh teri wazah se mujhe ye sab sunna padta hai. Tu thoda achhe se reha kar. Date of Interview 01/7/16 at GAURAV

²²⁶Ab mai aisa hi hu mujhe aise chalna pasand hai, asie bolna pasand to mai kya karu? Par mai unhe kuch bol hi nahi paya, wo bolte the mai sunleta tha. Gaon mein to bahut restriction tha, abhi Bombay mein aakar thoda freedom mila hai. Rahta hun acche se. Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

²²⁷Bahut bura lagta tha jab papa aise bolte the. Abhi bhi wo sab deemag mei chalta rahta hai. Bahut hurt Hota tha. Samajh nahi rahe hai aur samajhne ki koshish bhi nahi Kar rahe hai. Papa bolte the to bahut bura lagta tha, Bahar walo se Itna fark nahi padta. Mujhe lagta hai ki har maa baap ko pata rahta hai ki unka bachha kya hai bas bolna nahi chahte hai. Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

Truly all parents know about their children, their strengths and weaknesses, their likes and dislikes but in our culture being unmanly or gay is so disgraceful and unacceptable that they deny the most obvious. The force is applied to the tender minds to walk and talk in a particular manner. When the child fails to perform, again low self-esteem is the outcome. Referring to depression which is very common among male sex workers, Ishq says that:

I feel depressed due to all these and then I just drink and leave home looking for sex. We have to face all this more than others.²²⁸

It leads to further decline in their overall wellbeing. It's a cycle where you are depressed and to overcome that depression you take alcohol and drugs. When you are under the impact of alcohol and drugs you do not know if you are protecting yourself by using condoms. Further, the next day is no better. You are more depressed and to overcome this feeling of 'more depressed' you do drugs and alcohol. For instance, Ishq tells that when he feels depressed he drinks and then sets out looking for either clients or partners. It's a dangerous turf where anything can go wrong. The life of male sex workers is quite challenging and full of woes. Providing details of his everydayness Aapaa, kothi-identified 37 years old male sex worker, encapsulates his experience in great detail and says that:

Everything is a problem; even if we don't want we have to do many things. Now if I go to work and I get a 50 years old client then even if I don't want to have sex with him I will have to do if he gives me 3000 instead of 1000. This is how everything in our life goes. There are many male sex workers in our line who usually get 2000 from clients. But if a client offers him 5000 and asks him to go without condoms then sometimes greed overtake safety concern and that is how chances of diseases increases. I know this but the moment more money is being offered to us, many times we give in and then later there are problems.²²⁹

²²⁸Mujhe depression hota hai to bas drink karta hu aur sex karne ke liye nikal padta hu. Hume kuch jaada hi face karna padta hai. Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

²²⁹Sab kuch problem hai, nahi chahte hue bhi hume bahut kuch karna padta hai. Abhi mai agar kaam par jaau aur mujhe 50 Saal ka aadmi bhi milega to nahi chahte hue bhi mujhe uske saath sex karna padega agar wo mujhe 1000 ki zagah 3000 hazar dega to aisa hi sab kuch hota hai. Koi koi bande aise bhi hote hai ki jaise 2000 rs mil raha hai koi banda bolega ki mujhe without condom sex karna hai Mai tujhe 5000 rs deta hu to lalch mei ho jata hai aur istarah beemari ke chance badte hai. Mujhe to pata hai par phir bhi jaise hi jaada paise aate hai hum kai baar maan jaate hai aur phir baad mei problems hoti hai. Date of Interview 03/12/17 at GAURAV

Similarly Aiba, a kothi-identified male sex worker recounts his everyday challenge to survive:

Oh there is tension at every step, lets say if I get a client who is either known to my brother or sister-in-law then what will happen or if I get a client on the crossroad whom I don't know, he may have some disease, he may be suffering from VDRL (A kind of STI), TB, he may have any disease. Then some clients don't want to use condoms (chocolate is a popular term among MSW for condoms) but I always insist on a condom. There are other problems too. For instance, unavailability of place renders it difficult to carry out even if a client is ready to pay you your rate. Then sometimes you have a place but the client is not ready to pay you your rate. Then you go in the bushes or sea beach but then horse cart will come and police will trouble you. Oh, there are too many tensions in this work. There is no peace. A girl and boy, a girlfriend-boyfriend can kiss each other on Juhu beach in front of people but two males cannot do this. If we take our client to a lodge, then the lodge owner is also suspicious. If a man and woman go they are fine but if two men go to a lodge then first he will observe us for five minutes and then comment that who is male and who is female here. Then also you are scared if there are any secret cameras. There are many things.²³⁰

Another major concern for male sex workers is having a dual identity and hiding one's identity, all the time, from family, relatives and acquaintances. Below is one such excerpt of an interview with Rishi, a bisexual male sex worker:

Yes I am from Mumbai and I am 24 years old but no one in my family knows that I am an MSM or an MSW. All the people in Mumbai who know me do not know my real name. That is why I am scared that if anyone in my family comes to know about my identity I do not know how will they react? And I have changed my name in this field of MSW.²³¹

When asked why he did not share his identity with his family or anyone, Rishi explained:

²³⁰Arre baat baat mei tension hai, jaise bhai ke ya bhabhi ke saage mei, kisi ke saath pann lag gaya, ya phir koi raaste mei mil gaya, koi beemari ho sakti hai, VDRL ho sakta hai, TB ho sakta hai kuch bhi ho sakta hai, koi log bolte hai chocolate ke saath nahi karna par hum to condom ke saath his karne ko insist karenge. Phir koi paisa deta hai to room nahi room hai to paisa nahi hota, phir jhaadi mei, samandar ke kinare, kabhi ghodi aagai, police aagaa, bahut isme lafde hai, sukoon nahi hai. Ladka ladki, girlfriend- boyfriend juhu pe logo ke saamne kiss kar sakte hai par do male ye nahi kar sakte hai. Ye saari mushkile hai, aur agar lodge par gaye to lodge wale ko bhi shak hota hai, ladka ladki gaye to thik hai par agar do ladke gaye to wo bhi panch minute tak dekhta hai phir bolta hai nar kaun hai maada kaun hai, phir dar hota hai ki kahi koi camera to nahi laga hai ye saari cheeze hai. Date of Interview 07/7/16 at GAURAV

²³¹haa mai Mumbai ka rahne wala hu meri age 24 hai but mere ghar mei kisi ko pata nahi hai ki mai msm hu ya phir msw hu. aur mumbai mei jitne log mujhe jaante hai koi bhi mera real naam nahi jaanta hai,...isliye mujhe dar lagta hai ki agar kal ko mere ghar mei pata chal gaya ki mai MSM hu aur wo kis tarah se react karege to mujhe nahi pata hai .. to maine apna naam yaha par change kar liya MSW ke field mei. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

No, no, MSW's life is not so easy. To come out open at home is not possible in India... no there is no acceptance. We have to keep in mind many things like family, relatives, and friends ²³²

They are juggling between so many push and pull and still, they are aware that it is not possible in the Indian context to come out. No one will accept them. This is a question about sexual identity and if we combine the sexual identity with a work identity which is tabooed, it's impossible to share and come out with anyone. The male sex workers who come from poor socio-economic strata know their surroundings and family. Most of them have either illiterate or functional literate parents who are unable to accept and understand them. Rishi while answering the question of coming out in open about his identity replied:

Yes, there are many people who come out open but their family is not narrow-minded. They (family) know that this person is born like this, he has no problems. But there are many people who do not have very educated parents and they feel that their boy has some disease and he is behaving like this because of that disease.²³³

This is a grim situation with male sex workers. They do not disclose their identity to others — family, relatives, peers and others with whom they interact on daily basis. They only disclose their identity with other gay-identified people and those who sell sex. Sometimes they do not even disclose their identity to their gay friends. This is the choice they have exercised depending on their situation, fear of stigma and discrimination after disclosure. It is a dismal situation in which male sex workers find themselves without any hope of escape from this cycle. Vishal, a male sex worker, has also worked in the television industry for some time shared that while he was new in Mumbai and had just started into sex work, he was very scared and had created an ID with a different name and no one knew his real name. According to him to date, people identify him with that name. Now Satyam is an outreach worker with Gaurav CBO and along with that, he is into sex work. When he was asked that what according to him is the biggest challenge in the life of a male sex worker he replied:

²³²nahi nahi, msw ki jo life hai wo itni easy nahi hai, ghar par open hona matlab apni India mei to possible hi nahi hai...nahi acceptance nahi hai, bahut saari cheezo ko, hum family ko dekhte hai, rishtedaro ko dekhte , aur apne friends ko dekhana padta hai. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

²³³Haan par bahut saare log hai jo open ho jaate hai lekin unki family narrow mind nahi hoti, unko pata hai ki ye banda upar se hi aise aaya hai isko kuch problem nahi hai, lekin kuch bande hai jinke parents jaada padhe likhe nahi hote, unko kaisa lagta hai ki isko koi beemari ho gayi hai jiski wazah se ye aisa ho gaya hai. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

The most common problem is that people are doing it (selling sex) but they will say that I am not that (gay or sex worker). Oh! But you are doing that. They have relationship with other boys but they will say that I have a girlfriend. They will say that I am not this (gay). They don't accept this reality. Maybe they are scared that we will recognise them and their identity will be disclosed. Fear is the main factor.²³⁴ This draws our attention to the compulsion to live under anonymity and pretension.

