

Role of Religion in Shaping Attitudes Towards the LGBTQ+ Community and its Impact on Social Equality

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ABSTRACT: The role of religion in shaping societal attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ community remains a complex and often contentious issue across cultures and regions. This paper explores how various religious doctrines, traditions, and institutional practices influence perceptions of LGBTQ+ identities, behaviors, and rights. Drawing on interdisciplinary sources—including theology, sociology, psychology, and human rights—it examines both affirming and non-affirming religious responses to sexual and gender diversity. While some religious interpretations have historically contributed to the marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals, others have evolved to support inclusion and dignity. The paper further analyzes the broader social consequences of these religiously-informed attitudes, particularly their impact on the pursuit of social equality, legal recognition, and mental health outcomes for LGBTQ+ individuals. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for fostering more equitable and compassionate societies, while also addressing issues of religious freedom and human rights in pluralistic democracies.

Keywords: Religion, attitudes, cultures, identities, human rights, gender, inclusion, marginalization.

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INTRODUCTION

This research paper will deal with the role of religion in shaping attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community and its impact on social equality. Here it has been assumed that religion does play a role in shaping attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community and that it ultimately has an impact on social equality. It is therefore, necessary to understand that:

- a) Whether religion plays a role in framing our attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community?
- b) If yes, then does this attitude framed through religion affect social equality?

If findings suggest in the affirmative, then this study will move forward to look for ample measures to ensure that such impact is softened.

Before delving into further research it is advisable that it is ensured that one is perfectly aware and educated about the community on which the research will be carried on. A brief introduction of the LGBTQ+ community, is both relevant and essential to understand the subject matter, and also to understand as to what exactly is meant by the term social equality.

The LGBTQIA+ Community: Historical Background, Members, and Otherism

There is often a misconception that the LGBTQ community has evolved only recently in the past few years. This misconception has seemingly developed because, prior to the late-nineteenth century, there was no concept of having a distinct personal sexual identity, even though people in the ancient past lived lives that were very similar to our modern understanding of what it means to be a person of the LGBTQIA+ community. Also, the historical terminology that was used to describe gender and sexuality often lacked the specificity that exists today.¹

The LGBTQIA+ initialism is often used synonymously with the term “homosexual”; this usage is obviously not right because the term “homosexual” denotes but a sub-set of the community that is included in the LGBTQIA+ initialism. However, the term “homosexual” has a commendable contribution in developing the movements that brought rights to the LGBTQIA+ community. Therefore, it is essential that one looks into the development of the term

¹ *A Brief History of the LGBTQ Initialism*, Queer History for the People (June 9, 2018), <https://medium.com/queer-history-for-the-people/a-brief-history-of-the-lgbtq-initialism-e89db1cf06e3>. Accessed on 20/05/2025

“homosexual” before breaking down the term LGBTQIA+ individually, giving due importance to each of the letters of the initialism.

The term “homosexual” was first used in 1869 by Karoly Maria Benkert a Hungarian physician, who wrote under the pen name K. M Kertbeny. It was not until the early 1900s that the term became widely used. K M Benkert expressed that his fight for equal rights for the minority sexualities was driven by his “instinctive drive to take issue with every injustice.” However, his own activities suggest that he might have been secretly homosexual himself.

He also advanced one of the main arguments that is still used against the decriminalization of homosexual activities; according to him, whether sexual preference was ‘innate’ was a “very interesting riddle of nature,” but he had strong opinions regarding the right of the government to intervene in private matters. He argued:

“We should convince our opponents that exactly according to their legal notions they do not have anything to do with this inclination, let it be innate or voluntary, because the state does not have the right to intervene in what is happening between two consenting people aged over 14, excluding publicity [in private], not hurting the rights of any third party.”²

Homosexual activists of the mid-1900s thought that the term “homophile,” which omitted the word ‘sexual’ and affirmed same-gender attraction, was a more neutral and acceptable term than “homosexual.”

Now that the history of the term “homosexual,” has been well understood, it’s feasible to delve into the initialism.

If one still does not doubt the reason behind focusing on the history behind these terms and initialism, it is about time one does so. Why would a term be so important that one has to write three-four pages about it? This is because these terms are *historically embodied*. Language helps in providing visibility and shifting social perspectives. To understand this, one can take the help of an analogy: there exists a concept of “emotional granularity”³ in psychology which is the level of specificity that characterizes verbal representations of an affective experience.

