

REPRESENTATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN RELIGION: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

As the religion is an existing powerful authority and one of the important aspects in many lives, reaction towards homosexuality can be considered as the societal reaction of it. The relation between homosexuality and religion can be varied greatly across time and place, within and between different religions and denominations, also in association with different forms of homosexuality. Religious aspects widely reject homosexual orientations. The opposition ranges from discouraging homosexual activities to supporting criminal sanctions up to capital punishments. As there are exceptions exist, this study aims to analyse the homosexual aspects in different religions and it's reflection upon society.

Key words: Religion, Homosexuality

Introduction

World is full of turbulent contradictions based on many complicated concepts. Identifying a person subjectively and socially is mandatory in the society, identifying one's own gender and sexuality is also equally important. There are exceptions also. The society widely considers heterosexuality as 'normal' and homosexuality as 'not normal'. Religion, as an important authority in most of the human's lives, its view and opinion towards homosexuality has a significant role. This paper aims at the study of different religions' opinions about homosexuality and it's reflection upon the society.

According to the American Psychological Association, "Homosexuality is romantic attraction, sexual attraction or sexual behaviour between members of the same sex or gender. Homosexuality is one of the three main categories of sexual orientation within the Heterosexual-Homosexual continuum. Science does not yet know the exact cause of sexual orientation, but they logically theorize that it is caused by a complex interplay of genetic, hormonal and

environmental influences". As the society thinks that homosexuality is not normal, the humans who are identifies as homosexual, confront different types of brutal discriminations and oppressions.

Methodology

As the religion is an existing powerful authority and one of the important aspects in many lives, it can have a specific role in organizing various stages of human life. So, the religion's reaction towards homosexuality can be considered as the societal reaction of it. The relation between homosexuality and religion can be varied greatly across time and place, within and between different religions and denominations, also in association with different forms of homosexuality. Religious aspects widely reject homosexual orientations. These rejections and oppositions of the different religious denominations towards homosexuality ranging from quietly discouraging homosexual activity, explicitly forbidding same-sex sexual practices among their adherents and actively opposing social acceptance of homosexuality, supporting criminal sanctions up to capital

punishment, and even to condoning extrajudicial killings.

These religious movements affected both the most religious people and the less religious people almost equally. The people who do not share their local dominant religious context are also included in it. Some believe that it is the homosexual activities which are sinful rather than the same-sex attraction itself. Many argue to discourage labelling individuals according to sexual orientation. Most of the organizations believe that conversation therapy will decrease the same-sex attraction. But at the same time some adherents of many religions view homosexuality and bisexuality positively, and some denominations support LGBT rights, enact laws supporting LGBT rights and routinely bless same-sex marriages.

Many mythologies and traditions can be found around the world which are accommodated or revered same-sex love and sexuality. When says that religions are widely opposing homosexuality there are these exceptions historically within this. Many people of faith look to both tradition and sacred texts for guidance on this issue regardless of their position on homosexuality. Here are some important religions and denominations and their views about homosexuality.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are together known as Abrahamic religions. They believe and teach that homosexuality is sinful and traditionally forbid it. But today, within these religions some denominations are accepting homosexuality and including homosexual people such as the United Church of Christ, Reform Judaism and the Metropolitan Community Church.

The Torah (1st 5 books of the Hebrew Bible) primarily mentioned Jewish views about homosexuality. It states that: "(A man) shall not lie with another man as (he would) a woman, it is an abomination".

Orthodox Judaism views homosexual activities as sinful. But in recent years, there are approaches which denote only sexual anal act is forbidden and considered an abomination by the Torah. It points out that sexual orientation and other sexual activities are not considered as sin. Conservative Judaism has engaged in a detailed study of homosexuality since the 1990s. The official position of this movement was to welcome homosexual Jews to synagogues and campaign against the discrimination towards homosexual community.

Many organizations and denominations around the world consider homosexuality as heterosexuality. These include Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism in North America, Liberal Judaism in United Kingdom. Progressive Jewish Authorities believe that tradition laws against homosexuality are subject to change or are no longer binding. They think that there should be a new understanding of human sexuality. At the same time some of these authorities rely on modern biblical scholarship pointing out that the prohibition in the Torah was intended to ban coercive or ritualized homosexual sex, such as those practices ascribed to Egyptian and Canaanite fertility cults and temple prostitution.

Christian religion and denominations have variety views on homosexual activities, ranging from outright condemnation to complete acceptance. Referring the Christian history, most Christian theologians considered homosexuality as immoral and taught that it is sinful. Some Christian denominations such as Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodox Churches and other mainline denominations welcome people attracted to the same sex, but teach that homosexual acts are sinful.

But at the same time, liberal Christians are generally supportive of

homosexuals. Some Christian denominations do not view monogamous same sex relation as bad or evil. These include United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church, the churches of the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht etc. Lutheran and Anglican churches allow gay unions. There are openly gay clergy in Anglican communions, such as Gene Robinson and Mary Glasspool. They are homosexual bishops in the US Episcopal Church.

There are Old Testament and New Testament texts in Christian religion which describe human sexual relations as strictly heterosexual by God's design. Conservative denominations follow this and generally oppose same sex sexual relations. As such, it is said that sexual desires and activities that disobey God's design are sinful and are condemned by god. Catholic Church is one of the important institutions of Christian religion. It teaches that those who are attracted to persons of the same sex are called to practice chastity, just like everyone else has to before they get married. Likewise the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also forbid all kinds of homosexual or same sex sexual activities. In the case of the LDS church, it previously taught that homosexuality was a curable condition and counselled members that they could and should change their attractions and provided therapy and all.

Islam widely disapproves all the activities of homosexuality. They view same-sex desires as an unnatural temptation. The discourse on homosexuality in Islam is primarily concerned with activities between men. But, some hadiths mention about the homosexual activities between women, although the punishment for lesbianism is rarely mentioned in the histories. Al-Tabari records say that in the year 170 AH there happened an execution of a pair of lesbian slave girls in the harem of al-Hadi. The

Holy Quran says that "do you approach males among the worlds and leave what your lord has created for you as mates? But you are a people transgressing".

When it comes to Hindu religion, it does not have a central authority. Many Hindu sections have taken various positions on homosexuality, ranging from positive to neutral or antagonistic. The Rigveda says "perversity/diversity is what nature is all about, or, what seems unnatural is also natural". Several Hindu texts, Manusmriti and Sushruta Samhita, assert that some people are born with either mixed male and female natures, or sexually neuter. Hindu groups are historically not unified in the case of issue on homosexuality.

The Indian Kama Sutra contains passages describing third sex males performing oral sex on men. There are some medieval Hindu temples which openly depict both male homosexuality and lesbianism within their carvings such as the temple walls at Khajuraho. Many Hindu priests have conducted same sex marriages, arguing that love is the result of attachments from previous births and that marriage, as a union of spirit, is transcendental to gender.

Conclusion

Here analysed is the interpretation about the homosexuality of a few religions around us, although there are number of religions in the world. In spite of the existence of exceptions, the religions are widely disapproving homosexuality. If the God has created the whole universe, these community also created by God. Then why this ignorance towards the who are not harmful to nature or to human beings?

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