SESSION III

Sexuality, Subjectivity and Community Resistance
Session Chair: Habiba Zaman, Simon Fraser University

Bidushi Rahman “Decolonizing Desire: Polysexuality in South Asia”

Taqdir Bhandal “The Coloniality of Menstruation and Diasporic Subjects”

Leena Hasan “How did I Get Here? R Reflections of an Introverted Activist

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SOUTH ASIA OVER THE YEARS: COLONIALISM AND QUEER DESIRE

ABSTRACT

Although hegemonic Canadian culture systemically and covertly marginalizes queer desire, Bangladeshi hegemony struggles to even make room for it at all. In this paper I map stigmas against queerphobia in multiple South Asian cultures, and then contradict them with our own historical records in order to debunk myths of abnormality and impermanency and to reimagine queer, brown spaces. I, then call into question how sexuality is a Western-cultural imposition on one's lifestyle and how poly-sexuality challenges this process. Indeed, bisexuality, pansexuality, and similar other practices are considered poly-sexual (of multiple desires) and heterosexuality and homosexuality as monosexuality (of one desire). I argue the conclusion of human sexuality as being stable and fixed is a product of tradition more than science. However, I also refute the idea that one can choose their desire as they do their shirt. Indeed, desire is something in and of itself, and the categorization of it is done methodologically. When the British invaded South Asia, the conditions of one's lifestyle and thereby sexuality became reframed as a product of the invasion and integration into the British system. I explore how the Western fixation of desire has enabled toxic categories for further suppression against South Asians. I look into how profound of an impact this imparted on communities who connected the Divine with human love, and hailed poets like Abu Nuwas during the height of the Islamic Golden Age. As a result, I examine how profound of an impact this creates on queer South Asians still to this day.

South Asia has shifted borders and empires throughout its rich and complex history. I will be focusing primarily on the regions of modern day Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan via the cultural and/or religious affiliation of popular literature before, during, and after Partition.

MARRIAGE

I have come to the conclusion that, for South Asia, marriage is inextricable from the Divine. No matter the timeline, South Asians from east to north, west to south have a history of affiliating the Divine with human love. Everywhere from Muslim ghazals and Hindu odes to Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Bollywood hits, there is a prevalent connection between human intimacy on Earth and the Divine. The Divine places itself above all when it comes to answering questions like, *Why are you here? What will you do?* The Divine gives us our reason to eat, sleep, and breathe because it gives us the purpose for

our existence. To reach ideal serenity in our lives, therefore, our actions and lifestyles must reflect that purpose and structure our belonging accordingly within our homes and communities. I'd like to keep this in mind throughout this essay. As I'm sure we are all aware, South Asians, more or less, have some form of spiritual affiliation with the Divine—even though we may not follow our duties perfectly. This spiritual affiliation has a tremendous affect on our belonging, self-actualization, and relationships, to name a just few facets of our lives. So, I will begin by asking: *What does your life look like when you exist outside of this world?*

The meaning marriage holds for South Asians can't be done justice in a few words. Its traditions are complex and have changed over time. For centuries before the East India Company or the British Raj, people married primarily as a political means to extend one's familial network and maintain property. Indeed, a big part of this was bearing offspring. Families grew alongside businesses and communities, exemplifying the popular communal way of living. However, despite the depth of respect and alliance involved in marriage, deep emotional commitments were normally linked to same-sex platonic relationships that would last a lifetime. "Noblesse oblige," meaning *nobility obligates you*, is a succinct example of the European sense of superiority that Viceroy Macaulay and imperialists like him believed gave them the right to "civilize" South Asia out of its cultures and traditions. Since Partition in 1947, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan have struggled to stabilize a new socio-economic and political jurisdiction with the psychological effects of imperialism persisting. Understandably, South Asians have aimed to represent themselves as successful, innovative contenders in the global arena; however, due to the impact of centuries of colonization, it's hard to differentiate South Asia's standard of success from capitalist Judeo-Christian European standards. Indeed, it seems we have ingested these beliefs as our own, and our social institutions such as marriage have changed in response. Why wouldn't they, when social order and traditions are notoriously fluid throughout history? We change with our environments, and yet we hang onto tradition for dear life. In times of intense disarray and destruction, we grab onto certainties, seeking a sense of stability and home. This can be seen particularly in South Asians living in diaspora. Immigrants exemplify the ongoing impact of colonization, if not in the search for better living conditions then in the rigid values they try to instill in their second-generation children.