² Judith Takacs, *The Double Life of Kertbeny*, Past and Present of Radical Sexual Politics 26-40 (2012).

³ Todd B Kashdan, *Unpacking Emotion Differentiation: Transforming Unpleasant Experience by Perceiving Distinctions in Negativity*, 24 *Current Directions in Psychological Science* (2015).

Which basically means that being able to name the emotion that people are feeling, enables them to “feel it better.” Similarly, people believe that if a person can identify as a member of a community and label themselves, then they can know themselves better and therefore fight for their rights.

Initially, the umbrella term “gay” was used to refer to the entire community that is now referred to as the LGBTQ community. However, the word “gay” itself had nothing to do with homosexuality until, approximately, the 20th century. The word had originated from the French word “gai” and was used to refer to a carefree or joyful person in the 12th century. The journey of the word from being used in this sense to being used to refer to a prostitute is largely undocumented. Eventually, in the 1920s and 1930s, the word “gay” was used to refer to men who were sexually involved with other men. This usage was limited to the gay community before 1955, when it officially acquired the new definition of a homosexual man. “Gay,” an originally derogatory term (that) has now entered general usage as a *reclaimed* category term.⁴

There must have been some issue with using the word “gay” as an umbrella term that eventually led people to adopt the LGBTQ initialism. An attempt shall be made to cover this issue in detail in the following section(s).

For now, it’s necessary to delve into the first letter of the initialism: whose etymology would also help in debunking the myth that homosexuality is a “current trend” or whether it has only risen in the recent years. L for ‘Lesbian’ – The word Lesbian has been derived from the Greek word ‘Lesbos’, which is the name of the island native to the great Greek “Muse,” Sappho (interestingly, the word ‘sapphic’, which refers to erotic attraction between women, has been derived from Sappho’s name.) Sappho was a priestess and poet who lived in 600 BCE, whom Plato referred to as the “Tenth Muse.” Her works, though not exclusively about eros and agape among women, were the major literary and historical proof of homosexual activity among women in ancient Greece. While homosexual activity among men was prevalent in the time period that Sappho belonged to, similar activities among women were condoned. This patriarchal perspective in the homosexual community was one of the main reasons why feminist lesbians were against being referred to by the umbrella term “gay.” This consciousness mainly developed during the Women’s Movement that took place in the mid-nineteenth

⁴ Gregory Coles, *The Exorcism of Language: Reclaimed Derogatory Terms and Their Limits*, 78 College English 16 (2016).

century, also referred to as the “Second Wave of the U.S. Feminist Movement,” because of the exclusions that the lesbian women faced in the feminist and gay organizations. Lesbian women thereby rightfully desired the articulation of their experiences that differed from both gay men and heterosexual women.⁵ Thus, behind the evolution of the term “lesbian,” it can also be seen as to what is the background of inter-sectional feminism, providing an insight on how relevant the LGBTQ movement is to world of gender politics and social equality.

Despite the efforts of Lesbian women, “the word “gay” was still used as an umbrella term for the movement well into the 1990s. It was with the birth of the bisexual, transgender and queer movements that this usage shifted and the four-letter initialism was finally adopted. The LGBT initialism was more inclusive and was therefore well-received by the community. It also entailed ideas around gender being fluid and non-binary.

SOCIAL EQUALITY AND THE LGBTQ MOVEMENT

T.H. Marshall wrote a treatise known as “Citizenship and Social Class,” in which he divided equality into three parts: civil, political and social. The exact terminology that he had used was “political citizenship,” “civil citizenship,” and “social citizenship”⁶ but these three heads entailed the rights that the citizen of a country were entitled to. Civil citizenship referred to liberty of individual choice and Political Citizenship referred to equal rights of the people to participate in the political process and T.H. Marshall believed that these two types of equality could be easily achieved. According to him, it was the third kind, social equality, which remained an elusive goal. So, what is it about social equality that makes it so difficult to achieve?