Their outward manifestation of inverted identity is a threat to 'traditional' masculinity and femininity and therefore they have been at the receiving end of homophobic outbursts more than others. Shidlo (1994) explains homophobia and its outcome for homosexuals through the concept of internalised homophobia where sexual minorities acquire opinions and beliefs concerning their same-sex desires that endorse the outlook of the greater culture. In most cases, these attitudes indicate stigma and negativity (homophobia) against individuals with same-sex attractions and behaviour. As an outcome, they tend to learn to believe that same-sex sexuality is inferior and worthy of shame; collectively, these beliefs are commonly known as internalised homophobia (Shidlo 1994). It has been recorded that those who identify and disclose their sexual identity to more individuals display lower levels of internalised homophobia (Shidlo 1994). Further, Individuals who grow up in greater homophobic environments display lower levels of adjustment (decreased disclosure of one's sexual identity to others and increased levels of internalised homophobia). Male sex workers who sell sex to men are constantly victimised and criminalised by the larger society. Thus internalised homophobia is strong in male sex workers. Both male sex workers and their clients engage in sex with men but clients see this as *masti*, release and discharge whereas male sex workers are in constant dilemma and always work under the fear of being found out. Sheikh, a part-time MSW expressed this fear of what will happen if his family comes to know about his sexual and occupational identity: "I will not be able to live in my house, in society. I will be so ashamed that I'll probably run away from home...but, no, I won't end my life?" (Rao and Sarma 2009: 126). In the Indian cultural milieu, the patriarchal social systems along with compulsory marriage and procreation of male children have created a system of denial, discrimination and marginalisation of same-sex sexualities and their

²³⁴Another common thing which I have noticed is karte hai, Karwa bhi lete hai par bolenge ki mai hu hi nahi ye cheez. Arre! par tum Kar to wahi rahe ho. Doosro ladkon ke saath relation rakhte hain par bolte hain ki arre meri to girlfriend hai. Bolenge ki hoon hi nahi main ye. They dont accept this reality. Shaayad unhe dar lagta hai ki hum unhe baad mein kabhi pehchan lege aur unki baat baahar aajayegi. Dar ek main cheez hai . Date of Interview 06/12/17 at GAURAV

histories in South Asia. Heterosexuality has historically claimed precedence over all others as a system of social control which allows male power to take on a patronising social role. So anyone experiencing these same-sex emotions doubts himself. Sherry Joseph (2005) who studied sexual identity of 52 MSM in Kolkata verifies a pattern of dual identity among same-sex sexualities. On question of public and private sexual identities among these MSMs, 69 per cent identified themselves as homosexuals in private compared to only 7 per cent in public. Thus, it can be concluded that about three-fourth of the men who have sex with men (MSM) do not have a public sexual identity even though there are different homosexual frameworks existing in Indian cultural milieu. Public sexual identity refers to the ways and means in which MSM present themselves to the larger social environment. In Indian society, heterosexuality is the only identity and thus publicly acknowledging any other sexual identity is an intrinsically political statement. Same-sex attraction gets articulated in same-sex sexual 'behaviour'; there is no question of socially recognised sexual identities. Thus, staying away from identifying themselves as a sexual minority is more due to social shame than individual guilt.

Guilt and Sex Work

Guilt was another element which was found to be associated with identity and work among some male sex workers. Being gay and selling sex to men does not go well. The outcome is a pervasive feeling of guilt.

Yes, I feel sometimes that had I been a straight person I would have married and settled by now. My family would also have been happy but I am this. I would not have been living this dohari zindagi. Whenever I go out I am compelled to think that why I am the only one like this. There are so many people and I am the only one like this. I only lack.²³⁵ (Manoj, a bisexual male sex worker)

So there is a constant feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem which over a long period of time results in depression and anxiety. In situations when the identity of male sex workers has been disclosed, do their families accept them? One came across two in-

²³⁵Yes kabhi kabhi feel hota hai ki agar mai straight banda hota to shaadi karke kahi settle hota, ghar wale bhi kush hote par mai to aisa hu, ye dohari zindagi nahi geena padta, Jab kabhi baahar jaata hu to sochne pe mazboor hojata hu ki mai hi kyo hu aise, itne log hai aur mai hi ek aisa hu. Muhjhi mei kami hai. Date of Interview 15/6/17 at GAURAV

stances where the identity came out in the open and family found out. Amitesh recalled his experience:

They accept female sex workers thinking that she did it out of ignorance or compulsion but in the case of MSW they chuck them out of the house. When I was into sex work and my friend told my brother-in-law about my work then my brother-in-law told me that I should leave this house at once because if he will disclose my identity to the family then my life will become from bad to worse.²³⁶

Amidst all these stories of woes and miseries, there are few narratives which gives little hope and optimism. One particular narrative of Devo, a young man of 23 years who is a bisexual male sex worker and also into tailoring, gives little cheer. Devo stated:

My family is not aware of my identity. But yes I am scared but then I know that they will accept me. It will take some time but parents know about their children. Stigma and discrimination is part of our reality. I never participated in any sports neither indoor nor outdoor. It was there (he was not like a regular boy) but my family always supported me. Whatever I wanted to do they allowed me.²³⁷

There are many challenges in the lives of male sex workers. Amitesh who has been into sex work for more than 18 years shared his early days' experience (early 2001) when he was young and not so aware about services and protection and the threat of HIV:

When we will go to a doctor what are we going to say? We did not know about condoms then. Sometimes I would cater to 10 clients and sometimes 15 in a day. Many times the client would have done the sex but will not pay us then we did not know what to do. If there is an FSW (female sex worker) she may collect people and say that this man was troubling and teasing her but if we raise our voice against such clients, the client will tell a different story saying that this *gud* (a slang for gay) was after him.²³⁸

²³⁶Female sex worker ko to accept bhi kar lete hai sochte hai ki naadnai mei kar liya , mazboori mei kar liya, par MSW ko to ghar se nikaal dete hai. Jab mai sex work mei tha aur mere friend ne mere jija ko bata diya tha tab mere jija ne mujhe bola ki agar maine ghar mei bata diya to teri zindagi bat se battar ho jayegi. Isliye aaj ke baad dikhayee nahi dena, ye tera aana jaana sab band kar de. Date of Interview 30/11/17 at GAURAV

²³⁷Family is not aware about my identity. Par dar to lagta hai. Par lagta hai ki accept to Kar lege. Thoda samay to lagega, har parent ko pata hi rahta hai ki unka baccha kya hai. Haan stigma aur discrimination to hota hi rahta hai, school mei kisi bhi sports mei na to indoor ya na to outdoor mei tha. Wo hota tha par meri family ne hamesha support kiya hai mera. Jo bhi karna chaha karne diya. Date of Interview 15/12/17 at GAURAV

²³⁸Jab hum doctor ke paas jayege to kya bolege, humein condom ke baare mei pata nahi tha, kabhi 10 client bhi ho jaate the kabhi 15 bhi, par hume pata nahi tha. Kai baar client sex karlete hai lekin paise nahi dete, phir tab kya kare, agar ek FSW hogi to logo ko ikattha kar ke ye to bol sakti hai ki ye mujhe chhedh raha tha, par agar humne shor machaya to ulta client hi bolega ki yahi gudh mere peche padha tha. Date of Interview 30/11/17 at GAURAV

The neighbours and other people from the locality always mock and ridicule them. During interaction with many informants, it came out. In this regard, Manoj, a bisexual male sex worker

Yes all time, people ask me about my whereabouts all the time. If one boy comes to know about my identity then everyone will come to know. They don't say it to me directly but their body language changes. They point towards me and laugh²³⁹

In another interaction with Aiba, a kothi-identified male sex worker, when asked if people in his neighbourhood ridicule him and talk about his identity he replied:

Yes, the moment I will walk in my lane they will say –he came he came, see. They will sing songs– Prem Ratan dhan payo (a popular song featuring famous Bollywood actor Salman Khan has this in lyrics). They will use anonymous numbers to call me to see if I will come. But I have a rule I never respond to unlisted numbers. I would stop and ask them – why, you do not have a mother or sister at home? And one guy will get up and reply promptly – I have a mother and sister at home but I do not have a *gud* (it's a common slang for homosexual) at home.²⁴⁰

Ilan H. Meyer in her paper *Minority Stress and Mental Health in Gay Men* described minority stress as psychosocial stress derived from minority status (Brooks 1981). This concept is based on the premise that gay people, like members of other minority groups, are subjected to chronic stress related to their stigmatisation. Consistent with a social stress discourse (Mirowsky and Ross 1989; Pearlin 1989), and the evidence for social causality of distress (Dohrenwend et al. 1992), such stress leads to adverse mental health outcomes. The concept of minority stress is not based on one congruous theory but is inferred from several social and psychological theoretical orientations. In general, minority stress can be described as being related to the juxtaposition of minority and dominant values and the resultant conflict with the social environment experienced by minority group members (Mirowsky and Ross 1989; Pearlin 1989). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe such a conflict between individuals and their experience of society as the essence of all social stress. Several theories describe alienation and incongruence

²³⁹Yes all time, log puchata hai ki tum udhar kya kar rahe the. Ek ladke ko pata chala to saare logo ko pata chal jaata hai. Log bas muh se nahi bolte par haobhav badal jaatahai. Kuhuni marte hai aur deekhate hai. Log humein dekh kar haste hai. Date of Interview 15/6/17 at GAURAV

²⁴⁰Haan jaise hi mai apne lane mei pahuchata hu wo sab bolte hai –Aya Aya dekh. Wo gaana gaate hai- Prem Ratan dhan payo . Wo Hamesha alag alag number se mujhe phone karte hai ye dekhne ke liye ki mai aata hu ki nahi. Par apun ka bhi ek usool hai apun kabhi bhi unlisted number nahi utatha hai. Mai kai baar ruk kar puchata bhi hu ki kyo re ghar par maa-bahen nahi hai kya re. Tabhi unme se ek uth kar bolta hai ki maa bhi hai bahen bhi hai par gudd nahi hai. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

between individual needs and social structures (Durkheim 1951; Merton [1957] 1968; Moss 1973). Certainly, when the individual is a minority person in a stigmatising and discriminating society, the conflict between him or her and the dominant culture can be onerous, and the resultant minority stress can be significant. Symbolic interaction and social comparison theories give a different perspective. These theories view the social environment as providing people with meaning to their world and organization to their experiences (Pettigrew 1967). Negative regard from others, therefore, leads to negative self-regard and adverse mental health outcomes (Jones et al. 1984).