As a broad generalization, brown girls are meant to remain virginal, pursuing promising careers that will not jeopardize their future marriage and their inevitable return to family life. Brown boys with higher paying careers will have their body count wiped clean and marry a pure brown girl, returning to serve as the authoritative breadwinner for their parents and in-laws. Children are non-negotiable. This model arguably causes trouble for everyone, but exceptionally so for queer people. Queerness of any shape or form that derails heteronormative Bengali values is shamed or policed until disciplined.

Earlier, I mentioned the spiritual connection with human love and intimacy that still echoes in our films and songs. Excluding someone from this ethereal, divine sense of self is a prelude to the jeopardized reality queer people experience. Accordingly, we note,

> The lack of a public social security system, poverty, and compulsory heterosexual marriage may indeed be the most oppressive aspects of everyday life in India for individuals who identify as glbtq. Consequently, those who do adopt a Westernized gay, lesbian, or transgendered identity often migrate to large Indian cities or live abroad as part of a larger, worldwide South Asian diaspora. (Penrose, 2004, p. 3)

Disha Ganguly committing suicide, Xulhaz Mannan and Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy being hacked to death in Mannan's home, and the plummeting conditions faced by Hijras are just a few examples of internationally hushed-up hate crimes. Despite the naturalization of the past as backwards and unevolved, South Asia was once as a good a place as any to be queer. Indeed, while the British were stoning men for sodomy in the 16th century, queer literature was flourishing in South Asia (Penrose, 2006). Throughout this essay, I will be focusing on queer literature because it reflects the cultural consciousness, values, and widespread traditions of popular culture. Furthermore, it helps us track distinct shifts in sentiment about desire and sexuality.

I am not suggesting that lifestyles before colonialism were inherently ontological ideals simply because they are in the past. Situations occurring along any timeline, including our present one, will inevitably become historicized, and I dread the idea that present day neoliberalism risks naturalization. Instead of idealizing the past and its complexities, I use our rich past to help us reimagine our potential. There is a disparity between the values of our ancestors and our modern day politicians. This disparity reveals how fluid our traditions can be, and in turn, how they can be changed. Nor am I looking at the past for answers; rather, I am looking for insight. Tradition can be a source of inertia in the face of epistemology and ontology, and therefore I question the investments we make for the sake of nursing our malignant anxieties instead of exploring them—malignant for those harboring hate and losing loved ones, violent and fatal for those being lost.

CONTEXT AND DEFINITIONS

As we take a glimpse into a queer, South Asian archive, it is important to understand that we are looking at what has survived. What have been recovered, recorded, and handled by western colonial powers are the only resources we have (Dasgupta, 2011). Although there is much to be learned from these records, they cannot provide a cohesive, objective narrative of queerness in pre-colonial South Asia. Even without western influences, no archive can be objective if subjectivity is our most human trait.

Furthermore, we must diverge from the idea that we can measure the validation of queerness through the archive. Heteronormativity relies on this quantification of queerness in order to naturalize heteronormative truths. It seems that, when quantified, queer desire appears miniscule whereas heterosexuality remains steadfast and far more common. Indeed, the archive remains a product of imperialism, and in this respect, it is impossible to discuss South Asian identity and belonging separate from South Asia's history as a British colony. As suggested by Arondekar (2009) in "For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India," sexuality is anywhere but the peripheries of this archive. Indeed, sexuality is centralized within the archive due to its

very calibrated and intentional absence managed by British authorities and maintained in post-independence India. Arondekar (2009) critiques the legitimacy of a homoerotic South Asian history being linked to the archive even as queerness is marginalized via the erasure of non-heteronormative sexualities. In this sense, we are simply inverting the discourse of historical ontology without challenging or dishevelling the panopticonic authority of the archive (Arondekar, 2009).