The Indian Constitution defines equality under Articles 14-18. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution defines Social Equality. It states that “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.” This definition was proved to be a narrow definition in the 2018 5-bench judgement of the Supreme

⁵ A Brief History of the LGBTQ Initialism, Queer History For the People (June 9, 2018), <https://medium.com/queer-history-for-the-people/a-brief-history-of-the-lgbtq-initialism-e89db1cf06e3>. Accessed on 22/05/2025

⁶ Mitchell Cohen, *T.H. Marshall’s “Citizenship and Social Class”*, Dissent Magazine <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/t-h-marshalls-citizenship-and-social-class/>.

Court in the case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India.⁷ In this case, five petitioners filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of Section 377 of the Indian penal Code, alleging direct violation of their fundamental rights. Section 377 was consequentially read down and in her concurring opinion, Justice Indu Malhotra mentioned and the same has been quoted below:

“The members of this community were compelled to live a life full of fear of reprisal and persecution. This was on account of the ignorance of the majority to recognise that homosexuality is a completely natural condition, part of a range of human sexuality. The mis-application of this provision **denied them the Fundamental Right to equality guaranteed by Article 14.** It infringed the Fundamental Right to non-discrimination under Article 15, and the Fundamental Right to live a life of dignity and privacy guaranteed by Article 21. The LGBT persons deserve to live a life unshackled from the shadow of being unapprehended felons.”

This case broadened the scope of Article 15 to include gender and sexual identity as a ground that people could not be discriminated against, alongside religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth. The LGBTQ community was also entitled to equal citizenship and protection under law because of this judgement.

This judgement provides sufficient proof that the LGBTQ community has been systemically discriminated against and therefore proves that the topic of the LGBTQ community is relevant to the concept of social equality. The International Lesbian and gay Association in a report published in May 2014, published an alarming report stating that,

“Almost 2.8 billion people are living in countries where identifying as gay could lead to imprisonment, corporal punishment or even death. In stark contrast, only 780 million people are living in countries where same-sex marriage or civil unions are a legal right.”⁸

⁷ Navtej Singh Johar v. UOI, INSC 790 (Supreme Ct. India 2018).

⁸ Kenneth Roth, *LGBT: Moving Towards Equality*, Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/23/lgbt-moving-towards-equality>. Accessed on 25/05/2025

Now that the knowledge about the LGBTQ community is quite apparent with respect to its relevance to social equality, it's time to move on to the role of religion in shaping attitudes towards the said community.

I

DOES RELIGION HAVE AN IMPACT ON HUMAN ATTITUDE?

It's now necessary to understand that there is a need to establish whether religion has any impact on people's attitude at all before delving into its impact on their attitude towards the LGBTQ community.

First of all it's imperative to understand here as to what "attitude" means. From the point of view of Psychology, and according to the definition provided by the Britannica Dictionary, an attitude is "a feeling or way of thinking that affects a person's behaviour." So, in proving that religion affects people's attitude, it will essentially be proved that religion affects the way one think and feel, consequentially affecting the way people behave.

The attitude that people hold is inculcated in their thinking process through interaction with direct and indirect attitude objects and are based majorly on their cognition, feelings, beliefs, and sometimes even behaviour. Religion can affect human attitude because it forms a major part of human belief system, especially in the case of religious individuals. These attitudes are held because they are helpful. They enable us to determine, quickly and effortlessly, the kind of behaviour to engage in. Even though this might seem a harmless trait at first glance, it can provide worrisome results. People, who are religious, are likely to not question their behaviour towards a particular section of the society because they believe that their religion has advised them to do so. This claim has been substantiated with empirical proof later on in this section.

To prove that religion affects human attitude, it will be worth focusing on the research conducted by the University of Manchester titled "Religious Faith and Contemporary Attitudes."⁹ This research is empirical with primary sources, conducted on four major points – bioethics, morality, political party choices and 'social trust'. This research is, therefore, helpful

⁹ Siobhan McAndrew, *Religious Faith and Contemporary Attitudes*, 26 British Social Attitudes (2010).

in establishing how religion impacts people's attitudes about multifarious topics. This study will, however, mainly deal with their second point of focus, that is, "proliferation of new and complex family forms over the last few decades (Duncan and Phillips, 2008) and people's attitudes towards personal relationships and family roles, focusing on issues such as sex outside marriage, homosexual rights, and gender roles within the family."¹⁰

In this research, the researchers have divided "religiosity" into three heads: the religious, the fuzzy faithful, and the unreligious. Under the religious head are the people who "believe in God, belong to a religious group and attend religious services at least sometimes." The fuzzy faithfuls are those who "exhibit some evidence of religious belief, affiliation or practice, either through belief in God, reporting a religious affiliation, or at least some attendance (but not all three)." Lastly, the unreligious are those who "neither believe in God nor belong to any religious group."