Many studies have attempted to study the effects of minority status (especially ethnicity) on mental health. The most widely used approach compares rates of psychopathology and distress between minority and non-minority groups. It has been predicted that, if a minority position is stressful, and if this stress is related to psychological distress, then minority groups must have higher rates of distress than non-minority groups. But studies that compared rates of distress and disorder between Blacks and Whites, women and men, and homosexuals and heterosexuals did not confirm such predictions, leading some researchers to refute minority stress conceptualisations (Hirschfeld and Cross 1983; Williams 1986)

Physical Violence and Assault

Physical violence, assault and many times rapes are very common with male sex workers. Many of them feel that it is an inescapable aspect of their existence. The intolerant homophobic society that we live in cannot withstand sexual minorities. And if it is disclosed that the sexual minority is engaging in selling sex then it is completely unacceptable for many. This script of coercion is very common among male sex workers.

Amitesh recalled his earlier days in Mumbai when he was an active sex worker and narrated that police used to trouble them a lot. They will take their money and beat them also. If they used to come to know about their work identity, the police will take away all their money. Local goons and neighbours are also agents of violence and assault in the case of male sex workers. Knowing this male sex workers take utmost care to stay away from such agents. Aiba, Ishq and Aapaa, all kothi-identified male sex workers, shared their experience of sexual assault and rape by local goons and rowdies. Interest-

ingly, bisexual and gay male sex workers who do not look feminine have reported fewer instances of sexual assault. Here one would like to bring in the term “bailee” which is an oft-employed term to refer to men who look like women *i.e.* feminine. Bailee is the sum total of bai and lee. “Bai” in Marathi is a woman and “lee” is Marathi term for ‘like’. So anyone who looks like a woman is called bailee. This term is quite often used to identify kothi. Sexual assault in the case of kothi points to their gendered identity. Since Kothi looks feminine and identify as a woman and therefore, draws the attention of men who assault them. Various studies from many parts of India – Studies in Chennai (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001; Chakrapani et al. 2007), Calcutta (Boyce 2006) and Mumbai (Row Kavi 2007) reveal structural violence meted out to kothi-identified MSM and MSW. According to Chanrapani (2007), there are multiple contexts of stigma, discrimination and violence in the case of kothi-identified MSM. Chakrapani identified four key areas where these cases of violence and discrimination prevail.–the police, community members, family, and the health care system. The present findings suggest interlocking subsystems of discrimination and victimisation of *kothi*-identified MSMs are embedded in structural factors and must be understood beyond the individual level. He explains that local goons and rowdies are able to extort money from *kothis* because *kothis* are scared of rejection at the hand of family members if their sexual identity or HIV status is being disclosed. Further rowdies engage in unmitigated exploitation over a long period of time because *kothis* cannot seek any help or assistance from police. Moreover, the police become an agent of violence and sexual assault in many cases.

Here Aiba is recalling his experience of sexual assault by a group of men in Bandra:

Yes, this has happened many times. When I was young I was roaming in Kalanagar in Bandra with an umbrella, it was raining hard. I have this habit of talking a lot and ask many questions. There was construction going on in that lane and it was half-past nine. It was very quiet. There was a handsome boy there and no one else. He was smoking. I had an umbrella and he was getting wet. I started talking to him and in some time I struck a deal with him. There was a lorry parked nearby. There was no one around. Then we had sex in that lorry. But the moment I started asking for money he held me and started scolding me loudly and asked me that where did I learn such bad work. Then he started beating me and took away all my clothes. I had little money, he took that too. Then he called his 13 friends. That night all 13 of them had sex with me and they thrashed me. They did not pay me any money and I was forced to go home at half-past two in the night in my underpants. After this incident, I do not do any work from cruising spots and if I happen to go to the hotspot then I never go alone. If a friend refers me to some client then I go. But

now wooing a Client from crossway and then taking him somewhere, I don't do that anymore.²⁴¹

One observed a tacit understanding among male sex workers about violence being an inherent part of their work and one cannot avoid it completely. Ishq, a kothi-identified male sex worker, explains how they compromise when the situation goes out of hand:

Let us say you have a meeting fixed with one client but that one client comes along with other more people. So what will you do? You have to do it with him as well as his friends, otherwise, violence will take place. If you are entering in this kind of work (sex work) then such things will take place. It is part of our work. One gets used to it slowly. We also forewarn all our friends about such clients and then no one ever goes to them.²⁴²

Ishq Recalling an incident of violence:

I have clients who want me to dress up as a woman. Once I was all dressed up to go out with a client. I was standing near bushes to avoid attention waiting for my client to pick me up, at the same time two men on a bike came and started abusing me. They took me forcefully into the bushes and both had forced sex with me. This was last year in the monsoon. You know anything can happen to anyone here.²⁴³

²⁴¹Haan aisa bahut hua hai jab mai chota sa tha tab mai bandra mein kalanagar ke pass chatari leke ghoom raha tha, bahut baarish ho rahi thi. Meri aadat hai ki saamne wale ko sab kuch puchata huin. Aage ek building ban rahi thi raat ke saade nau baz rahe the, pura sannata tha, waha ek handsome ladka tha aur koi nahi tha, wo cigarette pee raha tha, mere paas chatari thi, uske paas nahi, aur usko jaane ka tha, apun baat karne laga, thode der Mei maine use dhande ki baat kar li. Wahi paas Mei ek lorry khadi thi. Koi aur nahi tha aas paas. Phir usne usi lorry mei sex kiya. Par jaise hi mai paise mangne laga usne mujhe pakadh liya aur jor jor se datne laga. Aur bola ki Kahan se sikha hai tune ye gandhi harkat. Phir wo mujhe marne laga aur mere saare kapde le liye, mere paas thode se paise the wo bhi le liya, phir us aadmi ne apne 13 dosto ko bulaya. Us raat un sabne baari baari se mere saath sex kiya aur mujhe maara. Koi paisa nahi diya aur mai sirf apni nicker mei ghar gaya raat ke 2:30 baje. Us incident ke baad se mai ab cruising spot se dhandha nahi karta. Aur agar hotspot par gaya bhi to Akele kabhi nahi jata. Agar koi dost kisi client ko refer karta hai to apun chala jata hai. Par ab ye raste se patana, aur phir kahi jaana, ab ye sab nahi karta baba. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

²⁴²Man lo aap ki meeting fixed hui ek client ke saath par Udhar wo aur doo ke saath aata hai. To aap kya karoge. Aapko client ke saath karna hoga aur uske dosto ke saath bhi. Nahi to phir aise mei violence hota hi hai. Agar in sab cheezo mei ghus rahe ho to ye sab hoga hi, ye hissa hai humare kaam ka. Uski aadat dheere dheere ho jaati hai aur phir aise client ke baare mei hum doosro ko bhi batate hai phir unke paas koi nahi jaata hai . Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

²⁴³Mere paas clients jo mereko aurat ki Tarah dressup hone ko bolte hai. Ek Baar mai aise hi ghar se dressupo hoke nikla tha. Mai jhadiyo ke paas khada tha taki koi dekhe na. Mai apne client ka intazaar Kar raha tha. tabhi waha do ladke aaye bike par aur mujhe maar Peet Karne lage, jabardasti jhadiyo Mei leke gaye aur jabardasti sex karne lage, dono ne mere saath forcefully sex kiya. Ye peechle baarish ki baat hai. you know kabhi bhi kisi ko kuch bhi hosakta hai. Date of Interview 1/7/16 at GAURAV

Early Childhood Sexual Abuse

Innumerable instances of abuse, stigma and exclusion came to notice from an enquiry into their childhood memories. Male sex workers shared several cases of early childhood sexual abuse. Of 34 informants, 24 reported incidents of early childhood sexual abuse. These cases of abuse were also their first experience of sex and sexuality. Mostly, they faced sexual abuse by their relatives, neighbours, friends and teachers. These young boys were made aware at a tender age that they are different and hence they have abuse in store for them. One of the respondents brought out from his experience said that mostly the first sexual encounter of an MSM happens with one of the family members (Ravi). According to them, they slowly get habituated to sex at a young age and start looking out for partners. Most of these early partners are school friends and seniors. Sometimes teachers also take advantage of their situation and indulge in sexual activities with these young boys. Dhanush while describing his first sexual experience shared:

My first sexual encounter happened at the age of nine, my neighbour sexually abused me. Then it kept ongoing. He would take me to his house and then under the bed. I was a quiet child not used to talking so much not even to my parents. So I could not communicate this to anyone. It kept on going till I was in 10th class. Initially I was not sure what was happening but slowly I thought that this is perhaps how it is supposed to be. The neighbour was older than me. He was in the seventh standard whereas I was in the fourth standard. We were in the same school. I used to go to a municipality school where, during the break, he would take me into the backyard of the school and indulge in this. On couple of occasions, he hit me but I could not tell this to my parents. I never felt that I should tell this to someone. I then consoled myself thinking that whatever is happening would anyway go on. Then we left that place and we shifted to Borivali and I soon felt as though something was missing in my life. Since all this (sexual abuse) was going on for so long, I perhaps got so used to it so much that I was missing it. I soon happened to have a sexual encounter with one of my neighbours at the new place.²⁴⁴

Slowly and eventually these boys realise that they are different as they like men more than women sexually. In many cases, these boys do not feel a thing about women. When

²⁴⁴My first sexual encounter happened at the age of 9, mere neighbour ne hi mujhe physically abuse kiya. Then wo baar baar hota raha, ghar mei lejake, palang ke neeche lejake. Mujhe baat karne ki bilkul aadat nahi thi mai to parents se bhi nahi baat karta tha itna. So I could not communicate this to anyone. I was a quiet kind. It kept on going till I was in 10th std. earlier it was like ye kya ho raha hai par Dheere Dheere mujhe laga ki shayad aisa hi Hota hai. Then he was like elder to me he was in 7th std and I was in 4th, we were in same school I use to go to a municipality school. So in school also after break wo school ke peeche lejana ye sab hota tha. Phir ek do baar usne mujhe mara bhi par mai ghar par aakar nahi bol paya. Mujhe kabhi laga bhi nahi ki mujhe ye sab cheez bolni chahiye. Ok phir maine bola ki thik hai jaisa chal raha hai chalne do. Then we left that place. And we shifted to Borivali and then I found ki kuch to missing ho raha hai waha par. To shaayad itne saalon se ye sab ho raha tha to mujhe ye laga ki shaayad mujhe uski aadat si ho gayi hai. Waha par mera ek neighbour tha uske saath mera encounter hua. Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV

they compare themselves with other boys they find themselves in the sticky ground. So one of the informants recalled:

Since I was 11-12 years old I use to have sex with boys, knowingly and unknowingly. There was a boy in my area I use to really like, I was really attracted to him. When my friends use to ask me about my girlfriend I use to get very confused. I don't like girls but why are my friends asking me about them. I like boys but no one is asking me about them.²⁴⁵

Coming to terms with the fact and accepting it for oneself is also a long process coupled with an enormous degree of tension, stress and anxiety. Many boys fail to accept themselves and their journey is harder ahead. Most of the boys come from lower socio-economic status and hence there is pressure to start earning at the earliest. Before coming into sex work most of them have been into some kind of semi-skilled occupation. Since sex and sexuality is an important aspect for anyone, these boys have entered into relationships with men. Almost ninety-nine per cent of these relations failed due to unfaithful partners and lack of trust. This along with poor financial situation becomes a major cause for entry into sex work for many.