BRIEF HISTORY

I'm sure we are all aware that just because a new bill is made law, changed social conduct does not always follow. However, by enforcing new laws through persecution and violence, imperialists were able to invasively intercept the lives of many South Asians. In 1858, India was annexed by the British Empire from the East India Company, meaning this was the first time the British held complete administrative control over the Indian justice system, revenue, army and civil service, trade, education, and particularly literature. Queer literature came to a standstill after the annexation of India in 1858, despite British presence pre-dating the official declaration. In 1757, the Battle of Plassey determined social, judicial, and cultural structures of society (such as sexuality) throughout the vastly diverse communities of South Asia (Dasgupta, 2011). However, it wasn't until 1773 that a Governor-General directly facilitated governance, and not until 1858 did the Government of India Act officially give the British government complete administrative power. Partition (or independence from Europe) in 1947 only intensified the erasure of sexuality from literature. Likewise, intolerance against homosexual desire increased thanks to nationalist homophobic sentiments granted to us by colonialists (Dasgupta, 2011). Texts such as *The Arabian Nights* were deemed "filthy," and their "gloats of moral harms" prompted the British to purge Perso-Arabic texts, resulting in educational and legal reform (Dasgupta, 2011). Even though *The Arabian Nights* revolved around the intellectual power of women resisting patriarchal conditions, the text was heavily eroticized as it involved harems. Policing South Asian bodies began with the hypersexualization of the *Kama Sutra* by puritanical western discourse. Although it is a book that hopes to guide one to live their most harmonious life, due to the discussion of sexual positions (which make up less than one percent of the book), Indians were figured as sexually deviant and excessive bodies (Penrose, 2006). This, in turn, resulted in the puritanical suppression of sexuality in South Asia (Penrose, 2006). This tone of conservatism, still prevalent amongst Indian modernists, resists sexuality and especially homoeroticism when contesting Indian nationhood and belonging. We inherited a colonial morality which situates the "heterosexual patriarchal family" as "the cornerstone of the nation" through this popular discourse (Penrose, 2006).

Thomas Babington Macaulay designed the educational system to enforce British civilization and thereby morals that condemned homoeroticism and acts of sodomy as criminal and unnatural. Indeed, queer literature became a hotspot for colonial cleansing because of its public accessibility and influence. Penrose discusses this expulsion of queer literature from the colonial archive in further detail in "Colliding Cultures: Masculinity and Homoeroticism in Mughal and Early Colonial South Asia." Many works

of literature such as ghazals, Sufi and rekhti poetry, and novels were destroyed and lost in this purge.

Under the Indian Penal Code of 1864, Penal Code 377, modelled on the Buggery Act of 1533 in England, states the following regarding "unnatural offences":

> Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and also be liable to fine.

Unnatural acts range from sex with animals and minors to raping women and any sexual conduct between members of the same sex (according to the trans- and intersex-exclusive gender binary). Those familiar with most western-influenced archives will understand the phallic obsession inherent in them, as they are the hotbed of practiced power and dominance by those who hold access a.k.a. power. There is a great absence of non-phallic narratives in recorded history in contrast to those regarding phallus-bearers. Despite this, there are surviving testaments of queer lives before colonization, and they pay homage to a far more tolerant nation.

QUEER SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURE

Through the analysis of popular written works, we witness an unprecedented level of scepticism and antagonism against homosexual acts. Indeed, homosexual desire was seldom a site of public contestation or immoral content before invasion. The popular texts I have selected reflect the transition of our nationhood in regards to queer desire. Beginning with India as a nation undivided, I focus on Hindu and Muslim men as there is significantly more information regarding this group.

Same-sex romantic love was often signified by lifelong celibacy, friendship, or evidence of rebirth for Muslims and Hindus (Dasgupta, 2011). Due to the prevalence of divine homoeroticism in Hindu texts, if two people of the same gender are intimately close it is thought that in a previous life something had prevented their union as man and woman. Therefore, it is in this lifetime that they find each other or their bond was strong enough to surpass reincarnation. Despite this, homosexual desire was still culturally prohibited for reasons such as the anxiety of being the passive partner. Depending on one's interpretation of the Quran, homosexuality was a sin, but this stricture was addressed solely to men. Furthermore, the act itself was a sin, but the desire found in poetry was not. It is interesting that the presence of revered figures engaging in homosexual acts in Hinduism and the absence of this phenomenon in Islam did not result in disparate social norms. Perso-Arabic traditions for instance, often ignored and tolerated homosexual acts in varying degrees (Dasgupta, 2011).

In the 15th century, odes to young male lovers and reminiscence regarding love affairs between Muslim and Hindu men were popular themes in Mughal poetry. Homoeroticism between men was heavily idolized and favored during this time, provided it remained a longing as opposed to a practice. However, there is material to suggest these traditions were not always followed—including instances where homoerotic sex was actually supported (Penrose, 2006).