This religious typology was used by the researchers to examine how religiosity was linked to people's attitudes on key contemporary issues. The same questions were asked to all the three groups and they were given an option to answer on a scale that roughly varied from "I support this" to "I would never support this."

The questions regarding homosexuality are mostly based on moral grounds. Religious people usually do not support homosexuality because they consider it to be immoral. Christians, for instance, appeal to the Bible to establish that homosexuality is immoral.

"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination."

- Leviticus xviii, 22.

This study does not mean to hurt any religious sentiments but it will be relevant to cite philosopher Stephen Law's argument here: According to the Bible, eating beef or seafood, wearing a leather jacket and lending money for interest are also sins, but mostly people fail to condemn them while they continue to consider homosexuality to be an abomination. This argument, therefore, commits the fallacy of cherry-picking.

However, for now, this study is least concerned with whether the arguments of the religious people are right or not. This study will engage the readers with the research topic that has been

¹⁰ Siobhan McAndrew, *Religious Faith and Contemporary Attitudes*, 26 British Social Attitudes 3 (2010).

initially focused on. The researchers suggest that religious communities claim to provide moral guidance on relationships and family life, but they have much of a competition when it comes to influencing morality because it is also framed by the views of the family during formative years, individual judgement, peers and laws. In this research, the researchers sought to answer the following questions:

“How far do such norms vary with religiosity, or has a pragmatic secular norm supplanted traditional mores in order to accommodate these new relationship and household forms?”

“Are those who are more religious more conservative with regard to issues of personal morality, and more supportive of traditional gender roles and family forms?”

The researchers asked three questions related to morality but the third one is the most relevant to the point of discussion of this paper: do you think it is wrong or not wrong – sexual relations among two members of the same sex? This question was to be answered on the scale of “always wrong” to “not wrong at all.”

The result of the research analysis suggests that the religious are more likely to see homosexual sex as being wrong, even when controlled for age and other socio-demographic characteristics such as education. This also holds true for the fuzzy faithful, indicating that even attenuated religiosity has an impact on social attitudes. The unreligious are alternatively more likely to see homosexual activity as “not wrong at all.” This shows how religiosity is directly proportional to homophobia.

DOES RELIGION PROMOTE A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY?

In the previous section, it has been established that religion impacts people’s attitudes towards various things in life, including homosexuality. Is this impact negative, happens to be the next question.

Why are people so concerned about the rights of the LGBTQ community, to begin with? People in the society, usually only seek things that they do not have: “wants are unlimited” as Adam Smith had stated, holds true even outside of economics, but it’s better to understand that the desire for rights for the LGBTQ community is not a want, it is a need, and a pressing one at

that. According to a report published in 2017-2019, About 9% of all violent victimizations against LGBT people are hate crimes, compared to 4% of violent victimizations against non-LGBT people.¹¹ 29% of transgender youth have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, compared to 7% of cisgender youth and 52% of gay men in India without peer support suffer violence.¹² These are the numbers that have been published. It is essential that most of the people are aware of the fact that, in a lot of countries, comprehensive data on hate crimes and state-sponsored violence against LGBTQ people is “non-existent.”¹³ These alarming rates of violence compels one to ponder upon the root cause of such violence. What drives the incessant hatred of the perpetrators against the LGBTQ community? It was to answer this question that the research topic was taken up. One must not assume at this stage that it is being tried to put the blame of all of this violence on religion but the growing literature¹⁴ surrounding this issue suggests that “religious people report more prejudice against homosexuality when compared to non-religious people.” It has also been observed that “for each of the three great monotheistic faiths of the world—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—the stronger people adhere to them and the more strictly they are guided by the rules of conviction, the more prejudiced they are towards homosexuals.”¹⁵ Interestingly, the association between religiousness and negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ community has been empirically substantiated. Finlay and Walther (2003), for instance, conducted a study on the correlation between religious affiliation and negative attitudes towards homosexuals in the United States. Their research revealed that individuals belonging to Conservative Protestant denominations exhibited the highest levels of negativity towards homosexuals, followed by moderate Protestants and Catholics. Negative attitudes towards homosexuals were found within the Jewish community, with Orthodox Jews displaying more prejudice compared to Progressive Jews in the research conducted by Coyle and Rafalin in 2001 and was further substantiated by Schnoor’s research in 2003. In Europe, Hooghe et al. (2010b) noted negative reactions towards homosexuals among Muslims. Across Christianity, Protestantism, Judaism, and Islam, a

¹¹ Andrew R Flores et al., *Hate Crimes Against LGBT People: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017-2019*, PLOS ONE (2019).