Failed Love Relationships

Failure in love relationships and conflict with Regular partners is another concerning factor in the lives of MSW. Around 10 informants reported a failed relationship as the push factor for entry into sex work. Rishi a 24 years old versatile male sex worker recalls his experience of breakup and his entry into sex work:

My first love used to say I love you all day. In the evening when I used to go to my home then he used to go to someone else's house. And then one day one of my friends only told me that your boyfriend was with me. He used to love me but what kind of love is this and in our MSM community, all are like this. Here if you have a breakup in the morning, in the evening both of them are out with different partners. Slowly it makes no odds. Among MSM people it's only sex, sex and more sex and there is nothing like love. There should be 377 (Section 377 of IPC) because it will deter men from misusing other men. Our own

²⁴⁵jab se mai 11-12 saal ka tha ladko ke saath hi sex hota tha bhale wo jaane anjaane mei hota tha. Phir ek ladka tha meri area mei wo mujhe bahut pasand tha, mai bahut attract hota tha. Jo mere friend the ajoo bajoo ke wo mere se puchte the ki teri koi girlfriend nahi hai kya to mai bahut confuse ho jaata tha, ladkiya to mujhe pasand hi nahi hai to ye log mujhe uske baare Mei Kyo sawaal puch rahe hai. mujhe to ladka pasand hai uske baare Mei Kyo nahi puch rahe hai. Date of Interview 5/12/17 at GAURAV

community has soiled us. If there 377 is intact, there will be no love, no breakup and then no suicide.²⁴⁶

Since this interview took place in 2017, there are references to section 377 of IPC frequently. Rishi adds further:

It's simple, in our India 377 is in force, two men can't stay together (cohabit). Moreover, parents don't accept them. It calls for many sacrifices which is not possible. Parents should be well educated. Parents' understanding is necessary or else the fight will start. We may end up in a police case. So after this breakup, I thought that I do not want love or relationship in my life. I have had enough. Look at me the person whom I loved most, gave my everything to him but he (boyfriend) was cheating on me and he was just a namesake boyfriend and he had many more like me in his life. So I broke up and then started sex work. There is no loyalty. Only five per cent are loyal and the rest ninety-five per cent are disloyal.²⁴⁷

The loss of love and cheating very often results in dejection and depression. Below is the narrative of Noor, a bisexual male sex worker, who seems very disheartened and depressed. This utter hopelessness and lack of zeal are very common among all of them.

I sometimes feel everything is finished, what do I do? There is nothing left. Should I see home (family) or myself? How we get pulverised. Suicide is very common. Unloyals (using this term since it was used by the informant in this form) and loyal together finish the loyal ones. Everything just comes to an end.²⁴⁸

We have traced how stigma, homophobia and social prejudice against male sex workers contribute to depression, psychological distress and other mental health concerns. Punitive legal and social environment hinders the ability of MSM and MSW to organise and

²⁴⁶Mera jo first love tha wo din bhar mujhe I love you I love you bolta, Shaam ko mai apne ghar jaata aur wo kisi aur ke ghar jaata. Aur phir ek din mere ek friend ne hi mujhe bataya ki tera boy friend to mere saath tha. Wo mujhse pyaar karta tha ye Kaisa pyaar hai and aur humare msm Mei saare aise hi hai. Yaha subha break up Hota aur shaam ko dono alag alag partners se saath, slowly fark hona band ho jaata hai, msm logo ke beech Mei sirf sex sex aur sex hota hai love jaisa kuch nahi hota. There should be 377 so that men dont misuse other men, humari hi community ne Hume Ganda kr Diya hai. 377 rahega, to love nahi hoga breakup nahi hoga, suicide nahi hoga. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

²⁴⁷Simple sa funda hai apni india mei 377 lagu hai koi bhi bande ek saath nahi rah sakte hai, na hi parents jaldi accept karge, bahut saare sacrifice karna padta hai jo ki possible nahi hai, parents ko well educated hona chahiye, samajhdaar hona chahiye aur agar understanding hogi to samajh mei kar ke lege nahi to fight shru ho jayegi hum police case mei padh jayege. Iske baad maine ye socha ki mujhe pyaar vyaar nahi karna maine bahut pyaar kar liya. Dekho mai kaisa tha ki jise main pyaar karta tha use mai apna sab kuch de deta tha par mujhe pata chala ki mera boyfriend mujhe Cheat kar raha hai aur wo sirf naam ke liye mera boyfriend hai, uske bahut saare aare log bhi hai. I broke up and hence I started with sex work. Yaha par loyalty bahut kam hai, 95 % unloyal hai aur sirf 5% loyal hai. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

²⁴⁸Kabhi kabhi lagta hai finish hai sab kuch kya karu, kuch Bacha nahi hai, ghar ko dekhun ya khud ko, kaise hum piss jatein hain. Suicide is very common. Unloyal and loyal together finishes the loyal one. Sab kuch Khatam ho jata hai. Date of Interview 20/12/17 at GAURAV

participate meaningfully in the design and implementation of programmes to provide HIV-related services. This poses a serious concern for the HIV response — studies have demonstrated that the involvement of gay men and other men who have sex with men and transgender people in peer outreach and other community-level behavioural interventions can reduce HIV risk behaviours by 25% (WHO 2011). From here I move on to understand the role of NGO and CBO in addressing these concerning issues of male sex workers. Since I interacted very closely with GAURAV, I have tried to understand this important question in light of GAURAV and its role in the lives of male sex workers.

HIV/AIDS, NGO and Male Sex Workers

As HIV/AIDS emerged as a global health concern in the 1980s it led to the formulation of a detailed international policy framework for HIV and AIDS. It is in this structure that NGOs have been working to control HIV and promote fight against AIDS (Seckinelgin 2004). The role of NGOs has been examined and acknowledged at various levels right from international organisations and bodies — the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS-UNAIDS, the World Bank, donors such as USAID and DFID and national governments and civil societies. Every single actor through their interests and priorities have been responding to the disease and together they constitute an incipient governance regime, largely facilitated by the establishment of UNAIDS as the coordinating body. It is in this context that the role of civil society is emphasised and NGOs have been allocated key roles within this multi-sectoral intervention programme to address HIV (UNAIDS 2002; UNAIDS 2004). The 2004 UNAIDS Report recognised that “civil society organisations often have innovative approaches to the epidemic, and can channel funds to communities, augment state service delivery, and monitor national government policies” (UNAIDS 2004:157– 158). Seckinelgin (2004) examined the agency of NGOs from a broader perspective and argued that the concept of agency makes it feasible to understand how NGOs interacts with their social environment and take a decision to undertake a particular action or plan a particular line of intervention. Anthony Giddens define agency as not merely,

a combination of ‘acts’: ‘acts’ are constituted only by a discursive moment of attention to the *duree* of lived-through experience. Nor can ‘action’ be discussed in separation from the body, its mediations with the surrounding world and the coherence of an acting self. What I call a stratification model of the acting self involves treating the reflexive moni-

toring, rationalization and motivation of action as embedded sets of processes.(Giddens 1984:3).

Norman Long argues that agency is embodied in social relations and the effectiveness of an agency is possible through such social relations only. Power of persuasion is considered important for the agency to be effective but focus should also be paid to the networks of actors who are part of projects (Long 2001:17). Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', suggests that by establishing guidance for action through expert knowledge and the production of tools, communities and subjects can govern themselves within a set of social relations (Foucault 2000). Through their everyday practices, actors become encultured within a particular world of values and meanings and becomes part of 'a constitutive relationship' with the institutions of this world (Giddens 1984:17). These relations are mediated through the creation of a set of common aims, goals and missions that are implicit in the act of enrolling in a project. Thus the notion of agency is located within a social process and the possibility of action is dependent on the social framework. Dorothea Hilhorst's (2003) analyses a number of NGOs in the Cordillera region of the Philippines and analyses their everyday life and how this influences what they are and what they do within socio-political networks. She considers that NGOs are spaces or 'interfaces' that provide a capability for negotiation among various actors participating in an NGO's activity and where, in turn, NGOs themselves are able to influence a range of different actors (Hilhorst 2003:11).

The early 1990s witnessed two key developments with respect to queer movements in India. On the one hand, there was the rising fear of the AIDS epidemic which became a reality in South-East Asia in general and the Indian subcontinent in particular. Along with this economic liberalisation and globalisation influenced same-sex sexualities in many ways. Kole (2007) has captured this shift :

From earlier sporadic and individual efforts of early 1990s, the struggle against law and the process of queer mobilization shifted toward a more donor driven and AIDS-induced agenda...A large part of queer mobilization took place in response to HIV epidemic and due to vulnerability of some queer people resulting from their behavioral aspect (Kole 2007:5)

Non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs) are the front line in HIV/AIDS prevention and service delivery through targeted interventions.

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, HIV prevention interventions have been conducted in the absence of evidence-based research. CBOs need support to evaluate their programme with high-risk groups (HRG). Among MSM in India, it appears that sexual risk-taking co-occurs within a variety of other contextual factors and psychosocial problems. Both individual and structural interventions are, therefore, required to assist with the particular problems.

