

RELIGION AND HOMOSEXUALITY: INTERSECTIONS, CONFLICTS, AND EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Religion and sexuality have always played a vital role in shaping who we are, influencing our morals, societal values, and laws. Notably, the interplay between religion and homosexuality sparks essential conversations. Various faith traditions offer diverse interpretations of sacred texts and cultural contexts, leading to differing views on same-sex relationships. While some institutions may adhere to traditional beliefs, many others are embracing inclusivity and equality, fostering a more welcoming atmosphere. This journey towards understanding and acceptance showcases the evolving nature of faith in our contemporary world, highlighting a brighter future for all. India's rich tapestry of religious diversity adds depth to the conversation around homosexuality, making it both fascinating and nuanced. The interplay between Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism has intricately shaped cultural and moral views on sexuality. While ancient Indian traditions often embraced fluid understandings of gender and desire, the era of colonial rule, influenced by Victorian morals, significantly shifted societal attitudes. However, we are witnessing a positive change, especially after the landmark 2018 Supreme Court decision decriminalising consensual same-sex relations. This study aims to explore both the historical and contemporary religious perspectives on homosexuality in India, highlighting the dynamic influence of religion on law and society, as well as the ongoing journey of acceptance and the challenges faced in the post-colonial context. Let us delve into this critical dialogue together.

Keywords: Culture, Homosexuality, Religion, Sexuality, Society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality in India exists at the crossroads of diverse cultural traditions, religious norms, colonial laws, and contemporary human rights discussions. The Indian experience is unique, characterised by rich ancient traditions that acknowledge gender and sexual diversity, a long period influenced by Victorian-era laws and morals that shaped public life, and a more recent movement towards legal reform and ongoing social acceptance. The understanding of homosexuality has evolved since the late 20th century, moving from views of it as a sin, crime, or pathology to recognising it as a standard variant of human sexuality (Sadock VA, 2009). In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association and, later, the World Health Organisation in 1992 recognised homosexuality as a standard variant of human experience. This critical shift has led many countries to decriminalise same-sex behaviour and embrace marriage and civil unions for all. Research has shown that same-sex attractions are common across all cultures and even among many non-human primates.

The Psychological tests have found no clear distinction between heterosexual and homosexual orientations, emphasising the rich diversity of human relationships. This positive evolution reflects a growing understanding of love in all its forms. Research shows that individuals with a homosexual orientation exhibit no psychological dysfunction or impairments in judgment or stability. Today,

mental health professionals recognise homosexuality as a sexual variation of human sexuality, which is wonderfully complex. Embracing the differences among desire, behaviour, and identity highlights the rich, multidimensional nature of sexuality, promoting sexuality-inclusive and understanding society. This acceptance fosters optimism and unity among diverse communities (Rob and Jacob, 2012). Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of who we are, rooted deeply within everyone from the very beginning of life. It is important to understand that cultural norms or social ethics does not influence it. While modern India has made strides, particularly with the decriminalisation of homosexuality, there is still much work to be done to secure vital rights for sexual minorities. This presents us with an excellent opportunity to strive for a more inclusive society. Together, we can encourage our judiciary and lawmakers to prioritise these essential rights, creating a vibrant and welcoming community for everyone. Let us celebrate and embrace love in all its beautiful forms.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is an integrative literature review. Sources were selected across sociology, history, and human-rights scholarship to capture interdisciplinary perspectives. Priority was given to doctrinal studies addressing experiences of these community, theological analyses that engage primary texts, and historical accounts that document the colonial origins of many anti-sodomy laws. The review is selective rather than exhaustive; it synthesizes books, peer-reviewed articles, and influential reports to build a conceptual map of the field and identify gaps for future research.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the intersections of religion and homosexuality has expanded significantly over the past three decades, reflecting broader global debates concerning sexual diversity, religious authority, and human rights. Early scholarship tended to frame the relationship between religion and homosexuality as inherently oppositional, emphasizing doctrinal prohibitions, moral condemnation, and the regulation of sexual behaviour within religious traditions (Herek, 1995). However, more recent work has challenged this binary approach, revealing how interpretations of sexuality within religious communities are far more complex, historically contingent, and culturally diverse (Yip, 2005; Wilcox, 2012).

A substantial body of research has examined how Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and other world religions frame homosexuality within their scriptural and theological traditions. Classical interpretations from conservative Christian and Islamic scholars frequently rely on literalist readings of sacred texts to justify exclusionary positions (Gagnon, 2001; Al-Faruqi, 2016). However, progressive theologians have argued that these interpretations reflect historical contexts rather than immutable divine mandates (Kugle, 2010; Cheng, 2011). Scholars in Queer Theology contend that scriptural narratives have been selectively interpreted to uphold heteronormativity and patriarchal structures (Goss & West, 2020). This shift in interpretation has led to the emergence of inclusive religious movements advocating for the affirmation of LGBTQ identities within faith communities.

Contrary to earlier characterizations of religion as uniformly oppressive, more recent ethnographies highlight religion as a dynamic space where LGBTQ individuals negotiate belonging, identity, and spiritual agency. Studies of queer Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists show that many individuals reinterpret religious traditions in ways that affirm their identities (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). LGBTQ-affirming churches, queer Muslim groups, and inclusive interfaith networks have emerged as vital communities that reframe spirituality through the lenses of justice, compassion, and human dignity (Wilcox, 2012; Yip & Page, 2013). These findings complicate dominant narratives of conflict by revealing that queer believers actively reconstruct their relationship with faith.