¹² <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/52-of-gay-men-in-india-without-peer-support-suffer-violence-survey/story-HKOutVLK7YbIieafqsTrwL.html>. Accessed on 27/05/2025

¹³ Rachel Banning-Lover, *Where are the most difficult places in the world to be gay or transgender?*, The Guardian (Mar. 1, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/mar/01/where-are-the-most-difficult-places-in-the-world-to-be-gay-or-transgender-lgbt>. Accessed on 27/05/2025

¹⁴ Stulhofer & Rimac, *Determinants of Homonegativity in Europe*, The Journal of Sex Research (2005).

¹⁵ Hunsberger & Jackson, *Religion, Meaning, and Prejudice*, (2005).

consistent pattern emerged: the more devoutly religious individuals were, the more negative their attitudes towards homosexuality tended to be.¹⁶ These findings suggest that there exists a communal influence of religion which contributes to negative attitudes towards homosexuality. However, scholars remain divided on the exact nature and origins of this relationship, with various explanations being proposed.

Many scholars suggest that the traditional views on gender and family roles, which strongly condemn homosexuality, are embedded in the teachings of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. They argue that the negativity towards homosexuality expressed in religious doctrines influences individual attitudes. This means that deeply religious individuals may internalize their religion's disapproval of homosexuality, leading to more negative attitudes towards homosexuals. However, there are other factors at play as well. Fulton et al. (1999) observed that some fundamentalists exhibit an excessive antipathy towards homosexuality, beyond what is strictly required by their religious beliefs.¹⁷

ATTITUDES IMPOSED BY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS TOWARDS THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

- Christianity and the LGBTQ+ community:

Researchers have proved through their empirical research that religion has led to a promotion of negative attitudes against the LGBTQ community. However, what is still not clear is how it does so. Yes, religion forms a major part of our belief system and our belief system is primarily responsible for our attitude, but what exactly does religion inculcate into our belief system that fosters such negative attitude towards the said community?

To answer this question, there shall be an attempt to delve into the religious ideas propagated around the LGBTQ community. To begin with, it's time to examine the largest religion of the world – Christianity.

USA, where most people are Christians,¹⁸ was given a notice by the United Nations in December 2022, warning them that the rights of the LGBTQ people in some of its states were

¹⁶ Hunsberger & Jackson, *Religion, Meaning, and Prejudice*, (2005).

¹⁷ Liliith Roggemans et al., *Religion and Negative Attitudes Towards Homosexuals: An Analysis of Urban Young People and Their Attitudes Towards Homosexuality*, (2015).

¹⁸ *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center (May 12, 2015), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>. Accessed on 28/05/2025

being “eroded.”¹⁹ This notice compels us to think as to what may be the reason for such direct proportionality between the Christian population and the negative attitude towards the LGBTQ community might be.

Christians mostly rely on the Bible, their holy scripture, to seek ‘timeless’ guidance on how they should and should not act, even in their day-to-day lives. So, what is the Bible? Christians believe the Bible to be the “written word” of God. God had inspired “human writers” who wrote down His gospels for Him, which were open to interpretation. A religious scripture that is supposed to be a timeless guidance, for the people that follow it word-for-word, being open to interpretations can be problematic. Self-proclaimed religious ‘experts’ are more than likely to force their own interpretations onto the people who believe in the superficial superiority of such ‘experts’. This was also one of the main reasons for the Renaissance, so this claim is not completely unfounded.

The issue that arises when such self-proclaimed experts impose their opinions onto the people, is that the people adopt these religious beliefs and convert them into their attitudes. Attitudes are held by people because it helps in determining our behaviour in a particular situation, quickly and efficiently. Thus, in some senses, people do not question these interpretations and let them affect their behaviour.