Most of the HIV prevention programmes are geared towards adults and older men. MSM tend to be initiated into sex very early in their lives and therefore, early life interventions may be helpful in enabling youth to develop stable adult sexual identities. Homophobic attacks directly made against or witnessed by boys may result in their growing up to be sexual minority men, who will be at higher risk for depression, substance abuse, or victimisation, which can lead to increased levels of risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Finding ways to address young boys on these multiple psychosocial and sexual conditions, so that they support HIV risk reduction, may well increase the effect size of HIV prevention interventions. It is also important to focus on increasing condom use rates with the female partners of MSM, who are generally perceived as low risk. This may be difficult to achieve and sustain, however, because the desire for children may compete with the concern to protect partners from HIV infection. Bridging to the general population will, however, continue to contribute to the HIV epidemic unless condom use with higher-risk partners becomes more consistent.

When I interacted with my respondents to understand the role of GAURAV in their lives I got a very positive development after coming of GAURAV. I noticed a remarkable change in the attitude of police after constant advocacy by the CBO with such stakeholders. In one interview with Rishi, a 24-year-old MSW, Rishi described how his life changed after coming in touch with GAURAV:

R: So police are aware about such sites, they don't bother you people?

V: Yes they know about this but we have a good rapport with them so we do not have problems with them, in fact when we have any problems the police only comes for our help

R: But I have heard that police trouble you people

V: No it's not like this with us. Police support us on all our sites. Our biggest plus point is that we are associated with Gaurav. We go every month to the local police station and we

inform police about our work and we do advocacy with them and thus we have developed a good rapport with them²⁴⁹

Aiba, 37 years old kothi stated how his life changed after coming in touch with Gaurav:

I feel that I have found a family here at GAURAV. I am not so free with my other friends. They all have girlfriends and they go out with them. But I don't have a girlfriend but how do I explain this to my friends. After coming here I came to understand that I am not the only one like this. There are others like me. And I also feel that I have some rights and if something will go wrong with me then the law will help me as well. Being an MSM or gay is not bad. This is God's will, he had crafted me like this only so what do I do. Even if our families don't accept us but after coming here something has happened. We have developed relationships, some of them called me aunty or something else. Some are kothi some are panthis but we are all together.²⁵⁰

Satyam, 24 years old gay explained the role of GAURAV in his life:

I found friends here, I feel safe. GAURAV always stands with us. Now, we are no more afraid. I have been doing this for many years but have started using condoms from the last five years. For all these years god took care of me and now Gaurav takes care of us.²⁵¹

The gender-based stigma and discrimination consequent upon the hegemony of heteronormative society underscore the need for major reform in health service. Same-sex

²⁴⁹police ko pata rahta hai aise site ke baare mei , to raid marte hai

R: yes unhe pata hai par hamara unse ek achha rappo bana hai isliye hume problem naho hoti, infact jab hume koi problem hoti hai to police hume kudh aake madad karti hai

R: par mujhe jo sunne ko mila hai wo kahte hai ki police unhe bahut harass karti hai aur madad nahi karti

R: nahi humare ssath aisa nahi hai humare jitne bhi site hai police hume support karti hai.

R: achha to wo aapko support karti hai kahi ye is wajah se to nahi hai ki gaurav sanstha se jude ho? advocacy karte ho

R:yes yes ye humara sabse bada plus point hai, hum har mahine jaate hai police ko apne kaam ke baare mei batate hai advocacy karte hai to police se humara achha rapo ban gaya hai. Date of Interview 24/6/16 at GAURAV

²⁵⁰ Mujhe lagta hai hai ki gaurav cbo hai to yaha se mujhe ek parivaar milela hai. Apun aur dosto ke saath itna khul ke nahi rahte , sabki girlfriends hoti hai aur we unke saath Bahar ghoomte hai. Meri to nahi hai aur mai Kaise Batau ki Meri Kyo nahi hai. Yaha par aane se mujhe ye lagta hai ki mai ek hi nahi hu, aur bhi hai mere jaise. aur apun ko aisa lagta hai ki apun ka bhi kuch adhikaar hai kuch Haq hai. Agar apun ke saath kuch galat hoga to kanoon apna bhi support karega. Aur msm hona, msw hona gay hona koi buri baat nahi hai ye jo hai upar wale ki apni feelings hai, humko banaya hi aisa hai to hum kya kare. To ghar wale hume accept Kare ya na kare yaha par Aane se kuch hota hai jaise mujhe koi aunty kahna mujhe ye kahna mujhe wo kahna, koi kothi hota hai koi panthi hota hai to Matlab isme aap apun to involve kar sakte hai. Date of Interview 7/7/16 at GAURAV

²⁵¹Gaurav ek support hai, apne dard ko samjhne wala hai aur yaha jo Mao hu waisa hu. Koi acting nahi hai. Mujhe dost mile hai Parivaar mila hai. Sex Work Mei kai Saal se hu par condom pichle 5 Saal se use kar raha hu. Pahle Bhagwan ne sambhala aur ab Gaurav sambhaal raha hai. Date of Interview 06/12/17 at GAURAV

sexualities are often viewed through a single framework, that is, they are the vector of HIV and STI. Under the myopic influence of this framework, interventions which are carried out through health services often bypass the need to deal with societal attitude and prejudices. This, therefore, calls for responsible and planned programmes for institutional and legal support and laws to protect the human rights of MSM and TG. Service providers need to adopt a considerate and more responsible approach to actively address violence and stigma and discrimination (S&D). In other words, emphasis on adherence to neutrality and confidentiality is necessary in the course of counselling and/or social support. Male sex workers face particular challenges while carrying out work in open and unsafe spaces (street-based sex work from cruising spots). Multitudes of identities, feminine behaviour, lack of family support, and vulnerability to violence add to the enormity of their mental and physical stress. They nurture a great deal of reluctance and embarrassment which prevents male sex workers from seeking care for sexual health problems, particularly in case of oral and rectal infections. The problem also results from medical personnel's unwillingness to examine and treat them.

A number of essential legal and health interventions and strategies are needed to address the challenges to the health and well-being of gay men and other men who have sex with men. Gay men and other men who have sex with men are entitled to the full protection of their rights, as outlined in the Yogyakarta Principles. These include the right to the highest attainable standard of non-discriminatory health care. To be effective, HIV programmes and services need to be rooted in universal concepts of dignity and social justice. Prevention and treatment programmes must be implemented as part of an effective public health approach, even in countries where gay men and other men who have sex with men are criminalized. At the same time, work must be directed towards decriminalisation. Evidence is growing on promising approaches to HIV prevention and service outreach for gay men and other men who have sex with men, including the application of information technologies and new media. Gay men and other men who have sex with men must be fully involved in the AIDS response. When treated fairly and equally and when freely able to access health services, gay men and other men who have sex with men can drive HIV incidence downwards. Community systems need to be strengthened, including increased peer support and the encouragement of local leadership among gay men and other men who have sex with men.

Decriminalisation of Homosexuality and Male Sex Workers

On September 6, 2018, the Supreme Court of India gave a historical judgement by partially striking down section 377 of IPC in Navtej Singh Johar's case and thus decriminalised homosexuality in India. Now consensual adult partners will not be targeted as criminals for the corporeal expression of their sexualities. Historically, the manifestation of same-sex sexualities in India is distinctly evident from ancient scripts, temple carvings and texts (ABVA 1991; Khan 1994). During the British rule, Victorian morality was transferred to colonies and same-sex expressions were criminalised in India. Homosexuality is the broadest representative category under which several categories like gay, lesbian, transgender, *hijra*, *danga* and *Kothi* exist in India (Asthana and Oostvogels, 2001). Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, since its enactment, has been a constant source of discrimination and victimisation of sexual minorities in India. There has been a long battle to read down or strike this colonial instrument of 1861. The movement to strike it down started when *AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan* (ABVA) and Naz Foundation approached the apex court in 2001 (Mishra 2009). Since then there were many highs and lows but the 2018 verdict by the Apex court has finally decriminalised homosexuality in India.

During the course of my research, Section 377 was struck down and I got the opportunity to understand the impact of striking down of section 377 on the lives of male sex workers in Mumbai. Section 377 or anti-sodomy law has been utilised historically to surveil and control same-sex behaviour in India. It is in this context that I was looking at the aftermath of striking down of this discriminatory law and how it has impacted the lives of male sex workers in Mumbai city. Since male sex workers predominantly sell sex to men in India and identify as gay, bisexual, MSM or *Kothi*, they have been frequently discriminated against and abused by utilising the provisions of this law. Section 377 with all its inherent biases was utilised as a tool for harassing same-sex sexualities and male sex workers were worst affected by this law. In India "prostitution" is not illegal but there are reasonable restrictions like the prohibition of soliciting clients in public places, keeping a brothel or organising sex work. Thus sex workers can carry out their work in private if it is not organised. Men carrying out sex in private was illegal and a non-bailable offence under IPC in India till 2018. Interestingly the majority of

male sex workers in India operate independently and going by provisions of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1986 (ITPA) male sex work should not be a problem. But it is not so. Thus sex between males whether paid or not was a criminal offence till 2018. Therefore, instead of using sex work laws to regulate male sex work activities, anti-sodomy laws, or laws criminalising public indecency were used to regulate male sex work to a large extent. Due to criminalisation and stigma associated with homosexuality, male sex work have remained untouched by the sex work regulation. The criminalisation of male homosexuality pushed gay and bisexual males towards the margins and made same-sex intimacy a clandestine activity (Weeks 1981). Homosexuals in India felt pushed to the margins because of the draconian nature of Section 377. Male sex workers remained under constant fear, penalty and prosecution at the hands of authorities. So the only option left to them was to keep their homosexual identity a secret from families and society which leads to further marginalisation of this group (Bhugra 1997). Now after the decriminalisation of homosexuality there is a quest to know if there has been any change in the lives of male sex workers. There have been few studies to assess the consequences of decriminalisation of homosexuality in the Western world. Since the process of decriminalisation started in the late 60s and early 70s of the last century and during that period homosexuality was pathologised. Those were difficult times for same-sex sexualities around the world. Sinclair and Ross (1986) studied the consequences of decriminalisation of homosexuality in two cities of Australia and brought out views of two groups — one who opined that after decriminalisation, homosexual behaviour will be more prevalent and will be publicly expressed and this will lead to the breakdown of the family unit. The other group was of opinion that decriminalisation will improve the mental health of homosexuals and will decrease the fear of blackmail and social persecution. There were similar studies in the United States of post decriminalisation phase and reported more incidents of acceptance of homosexuality (Geis et al. 1976). Recent studies point towards the decline in the stigmatising attitude towards homosexuals in the United States (Herek, Capitano & Widaman 2002), but stigma and discrimination remain the chief concern in India (Bharat, Aggleton, & Tyrer 2001). Thus it took the United States around 6 decades to see a visible reduction in the stigmatisation of same-sex sexualities so we have a long battle ahead of us in India. In India, same-sex sexualities including transgender persons are very vulnerable due to stigma and violence associated with their sexual identity (Shaw et al. 2012; Chakrapani et al.