With respect to Muslim male desire, status and age were definite factors; love

with a minor was favored. In fact, the love story of Sultan Muhmad and his slave Ayuz was once regarded as the "archetype of perfect male love" during the Mughal era (Penrose, 2006). However, Ayuz's age is still contested due to records indicating the presence of facial hair. In modern day Afghan cities, valued homoerotic relationships involved varying forms of active and passive masculinity and age differentiation. Due to the presence of various cultures and religions, male-male eroticism in South Asia was complex when approved, as age, religion, status, gender, and caste differentiation all came into play. "Gender" in this context typically meant the younger beloved had not yet become a man, unlike his active counterpart. Indeed, this alternative understanding of gender denotes a certain lack of body essentialism in this fascinating gendered relation (Dasgupta, 2011).

A particularly stimulating area of speculation is the figure of the boy-lover, which stands as a trailblazing testament to the fluidity of desire. Although he engaged with an older man, this "did not preclude ongoing sexual involvement with woman, whether inside or outside of marriage," and thus the understanding of his "identity differs from modern homosexuality" (Penrose, 2006). Despite the presence of homoeroticism, there is no innate refusal of multiple desires in either the boy-lover or the penetrator (Dasgupta, 2011). Similarly, in paternalistic families, the adult men still desired young attractive men, or Ganymedes, despite being married (Dasgupta, 2011). Polysexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality are a few non-heteronormative desires whose existence was commonplace before the British Raj. Before British legislation designed to regulate South Asian sexuality, South Asians did not have a fixed, stable sexual identity like we do now. Romantic or intimate conquests were not inherent traits of a distinct group of people; rather, people were attached to the action itself. In this society, bisexual erasure was not apparent and everyone was capable of participating in any activity. Although of course there were repercussions for these actions, there was minimal follow-through. Perhaps the popularity of queer poetry indicated a certain level of tolerance or disregard at the societal level.

By the time Ismat Chugtai came around with her story, *Lihaaf,* or *The Quilt,* things had changed in the realm of queer literature. In 1942, *Lihaaf* was published in the literary journal *Adab-i-Latif,* meeting with considerable criticism for its implicit homoerotic tone. Chugtai was summoned to the Lahore court in Pakistan two years after its publication. However, since there was no explicit expression of homosexuality in the text, Chugtai won the case. The Urdu poetry of Hafiz and Azad faced similar public repercussions after being deemed "an abominable vice of sodomy" by British censors in the process of purifying South Asian literature (Penrose, 2006).

The British had been in India for a couple centuries by this point, intimately weaving British values through law and censorship. It would be only five years later that the nation would experience the devastation of Partition. Arguably, the British had finally given us our independence, and yet many millions died if they weren't already part of one of the largest waves of human migration. Nisid Hajari (As cited in Dalrymple, 2015, n.p.) writes,

> Gangs of killers set whole villages aflame, hacking to death men and children and the aged while carrying off young women to be raped. Some British soldiers and

> journalists who had witnessed the Nazi death camps claimed Partition's brutalities were worse: pregnant women had their breasts cut off and babies hacked out of their bellies; infants were found literally roasted on spits.

Partition is a crack or wound I believe all of us soothe—a glass shard we haven't been able to tease out of our skin. Briefly, a nation once largely harmonious among people of all religions and lifestyles is now fractured and bloody. Partition marks the chaos that had developed over centuries of colonization, and it signifies the impact of British rule on South Asian identity.

In the retelling of her life in *Cracking India,* Bapsi Sidhwa (1991) recalls her childhood during the Partition of 1947. The egalitarian relationships between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs as well as the rather uninvolved Parsees crumbled irrevocably as talks of the division of the nation ensued. The novel was later turned into the second part of Deepa Mehta's series—*Earth.* Perhaps due to the homophobic response two years prior to the first film in the series, *Fire,* the queerness of Lenny, the young girl with polio in Sidhwa's story, is erased in *Earth* (Mehta, 1998). In the book, Lenny's admiration for Ayah is often expressed through an erotic fascination. For example, Lenny describes Ayah's "rolling bouncy walk that agitates the globules of her buttocks" (Sidhwa, 1991, p. 14), indicating that Lenny's gaze is drawn to Ayah's body and sex appeal as well as her beauty and infectious personality. Whether or not Lenny desired Ayah in a romantic manner, the homoerotic gaze is present in the story but absent in the film.