So, how are these issues related with the issue at hand? Scholars believe that at the heart of the claim that the Bible clearly states that homosexuality is forbidden by God, is “poor Biblical scholarship” and “cultural bias” read into the Bible.²⁰

According to scholars, the six passages in the Bible that do talk about same-sex eroticism in the negative sense, never mention same-sex love and mutuality. The historical backdrop around the Biblical authors also suggests that the manner in which sexuality operated in those times was very different than the same-sex partnerships that we see today. The stories of Sodom and Gomorrah condemn sexual violence and not same-sex eroticism in every sense. Leviticus’ injunction that “man shall not lie with man” was only to continue family lineages and maintain the distinction of Israel as a nation. The New Testament mostly condemns the sexual

¹⁹ OHCHR, *United States: UN Expert Warns LGBT+ Rights Being Eroded, Urges Stronger Protections* (Aug. 2022), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/united-states-un-expert-warns-lgbt-rights-being-eroded-urges-stronger>. Accessed on 28/05/2025

²⁰ *What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?*, Human Rights Campaign <https://www.hrc.org/resources/what-does-the-bible-say-about-homosexuality>. Accessed on 23/05/2025

exploitation of young boys by older men (pederasty). Thus, we can see that the negative attitudes of the Christians towards the LGBTQ+ community, especially homosexuals, is not so much caused by their scripture itself than it is caused by the ‘false’ interpretations of self-proclaimed religious heads.

- Hinduism and the LGBTQ+ community:

Hinduism is the third-largest religion in the world and accounts for about 14% of the world’s population. Just like the Bible is a guiding book for the Christians, the Vedas are the authoritative guiding book for the Hindus. However, unlike the Christians, Hindus have multiple scriptures to refer to. There is, therefore, no central Hindu authority and this results in a variation in the attitudes towards the LGBTQ community. Hinduism does not provide a fundamental spiritual reason to reject or ostracize LGBTQ+ individuals, rather it states that all humans have inherent spiritual equality and therefore Hindus should not socially ostracize the LGBTQ community.²¹

The Vedas also roughly refer to a “third-sex.” The ancient Indian epic Mahabharata includes ‘*Sikhandi*’, a transgender character, and portrays the warrior *Arjuna* adopting a female persona, *Brihannala*, to teach fine arts. GALVA (Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association) also observes that in Vedic culture, individuals identifying as a third gender, known as hijras, were permitted to openly express their gender identity.

Several Hindu texts have also referred to homosexual experience as ‘natural’ and ‘joyful’. The ‘*Kama-Sutra*,’ a Hindu text detailing the ‘pleasures of sexuality,’ refers to same-sex experience as something “to be engaged in and enjoyed for its own sake as one of the arts.”²² There are also several carvings on Hindu temples that depict men and women engaging in homosexual activities. However, it is very difficult to arrive at a common ground on the view of ancient Hindus regarding the LGBTQ community. For instance, *Arthashastra* and *Manusmriti* openly condemn homosexual acts as sinful while the *Dharmashastra* recognizes the existence of homosexuality and does not condemn it on any

²¹ *Stances of Faiths on LGBTQ+ Issues: Hinduism*, Human Rights Campaign
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-hinduism>. Accessed on 20/05/2025

²² *Stances of Faiths on LGBTQ+ Issues: Hinduism*, Human Rights Campaign
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-hinduism>. Accessed on 20/05/2025

religious or moral ground. Meanwhile, *Mitra* and *Varuna* are two Hindu gods who are often portrayed as icons of intimacy and affection among males.

Thus, we can conclude that Hinduism itself is not completely opposed to the ideas of homosexuality. It was with the advent of the Britishers and their colonialist ideas that brought about the criminalization of homosexuality and the LGBTQ community. The Britishers officially led the discrimination against homosexuals in India by introducing Section 377 in the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which was read down by the Supreme Court of India in 2018. The *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* which is on its way to replace the Indian Penal Code does not criminalize homosexual activities.