2011; Newman et al. 2008; Setia et al. 2006). If these same-sex sexualities are selling sex then such vulnerabilities are increased manifold. Their identities have been criminalised and they are only viewed as a vector of HIV and STI.

Amitesh, a 38-year-old male sex worker recalls older days when homosexuality was criminalised and there were frequent encounters with police. Police will use this section of IPC to harass them and extract some money from them. Amitesh recalled:

Forget 377, even if we move a little the cops would beat us up and if by any chance they would come to know about sex work then they would beat us brutally and would take all our money. Sometimes to harass us they would take us to some far off place in their vehicle and used to have free sex with us.²⁵²

In a similar line Utpal, a 35 years old gay-identified male sex worker drew the comparison between living with section 377 and afterwards.

Yes, life has changed after 377 has gone. Earlier police and people use to blackmail us and would harass us to extort money from us. But now since this is gone (section 377) we have a choice. Now there is no fear in our mind and we know that whatever we are doing it is legal. Earlier we would hide and do things secretly. Even then we knew that we might be arrested or put behind bars. There was a pervasive unknown fear in our minds.²⁵³

Samuel, a 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker felt that he feels safer now but still change in law does not change the mindset of people around them. So people still sneer at them, make fun or call them by names but it is all fine. Now the fear is gone. Durg, a 19 years old gay-identified male sex worker who worked part-time in a departmental store shared the perception of friends and acquaintances who knew about his sexual identity when the verdict on 377 came out. He recalled

²⁵² Tab to 377 chod do, hile dule to bhi police bailee kar ke bahut Marti thi, aur dhandha ka pata chala to saare paise cheene kar berahmi se pitthe the. Kai to phir humse free mei sex bhi karte the aur kahi door bhi lekar jaate the gaadi mei bitha kar. Date of Interview 30/11/17 at GAURAV

²⁵³ 377 ke jaane se kafi faraq pada hai pahle hume blackmail karte the, police wale bhi aur baaki log bi ab wo hat gaya to jo bhi hota hai dono ki razanmandi se hota hai. 377 Jane se kafi farq gaya hai msm ke upar, ab hamre deemaag mei dar nahi hai, lagta hai ki haan ab jo bhi hai sab legal hai, koi chori nahi kar rahe hai, pahle hume pata tha ki jail to nahi jayege par phir bhi ek anjaana sa dar hamesha man Mei rahta tha, aur kab kya ho jaye kug pata hi nahi tha. Date of Interview 28/12/18 at GAURAV

The day verdict came and I went to work, all my 'straight' friends were teasing me and one remarked that now you will marry.²⁵⁴

The homosexual identity has been pathologised and men who sell sex to men are only viewed as a vector of HIV and STI (Scott 2003; Minichiello, Scott and Callander 2013). According to Minichiello, Scott and Callander (2015) violence, poverty, substance use and knowledge all play an important role in the overall health of male sex workers. Similarly, local laws criminalising same-sex and sex work and cultural norms also decide the health of male sex workers (Baral et al. 2013). Baral et al. (2015) opine that fear of persecution and stigma associated with identity and work reduces the accessibility of services for male sex workers.

Decriminalisation is the first step which might take care of fear of illegality and harassment by police and local goons. But there is a long battle ahead to deal with stigma and discrimination which have become part of daily discourse against same-sex sexualities. Non-normative sex and non-conforming gender identities have always created a series of denial, control, surveillance, regulation and coercion. Social actors develop and deploy agencies to perpetuate the age-old heteronormative structure which determines and enforces the gender and sex roles. The same social agencies pathologise those gender expressions and identities which differ from the societal expectations related to the sex assigned at birth. Pathologisation is a long process and an outcome of discourse where those who are powerful, cis-endosex-heteronormative, are the ones who define the less powerful, LGBTI, as deviant, abnormal and unnatural. Since these discourses are such a prominent part of our social reality, same-sex sexualities tend to internalise the Pathologisation associated with their identities. Thus Pathologisation is a social process to control and produce human bodies and results in social inequality and hierarchy of normal versus deviant. Thus homosexuality has been decriminalised and depathologised but these sexual identities are still viewed as abnormal and unnatural. As an outcome of decriminalisation, harassment by police and local goons have reduced but the attitude of parents, kins, neighbours and peers remain the same. They are still discriminated and

²⁵⁴ Jab s 377 katam ho gya tha tab mai Royal mei kaam karta tha aur us din jab mai kaam par gaya tha tha jo mere straight friends the wo mere ko chida rahe the ha ha ab to 377 pass ho gya hai ab tu shaadi karega. Date of Interview 20/3/19 at GAURAV

their identities are pathologised by the heteronormative society where effeminate men have no place. Social instruments are used to bring them back to ‘normal society’.

Striking down parts of Section 377 of IPC is crucial for the establishment of rights of the LGBTI community in India. This will result in a reduction in the cases of human rights violations. The western world and Europe where decriminalisation took place in the last century have witnessed a marked reduction in the cases of discrimination and abuse. We have begun with decriminalisation and now there is a long way ahead. We need to develop a roadmap for the reduction of stigma associated with homosexuality. Decriminalisation and depathologisation of same-sex sexualities is a long movement and we need to have multi-level interventions. To begin with we need to have more research to capture the lived experience of LGBTQI so that the realities of their existence become part of our daily discourse. Further research should also focus on the social, cultural, political, and economic determinants of stigma and discrimination associated with same-sex identities. Talking about gender identity and expression and sexual characteristics should be part of age-appropriate sex education curriculum. Sensitisation and training of health, paramedical, police staff are needed so that when they deal with same-sex sexualities they treat them with basic dignity and respect. Majority of health care programmes focus on infections while dealing with the health and mental health parameters are completely ignored. While planning health initiatives for MSM and MSW people, mental health to be made an integral part of the health care system. Legal reforms at the local, national and international levels will go a long way to alleviate the Pathologisation . Apart from the decriminalisation of same-sex sexualities another important aspect which plays an important role in the lives of same-sex sexualities in general and male sex workers, in particular, is the role of NGOs. NGOs have been able to mobilise MSM and gay men to an extent that they have been able to come out of their hidings to face the world. Since the gay rights movement is mostly a middle-class movement it is pertinent to raise the question about the participatory potential of groups who are poor, less educated and vulnerable to HIV infection. I am dealing with GAURAV, a community-based organisation of MSM as a case study to understand its role in the lives of MSM and gay men in Mumbai. I am interested to know if GAURAV has been able to promote a sense of shared identity among MSM groups.

CONCLUSION

Having dealt with the life of male sex workers at fairly great length and from several different perspectives, this research is now at a stage wherefrom undertaking an effort, to sum up, reflections, observations and findings seem pertinent. Drawing on works of Michel Foucault especially *Madness and Civilisation* and *Discipline and Punish* are worth in so far as the explanation of the link between stigmatised and marginalised conditions of male sex workers and the social structure is concerned. Likening intangible present's social structure to repressive and tangible structures of classical times in forms of 'confinement'(Foucault 1988:38) and excommunication provides a helpful framework to understand the life of male sex workers. In a tangible form, municipal authorities used to ship out rounded up 'madmen' to a world of uncertainty (Foucault 1988:8). This act of shipping madmen off to a realm of uncertainty speaks about a form of excommunication. Similarly, the transition from excommunication to confinement of people categorised under insanity under the pretext of reform and correction was no less problematic. Both excommunication and confinement amounted to exclusion in varying degrees. In its violent form, madmen used to be flogged in public. Narratives of marginalisation and exclusion which surround the life of male sex workers also echo melancholic repertoire of pain and agony. Male sex workers feel excommunicated in society with homophobic and heteronormative outlooks. Their work identity, that is, sex work compounds the feeling of excommunication. This further leads to self-confinement which resonates Foucauldian discourse of 'panoptic' structure which is embedded not outside in a physical structure but in one's own self and mind (Foucault 1991:195). The 'observatory' frame (Foucault 1991:170-171) underscores the act of seeing as an instrument to discipline and govern. Such panoptic structure evolves further to a level where the very self, conscious of being observed, takes upon oneself to observe one's own modus operandi. In the like manner, male sex workers figure out a world that is like outside despite remaining within it. In other words, they make conscious efforts to stay away from homophobic and heteronormative gazes and in the course of doing this, they regulate and confine themselves. In their excommunicated and the confined world, everything from their place and time becomes abnormal. They, their act and their world thus become an equivalent of disorder and thereby compelling them to be corrected and disciplined. It thus becomes clear that human is reduced to

identities. They are then herded into categories. Some categories are singled out from the rest and hounded. A study of male sex workers' life reaffirms this tendency of society.