I'm sure we've all heard something about *Fire*, by Deepa Mehta—a movie based on the very same short story for which Ismat Chugtai was summoned to the Lahore court. On December 7th, 1998, the film premiered in Mumbai, India, and was met with protests by Shiv Sena Mahila Aghadi, an anti-queer group. Smashed glass panes resulted in media crews covering the story, but surprisingly no police were present (Raval & Jain, 1998). Other armed protests broke out around multiple theatres that screened Mehta's film. Although most of the protestors never watched the film, they remained vigilant against *Fire* and anti-homophobic organizations that supported the film, such as Sakhi and Sangini. Asked if their violent acts were legal, one of the protesters replied, "We are the law" (Raval & Jain, 1998). Interestingly enough, Mehta did not want her film to become a vehicle for lesbian advocacy, and adamantly resisted the categorization of her characters' desire. "It is not about lesbianism," she explained. "It's about loneliness, about choices" (Raval & Jain, 1998).

The film was later cleared by the Censor Board without any cuts after winning several international awards. Despite being banned in Mumbai and Delhi theatres, the movie continued to release without much protest or struggle after the initial controversy. Gayatri Gopinath (2005) describes how, in both *Lihaaf* and *Fire,* "female homoerotic desire… emerges from within the patriarchal confines of the home, within the cracks and fissures of heterosexuality, and is inextricable from the violences of colonialism and misogyny" (p. 183). Exacerbated by British mandates and restrictions, the domain of sexuality shifted from the public sphere and moved even deeper into the heavily gendered private sphere (Penrose, 2006). While the British presence had formally departed, colonialism continued to shape our cultural psyche resulting in stigmatization and violence targeting queer South Asia.

Figure 1: ***Two Youths.*** **From the Fitzwilliam Album, Mughal, ca. 1555 – 60.**
Courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK (161.1948)

ABSENCE OF QUEER WOMEN AND NON-BINARY SOUTH ASIA

As discussed in this essay, the examples of queerness in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan virtually all depict men and their homoerotic relation to another and give no insight into women's homoeroticism. In this way, archives marginalize those erased from our history through the very absence of their lived realities. Due to the centering of women's sexualities, queer women are even further marginalized because of the mapping of the nation through women's bodies. Nayak (2003) argues that "the public humiliation of women by parading them naked, cutting off their breasts, or tattooing their bodies with nationalist slogans were all violent reminders that women's bodies are contested sites

for fixing competing discourses" regarding the Kashmir conflicts (p. 4). Indeed, the effeminization of South Asian men by British imperialists left an anxiety that needed relieving. Miserably, women's bodies became the site of contestation for the dismembered nation. Indeed, women demonstrated the purity of the nation through their celibacy until wedded to the nation's conqueror, the South Asian man. Queer women could not fulfil this civic duty and therefore are erased where present. Indeed, colonized people inherited monogamy, procreative marriage, etc. Modernity erased queer spaces of belonging and instead led to the rise of new subjectivities (Dasgupta, 2011).

British imperialists intentionally targeted unfamiliarly queer Indian bodies in order to prevent the reproduction of anti-heteronormative Indian traditions. The practice of revoking land grants attempted to end gender-variant male sex work and heavily compromised the income of gender-variant female bodyguards (Dasgupta, 2011). Kings and harems were traditionally guarded by Uzbek and Tartar slaves during the Mughal era, and these slaves were all gender-variant women. The sexualities of these masculine women (I use the term "women" loosely here) were distinctly separate from feminine women. Despite the pregnancies that did occur, it was forbidden to be pregnant as a bodyguard. However, gender expectations for gender-variant South Asian women have changed since imperialism. Similarly, Hijras, who were once understood as divine, are increasingly facing marginalization and homelessness.

COUNTERARGUMENTS

Shashi Tharoor's book *The Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* signifies the atrocities of colonization and ultimately determines that the British Empire's presence in India was traumatic. Although Uday Balakrishnan, a writer for the *Hindu BusinessLine*, agrees the arguments made by Shashi Tharoor deserve attention and recognition, Balakrishnan (2016) claims that "it was the British who made us aware of our rich cultural and linguistic heritage" and their benevolent presence in India has been far greater "than Tharoor cares to acknowledge" (n.p.). Balakrishnan is one of many South Asians and non-South Asians to make this point. However, it is not a well-rounded contextual assumption in my opinion.