II

In this part, attempts will be made to deal with the impact of the religion-framed attitudes against the LGBTQ community on social equality. Since, this topic has already been dealt in detail in the introduction part, hence here shifting this perspective to a little extent is desirable. The argument that a bunch of homophobic people often put forth is that instead of seeking to achieve social equality, one should focus on achieving social equity: equality among the equals. Equality focuses on providing all people with the same number of resources while equity acknowledges that the circumstances of each person is different and therefore allocates the exact resources needed to achieve an equal outcome. In arguing so, the perspective that they want to put forth is that people should not fight for equal rights for homosexuals and heterosexuals, but should instead fight for as much rights as the homosexuals deserve. However, this argument is flawed. In no way, are the heterosexuals and homosexuals different other than their sexual orientation and sexual orientation should not be a ground for discrimination.

If one goes back into history, one will find eminent personalities like Oscar Wilde being sent to prison and eventually passing away in exile solely because of their sexual orientation. Their merit held no value to the State that ordered such punishment. A heterosexual, on the other hand, would not have been punished for having romantic and/or sexual relationships with another heterosexual person. How does this amount to equality in a State that claims to be the pinnacle of equality, justice and good conscience?

There have been similar examples throughout history, including people like Leonardo Da Vinci, Emily Dickinson, and Virginia Woolf, whose career and merit outshined the critical comments on their personal and homosexual activities.

In conclusion, it would be quite relevant to state that the people of the LGBTQ community are as human as the heterosexual and cisgendered people and have existed for just as long as they have and thereby deserve equal rights and respect.

In this chapter, it would be reasonable to rely on Stephen Law's article "What's Wrong with Gay Sex?"²³ in order to debunk some of the most common arguments provided against homosexual activity. In this article, Stephen Law has provided arguments and counter-arguments in the form of a conversation between God (philosopher) and a God-fearing man, Jarvis. First argument has already been dealt with, in part I, in which Jarvis appeals to the Bible, so this debate will move forward with the rest of the arguments.

1) Homosexuality is Unnatural:

This argument is the most commonly held belief against homosexuality. Jarvis argues that most people do not engage in homosexuality, and therefore it is an aberration from the norm, rendering it unnatural. This is an argument ad populum and 'God' counters it gracefully, stating that there are many things that are unnatural to us that are not immoral, like red hair and cleanliness.

2) Homosexuality is Unhealthy:

Jarvis argues that homosexuality is unhealthy and leads to many diseases like HIV and AIDS. God counterargues by saying that there are many sexually transmitted diseases that spread among heterosexuals as well, but heterosexual activity is not condemned as immoral.

3) Homosexuality Corrupts the Young:

Jarvis argues that homosexuality is immoral because homosexual men prey on young boys, who would have not been exposed to the 'homosexual side of the world' otherwise. In arguing this, Jarvis assumes that people are 'made' out to be homosexuals and are not born that way to begin with. He also ignores the fact that preying on young

²³ Stephen Law, "What's Wrong With Gay Sex?", Philosophy Gym

children is not a phenomenon exclusive to homosexuals only. Several heterosexual men have also been accused of preying on and ‘grooming’ young women and girls.

4) Homosexuality and ‘Family Values’:

Jarvis argues that homosexuality erodes family values because if every person were to become exclusively homosexual, it would corrode the institution at the heart of the society, that is, the family. However, God argues, if everyone was to become a Catholic priest, it would also lead to the same situation, but that would not make homosexuality immoral.

CONCLUSION

The history of the LGBTQ+ community is well-documented throughout history, irrespective of how much homophobic or homonegative choose to turn a blind eye to it. India, especially, has a very rich documentation of LGBTQ+ history, evidence of which can be found on the monolithic sculptures of the Vishvanath Temple in Khajuraho and texts like Mahabharata and *Sushruta Samahita*. This provides all the essential proof that the LGBTQ+ community is not a result of “recent trends” or a Western influence. It has existed alongside heterosexual and cis-gender experience since centuries. Indian response to the LGBTQ+ community has been coloured by the ideas of its British colonizers and now that Indians are in the era of getting rid of colonialist impacts on the Indian society, it is about time that our communities should also get rid of such homophobic ideas as well.

Author bio

Narendra Narottam is an Assistant Professor in Political Science, National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India since 2012. He has over two decades of teaching and research experience in the fields of Political Science, Management and Law. He has completed his Graduation and Post-Graduation in Political Science from the University of Allahabad. He also completed his doctorate (Ph.D.) programme from Banaras Hindu University in the

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