In a persistent social structure, male sex workers perpetually experience exclusion because of their gender and sexual identities and the chosen form of work. That is why this research is replete with the vocabulary of marginalisation and structural exclusion to understand the lives of male sex workers. The enquiry has engaged with the question of imperceptibility of male sex workers because they often remain imperceptible even though they exist in society and among us. It is for this reason that this study has laid a particular emphasis on the fact that the imperceptible status of male sex workers should not be construed as the non-existence of male sex workers. This emphasis on acknowledgement of their existence constitutes the principal field for further enquiry. Understanding male sex workers in their social context has stood as an opening gambit for this research. Driven out from one social world, male sex workers seek a new space, that is, urban where they enter a different social world which is known for its specificities. In this new social world, male sex workers deal with several serious questions which revolve around their identities, sexualities, work and spaces because the set of challenges which male sex workers often face arise primarily from their gender, sexuality and work identities. Through this research, I have attempted to seek answers to two central questions — what is the essence of being a male sex worker and how the fluidity of sexual identity among male sex workers is linked with various socio-cultural forces and contexts. The larger aim of this research was to bring out male sex workers from their obscurity and invisibility.

As the study has headed into a conclusion, it seems relevant to re-emphasise the consideration regarding choice and suitability of methods especially when it concerns the study of *the least*. In general, it is conventional to set and dwell the focus on what is *the most*. Moreover, it is also tendentious to adopt conventional methods for research which remain preoccupied with a large body of data and multiplicity of statistical expressions. *The Least* does not stand fit to figure within the highly formulaic and colossal structure of statistical vocabulary. *The least* here implies male sex workers who constitute a minority within the world of non-normative sexualities. Even though the quantitative ap-

proach does not intend to exclude, its limitation to keep the numerically insignificant male sex workers within its fold amounts to exclusion. In view of this foregoing issue, ethnographic tools such as in-depth interviews and observation seemed a way out. Subsequent to this was an active and serious engagement with data in narrative forms. The challenge which soon followed was to deal with reflexivity. This inevitable reflexivity rendered it increasingly difficult to adhere to the disciplinary call of social science which seeks to remain withdrawn from preconceived notions. Thus the true challenge was to allow the quantum of reflexivity in such a manner that understanding continued to evolve while dealing with the transformation of narratives into knowledge. Understanding the complexity of this kind is important in so far as it involves the study of the subject like male sex workers who are sensitive, shy, hidden and limited. It is however essential to specify that the study does not purport to de-legitimise one method and legitimise others. What remained of utmost importance in methodological deliberation was sorting reasonable ways out to gain access to the subject, and making sense of what they had to say rather than what the researcher needed to know. Rather than putting a body of knowledge in a rigid form, emphasis was to reshape and allow a new form of knowledge to fit in with ease. It, therefore, claims that those belonging to *the least* can also be studied as much as those who are privileged of being within *the most*. *The least* ones can also claim to be worth empirical investigation. As long as the effort is made, they can be seen, they can be located, they can voice provided that they are attended to. The discussion of methodological limitation seemed important because the method can equally be of exclusionary nature in so far as it pushes any subject outside its domain or possibility of knowledge. They are quiet but not silent. They are tightlipped but not voiceless. Getting them to speak has certainly been a challenging task. Fulfilling a journey of this kind was challenging because it constantly reminded one of the dominant research trend which pursues meanings through a colossal structure of massive data. If one were to succumb to the dominant trend, such subjects whose numbers remain very limited would often fall by the side, let alone reaching a fruitful and meaningful conclusion.

As a sociologist, it is not unusual to follow in the footsteps of a historian in so far as such following enriches understanding of events, individuals, groups or social system. In absence of any historical records, studying male sex workers by means of interview-

ing them appeared as 'writing history of one's own lifetime' (Hobsbawm 1998) in particularity because it has looked at lives of male sex workers who are a minority within the sexual minority of the homosexual world. The proposition of Eric Hobsbawm that 'we do not know all answers about society and the process of discovering them is not simple' (Hobsbawm 1998:286) has remained a guiding principle behind serious temptation for looking at the subject from the present to past and vice versa. In doing so, the history of male sex workers is virtually absent. However, one becomes acquainted with the history of approaches in the study of sexuality and gender. Among these approaches, a few approaches have been put into historical perspectives like sexology, sociology of sex work, feminism and theories of homosexuality and deviance. Most of the perspectives either looked at the male to male relationship and male 'prostitution' as pathological or remained preoccupied with associating sex work with female sex work until theories of homosexuality wherein male sex work found place albeit under the disguise of different vocabularies rather than as a male sex worker. The preoccupation with associating sex work with female sex work remained so dominant that it amounted to the denial of male sex workers as an independent category. Thus most of the approaches including sexology and sociology of sex work proved to be inadequate to understand male sex workers. Moreover, the view that sex work is an outcome of poor economic conditions and individual pathological symptoms has dominated the discourse of sex work. Such a view generally projects an image of the sex worker as a victim forced into sex work which is exploitative. For this research, narratives of 34 male sex workers along with their friends and organisation with whom they were associated for their survival and safety throw light on the very notion of sex, sexuality and male sex work from male sex workers' point of view. These very narratives will later on, it is hoped, assume the shape of oral testimonies. Moving to what 34 male sex workers had to say about the revelation of their work identity, they would often refuse to disclose their identity to anyone because of stigma attached to sex work and fear of the negative reaction of people towards male sex work. This explains why they prefer to remain anonymous and unknown. It is important to note that gigolos also constitute the part of male sex workers who provide sexual services to female clients whereas this research has looked at male sex workers who generally cater to male clients. Out of 34 male sex workers who were interviewed, six admitted to having catered to female clients as well. As regards their initiation into sex work, there is no monocausal explanation for their entry into sex

work. Besides poor economic conditions and experience of abuse at an early or, later stage in their life explain how they are exposed to sex and sex work. It is thus necessary to understand that it is not an impulsive act on the part of male sex workers to enter into sex work. The process is rather tumultuous because it involves fear, hesitation and compulsion. Poor economic conditions, the experience of abuse coupled with homosexual identity help understand their history as to how they become part of the world, that is, sex work. Contrary to the widely held perception that male sex workers sell sex because of their homosexual desire, the majority of male sex workers, particularly bisexual and versatile sex workers, denied this and asserted that they consider sex work at par with any other occupations or works. However, Kothi identified male sex workers' view corresponded with the commonly held view that they enter into sex work because of their homosexual desire. A view from the close quarter brought to notice a new pattern concerning their sexual relationship. Most of them showed two different approaches in simultaneity. On the one hand, they had their regular partners with whom they had an emotional bond and on the other with clients where they shared a relationship of transaction which is devoid of any emotional attachment. In the case of the second kind of relationship which is transactional, sex is regarded as 'not real' and was often described as 'activity' by male sex workers. This duality in which there is a unity of mind and body in the former kind of relationship whereas the involvement of body without mind in case of later reminds one of the Cartesian duality of mind and body.

What became evident from the investigation of the relationship between male sex workers and urban space is the need for prolonged observation of complex entangle and matrix of urban space. It necessitated understanding male sex workers and their spaces in the city beyond the conventional notion of productivity since preoccupation with the understanding of the relation of people with urban space from a productive relation viewpoint limits the gaze. The study has not remained confined to the mapping of their physical presence across material and virtual geographies. What this study has done is to map marginality, tension, inequality, violence, and discrimination which are part of their quotidian life. The finding has thus drawn attention to the everydayness of their relationship with different geographies of the city and the unbroken series of tension that accompanies them throughout day and night. Understanding this brings out several anecdotes of struggle. The places where they live, operate and congregate underscore

the sustenance of competition among the underprivileged for space that itself is underprivileged and shrinking. If one fails to sustain the competition, losing claim to space is very likely. It is for this reason that people like male sex workers find it difficult to think beyond everydayness. Inequality in access to urban space brings to notice the discriminatory spatial practices in the city. To put it differently, access to the space of one's choice is a matter of privilege. Space which in itself seems inoperative becomes animated and operative which is evident from its changing forms and functions. It is this aspect that belies the assumption that the space is static. The idea of male sex work does not fit within the capitalistic paradigm of production. Space remains accommodative till male sex workers hide their sexual identity and continue to work as tailor, choreographer, hairdresser, cook, a worker in a salon and so on. However, the same space becomes repulsive when their sexual and work identities are manifested. Thus both accommodative and repulsive tendencies cohere in the same space. People's identity, including male sex workers' is shaped by space as much as space's multi-functionality and multi-dimensionality are shaped by the people. This points towards the reciprocity in the determination of identity — space on self and self on space. Surveillance and regulation obsessed state continue to assault spaces where male sex workers operate. In general, these spaces are dark bushes, unfrequented corners, under-construction buildings, parks, and hotel rooms, pubs and clubs in some cases. People's opinionated view of such spaces renders any association with such spaces illegitimate and illegal. As such fragments of space in the city become less and less with new spatial order; it becomes increasingly difficult for people like male sex workers to live in the city which was hitherto known for providing anonymity. It thus poses a great challenge to understand the sociality of male sex workers in the physicality of the space. Their spaces also get stigmatised. Thus marginality transcends self and comes to pervade the space too. Regarding space, new development is noteworthy, that is, cyberspace and telecommunication. Most male sex workers now take recourse to the cyber routes rather than operating via conventional physical hotspots. It is now more common among them to use mobile applications like Grindr, PlanetRomeo to contact their clients. It is thus a major transition from physical hotspots and street-based operations to cyber spots. It however is important to note that Kothi-identified male sex workers still tend to operate from physical spots where tension seemed to have lessened as a consequence of the popularity of virtual cyberspace. Few male sex workers operate through agencies that are being run by retired male sex

workers. Male sex workers operating through these agencies generally fall in the higher price range and have elite clientele.