Indeed, I find it hard to understand how a diaspora created out of a need to escape our nation's conditions due to the western influences I have highlighted in this paper makes us as South Asians aware of our rich heritage, unless it is the recognition of a home lost that we are admiring in this context. Balakrishnan (2016) also claims,

> We must not forget that by the time British rule ceased in India, the country had one of the most extensive railway networks in the world, a thoroughly professional army and an administrative system that has endured to this day. Under the British, most of the subcontinent has also been mapped and counted as never before. (n.p.)

This is a fair acknowledgement of western developments in India; however, I'd like to offer an alternative perspective. Present day globalization is ever-increasing, with vast stores of knowledge and information available between nations, especially in terms of technological advances. With India being a heavy hitter in the realm of trade during the

Silk Road, is it not possible to assume that South Asia would inevitably have developed railway networks and other advancements? The modern-day indoor plumbing system was inherited from India, signifying a certain technological know-how prior to invasion. Personally, I find the type of rhetoric espoused by Balakrishnan to be exaggerated, because I firmly believe we could have received all this information without the terror of colonization. The harm done by the British outweighs the supposed benefits we gained from imperialism, and since India accounted for 27% of the world's wealth before the British arrived, we were clearly fine. Europe however? Not so much.

The archaic veil thrown over history assumes our non-colonized past to have been a stagnant, prehistoric, undeveloped period. This trick is performed by western gatekeepers to mark colonization as an innovative and therefore superior present and future. Due to this understanding of time as linear, the idea of going back to prior ways of being is regressive. That is simply untrue. South Asia's history, for instance, reveals ways of being that we may well strive to return to.

CONCLUSIONS

I wish I had been able to include more information about Indigenous Indians, Hijras, and polysexuality in this paper; however, I hope I created a fissure in our colonial narrative either way. What I offer to the epistemology of South Asian people's ontological wellbeing is how colonialism and deviant sexualities are linked and result in modern day constituencies that regulate our (un)belonging in our communities. By understanding how colonialism shapes our naturalized understandings of our historical identities, ontological being, and social orders such as sexualities, we come to understand that we are a product of our environment—and environments change.

Destabilizing the fixity of sexuality prevents us from organizing people into categories of marginalization and privilege when integrated into our political spheres. (Bi)sexual erasure leads to the solidification of a sexualized social binary or sexual economy, with our fashion of living being a result of our experience. Arondekar (2009) laments the "erasures of the past," and (bi)sexual erasure is just that (p. 171). (Bi)sexual erasure must be dismantled in order for the historically marginalized to be unapologetically comfortable, fulfilled, pleasured, and at home without facing persecution from governing forces.

Keeping in mind our participation with colonialist identities, what is it we should do? Should we live with them, uncritically or critically aware? If we are critically aware, can we live in opposition to these systems whilst being facilitated by them? Do we need a core moral truth to begin implementing decolonization?

Personally, I do not think we need a single shared moral truth to begin decolonizing; rather, we require a shared effort towards reducing its violent and limiting effects. We are in a contingent moment in time with colonialism saturated in our imagination and epistemological comfort. Culture is the product of generations of human migration, and I mention this not to dismiss these concerns but to signify how we can change them to include queer South Asia.

I want to stress why the politics of desire matter in our contemporary lives, as desire is often dismissed and compartmentalized into people's bedrooms. The private

and public domain are never separate and are equally relevant in a well-rounded life. After discussing these texts, it is evident that the configuration of western sexuality into South Asia crossed intersections of our livelihood with detrimental consequences.

I challenge us to revamp our vocabularies and denounce sexuality as fixed and stable and instead look at our desire as a lovely unknown territory with infinite possibility. I challenge us to have wandering eyes that land freely without traffic lights directing their gaze—an openness that resists. The past isn't a utopia, but it can be a beginning. What you gain from Decolonial Mindfulness:

1. People are allowed to live their lives without violence
2. You don't harbor as much negative energy, and you don't lose your loved ones
3. Decolonizing one set of harmful beliefs can inadvertently unravel connected ones

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