This study has acknowledged the complexity inherent in meanings of sexuality, gender and power. Having understood the inadequacy of the male-female binary framework to understand this inherent complexity, this research drew on the ideas of Judith Butler and Erwin Goffman because their ideas dwell upon the notions of performativity, fluidity, and multiplicity in sexuality and gender. The male-female binary framework does not see beyond male and female whereas sexual identity is characterised by a wider spectrum of sexuality. That is why terms like effeminate male, masculine female, homosexual or other categories such as kothi, bisexual, versatile, active, passive and sometimes nothing at all cannot be understood unless a broader framework is adopted for a fuller and richer understanding of the wider spectrum of sexuality. The male-female framework also fails to understand the hierarchies which exist in gender and sexualities. This hierarchy is, for instance, evident in the expression and negotiation of sexualities and gender identities of male sex workers. Likewise, this does not subscribe to the pathological discourse which views homosexuals as deviant, pervert and threat to social order. By giving many instances from the field, this research could contextualise the notion of 'doing gender' which directs our attention to the performative aspect out of compulsion and practical considerations among male sex workers. The study recognises the multiplicity in manners of 'doing gender and sexuality'. Thus it is a compulsion in the heteronormative society to carry oneself in a culturally appropriate manner which determines the act of doing gender. Most of the male sex workers project themselves as heterosexual in the social world they inhabit whereas the other personal and private identities are revealed to only those who are either close friends or clients. Therefore, Butler's (1990) argument that there is 'no true identity' as we are all 'on stage'. Going by this argument, even the people with heteronormative appearance and behaviour fall under the scrutiny of performative theory. In other words, getting to know the real person or their inclination is not discernible. Therefore, biological and social essence do not hold sufficient ground to understand gender and sexuality. Erwin Goffman's "dramaturgical" theory reinforces the similar aspect of performativity which can be used to understand why male sex workers or homosexuals for that matter conceal their effeminate identity. It is largely because of fear of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, stigmatisation and criminalisation that they tend to conceal their identity. This, being part of everyday

practice, lead to routinisation and internalisation of switching from one role to others. The heteronormative division also fails to recognise the underlying tension and different subjective erotic cum sexual desire and behaviour. The fluidity framework offers a broader and wider base to understand homosexuality in general and male sex workers in particular not only from psycho-physical angles but also from various other theoretical standpoints. Carl Jung's analytical viewpoint lays strong emphasis on this very idea of dynamism which cannot be frozen into fixed and static identity especially when it comes to the domain of gender and sexuality. He, through the idea of "anima" and "animus" breaks the polarity and underscores the overlap by insightful reference to the interplay of the embedded feminine into males and masculinity into the females. Jungian's answer to the vexing question of identity trouble which results from the conscious or unconscious manifestation of feminine behaviour in males or masculine behaviour in females lays the foundation for resolution. In this regard, the idea of 'doing masculinity' can also be understood. Findings of this research suggest that maleness is much sought after and masculine male sex workers command more price from clients who prefer tall, good looking, masculine men. Given this tendency among clients, male sex workers act masculine. Those who fail or refuse to act and continue to exhibit feminine characteristics cannot negotiate for the same price and they also get derided for their manifest feminine demeanour. Thus ability and decision to act masculine confer upon male sex workers immunity from the wrath of society and family besides better rates from clients whereas kothi-identified male sex workers, by not acting masculine, become vulnerable to all sorts of discrimination and victimisation.

The life of male sex workers cannot be understood in a better manner unless the complexity of their relationship with their families is studied at great length. This research has, in the first place, unpacked the idea of family by looking at its forms, structures and functions. Looking at family as a form of collective, an attempt has been made to understand what it means to have the support of family and what repercussions it has in case of family ceases to support. It is the withdrawal of familial support from the life of male sex workers which accounts for a considerable share of anxiety and tension. The idea of the family involves multiple things like parenting, caring for children from an early age to adulthood, social training, education, provision of basics of life, marriage, procreation, working and so on. The problem arises when this regular rhythm of the family is

undermined. In the foregoing description of the family's form, one notices a regular rhythm and linearity. Family as an agency and custodian of traditional values sustain this linearity. However, the overall identity of male sex workers, that is, his sexual and work identity seem to break this rhythm and linearity. That is why tension arises as soon as the family becomes aware of either of the identities of male sex workers. To put it differently, most male sex workers do not disclose either of their identities. They fear that lest they should lose familial support. In Indian parlance, terms like *bekaam* (useless, misfit), *nalaayak* (villainous, worthless), *chhakka* (effeminate/ not masculine enough to work hard) and other derisive phrases constitute the vocabulary to dismiss them. In seldom cases, families accept them as they are, let alone work-related identity, that is, sex work which is not accepted at all. Both identities seem to bring dishonour upon the family. That is why the gap keeps widening between male sex workers and their families. However, there are a few cases where some of them muster the courage to 'come out' of 'closet' especially when homosexuality was decriminalised in India. What is worth noting, in this case, is that only one identity is disclosed in the event of 'coming out' but work identity is not disclosed. It is thus clear that family does not hold the same meaning for the male sex workers despite the fact they maintain intermittent or regular contact with their families. In some cases, there is a complete severance of all sorts of ties with the families. Unlike conventional family built upon blood relations, there tends to be a different form of the family altogether which has come to be regarded as 'family of choice'. Thus, the idea of the family does not cease to exist, it is rather its forms that undergo change. This is noticeable in the life of male sex workers. However, it is important to note that these changes in forms of the family become far more noticeable in post-industrial societies where production is no longer dependent on masculinised body labour which was most sought after in industrial society. Thus altered form and structure of the family in the case of male sex workers is just one angle among various other angles to understand changing dynamics of humans and the family as a form of collective. It has been brought to notice that the first incidence of violence and discrimination start from within the threshold of familial space. If a boy turns out to be gentlemanly, manly and ready to marry and work, he is considered fit in the conventional sense of family whereas the same family become uneasy with development in a different direction. Thus, if a boy is showing effeminate demeanour, he is disciplined, reformed and punished. Everything seems to fall by the wayside. If a boy does not mar-

ry, the traditional bequeathing of property is at risk because the absence of marriage marks the end of a generation and the question of property transference takes centre stage. Most of the male sex workers who do not look effeminate tend to marry to pacify familial tension which may arise on the matter of sexual identity. Simultaneously, they lead other life. The same is not true of effeminate looking male sex workers. Kothi-identified male sex workers fall under this category because they tend to ‘give out’ their effeminate behaviour. Thus, the study of male sex workers’ relationships with their families reveals a great deal of changing social patterns.

In details of their everyday life, narratives of mental and physical agony figure prominently. They associate it with the feeling of guilt and inferiority to such an extent that they consider their mind and body as flawed. This amounts to a process of “self-stigmatization” (Peggy 2011). Since male sex workers consider their behaviour undesirable, they constantly suppress their feeling and behaviour which leads to suppressed existence. That is why mapping their existence in unsuppressed form is difficult. The legal discourse reflects homophobic social order because it criminalises them and their behaviour. This compounds the process of stigmatisation. Mental and physical agony, therefore, remain constitutive elements in the materialisation of their troubled identity. Any effort to understand male sex workers without incorporating the status of their mind and body would yield a partial view of their identity and problems. Prevalence of substance abuse and alcoholism among them explains how they engage in the act of forgetting the stigma which is associated with their sexual and work identity. An effeminate body is often subjected to derision. Market links the potential of labour with the vigour of masculinity. Male sex workers’ low self-esteem results from such derisive attitudes of society and the market. The process of stigmatisation is an exclusionary tool. Using this, society targets the groups or individuals who do not conform to the dominant norms of society. Male sex workers have remained exposed to this process. Male sex workers carrying out work closely associated with shame, guilt, stigma, criminalisation and AIDS, are vulnerable to abuse and victimisation. Violence against male sex workers is a manifestation of stigma and discrimination due, at least in part, to the fact that they do not fit into traditional gender categories. Moreover, not seeing beyond a single lens view that male sex workers are vectors of HIV and STI narrows our understanding in that it overlooks poor mental health of male sex workers which result from

societal attitude and prejudice in considerable measure. This is evident in health service interventions as health providing functionaries often lose sight of the need to deal with societal attitudes and prejudices. This, therefore, calls for responsible and planned programmes for institutional and legal support and laws to protect the human rights of MSM, TG and MSW. Service providers need to adopt a considerate and more responsible approach to actively address violence and stigma and discrimination (S&D). In other words, emphasis on adherence to neutrality and confidentiality is necessary in the course of counselling and/or social support. Lack of counselling support was stark in the course of my fieldwork.

In the end, it seems apt to reinforce that this research is a sociological attempt to understand male sex workers in India. The existing body of literature dealing with male sex workers has remained health and HIV centric which is undoubtedly very important. However, health-centric literature does not suffice to gain an understanding of male sex workers in their social context. This research is therefore a step towards building knowledge about issues of male sex workers in India that could be shared by various disciplines like Sociology, Gender studies and Social work. It has highlighted the importance of understanding male sex workers, especially within the Indian context. I have attempted to locate the influence of various socio-cultural factors because they steer the course of sexuality in the case of male sex workers. This research has intended to arouse interest in the study of gender, masculinity and sexuality from a fresh angle. At the same time, the research has taken particular care to underline the contradictions and complexities involved in the study of male sex workers. Findings of the present study show that issues like stigma, life events and disclosure of sexual identity are very important to male sex workers and need to be studied further and included in future research initiatives. Another finding has been with respect to *Kothi*. It indicates that feminized male sex workers (*Kothis*) face more stigma and exclusion than other categories of male sex workers. Thus there is a need of carrying out more qualitative research in future with *Kothis* to understand these issues in a better light. Having drawn attention to a few contributions which this prolonged and intensive research claims to have made. It is also important to discuss a few limitations of this research. Since this research has studied one city and the sample is made up of thirty-four male sex workers who work in Mumbai city, there is certainly a need for larger coverage in terms of samples from

across wider spaces. It is then when a certain generalisation is possible. All the male sex workers except four were associated with GAURAV. Coming from one kind of organisation might have predisposed them to some kind of preparedness and therefore their narratives might have some common elements. But due to the lack of availability and accessibility of male sex workers, I took this opportunity to break the silence in the domain. Despite its limitation, the current research has paved the way for further studies to understand male sex workers in their socio-cultural milieu. Utterance howsoever small is a voice worth listening to and which is needed if history is to be made at all. Recorded interviews will, it is hoped, become oral testimonies in time to come. Male sex workers will thus have become perceptible identity and audible voice in the domain of sexual subaltern

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