A growing field of postcolonial research critiques the assumption that anti-LGBTQ sentiments originate from indigenous religions. Scholars show that colonial penal codes such as British Section 377 played a decisive role in criminalizing same-sex relations and shaping modern religious attitudes in South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean (Gupta, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2008). Massad (2007) argues that contemporary homophobia in many Muslim-majority countries is partially rooted in colonial attempts to control sexuality and morality. This scholarship reveals that many precolonial societies recognized

and accepted diverse sexual and gender expressions, challenging claims that homosexuality is foreign or untraditional.

Studies in psychology and sociology highlight how religious identity interacts with sexual identity, producing both risks and resilience. For some LGBTQAI+ believers, spirituality provides coping mechanisms, emotional support, and a sense of purpose (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2013). Others experience identity dissonance when navigating conflicting religious expectations and sexual orientation, which can lead to estrangement from families or religious communities (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000). Research also shows that religious communities with inclusive policies such as affirming churches can buffer against minority stress and enhance well-being among LGBTQ adherents (Lease et al., 2005; Pitt, 2010). These findings underline the importance of institutional support in fostering healthier outcomes.

Recent scholarship documents a global shift toward more inclusive theological stances, particularly within liberal Christian denominations, Reform Judaism, and parts of Buddhist and Hindu communities (Hunt & Yip, 2012). Religious leaders and theologians increasingly engage with human rights discourses, feminist theology, and queer theory to advocate for reinterpretation or revision of traditional doctrines (Cheng, 2011; Hendricks, 2019). However, backlash movements also exist, often tied to nationalist politics, conservative religious resurgence, and anxieties about cultural change (Rahman & Villar-Real, 2018). The literature therefore suggests an ongoing contestation between progressive and conservative forces within religious traditions worldwide.

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

4.1. Mythological and Pre-Colonial Religious Perspectives

India's mythological history offers a sexuality-informing exploration of homosexuality, rich with ancient texts, folklore, and vibrant cultural practices that celebrate diverse gender expressions and sexualities. In these stories, homosexuality and gender fluidity are viewed as integral aspects of the natural spectrum of human and divine experiences, reflecting an enduring acceptance and understanding that resonates through the ages. Such a legacy invites us to appreciate the beauty of diversity in all its forms. Indian society has a long-standing acceptance of homosexuality, beautifully reflected in ancient texts like the Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Rigveda. These stories showcase diverse sexual identities, with characters such as 'Shikhandi', 'Chitrangada', and 'Brihannala' being embraced just like their peers.

Furthermore, the *Arthashastra* presents numerous examples of gay individuals thriving in various professions. This rich historical context highlights a progressive understanding of love and identity that is both inspiring and hopeful for our society today (Pattnaik, 2014). Vedic history, rooted in ancient India, approaches the topic of homosexuality differently than later texts like the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*. However, the Vedic perspective is genuinely inclusive, offering indirect references and cultural practices that celebrate the richness of human sexuality and diverse identities. It is inspiring to note that before the 19th century, Indian religious narratives embraced this sexual diversity, showcasing a broader understanding that invites us to appreciate and honour all expressions of love and identity throughout history. Texts like the Kama Sutra openly discuss same-sex intimacy without moral condemnation (Vanitha and Kidwai, 2000). Some temple carvings, such as those found in Khajuraho and Konark, depict same-sex interactions. Early Buddhist Vinaya texts address sexual misconduct in a broad sense, without specifically targeting same-sex acts. Jain scriptures recognise and classify sexual activity, acknowledging 'third-gender' identities. Additionally, many tribal communities have historically recognised and integrated gender-nonconforming individuals, often assigning them to spiritual roles.

4.2. The Primitive and Colonial India

The arrival of Islamic rule introduced jurisprudence influenced by Sharia, which generally prohibited homosexual acts. However, the Mughal court culture contained instances of homoerotic poetry and art, particularly in Persian literature. Socially, Islamic moral codes promoted heterosexual marriage as the religious ideal, but private practices often diverged from official doctrine. Islamic theology, derived

from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical jurisprudence, generally prohibited same-sex sexual acts. References to the 'people of Lot' (Qawm-e-Lut) in the Qur'an were interpreted as divine condemnation of homosexual behaviour. While spiritual discourse centred on moral transgression, Sufi mysticism occasionally employed homoerotic imagery in poetry, though often as metaphor for divine love rather than literal advocacy of same-sex relations. The Delhi Sultanate (13th–16th centuries) and the Mughal Empire (16th–18th centuries) incorporated Islamic criminal law (Sharia) in varying degrees, where *liwat* (sodomy) was deemed a punishable offense. The severity of punishment varied across rulers and was influenced by Persianate court culture, which sometimes tolerated homoerotic courtly practices despite theological disapproval. Persian literature, art, and miniature paintings under the Mughals reveal a nuanced engagement with male beauty and same-sex attraction, especially in elite circles. However, these cultural expressions existed in tension with juristic prohibitions, creating a duality between private practice and public religious morality.

Introduced through colonialism and missionary activity, Christian morality, especially Victorian-era interpretations, reinforced heterosexual norms and condemned homosexuality. The British colonial administration codified these views in Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (1860), criminalising same-sex acts for over 150 years. Christianity, introduced primarily by Portuguese, French, and British colonial powers, brought with it a moral framework influenced by Biblical condemnations of homosexuality (notably in Leviticus and Pauline epistles). The Church's position, both Catholic and Protestant, regarded homosexual acts as 'against the order of nature' and inherently sinful. Christian missionaries in colonial India actively campaigned against what they perceived as 'immoral native customs', which included tolerance or depictions of same-sex intimacy in local art and literature. They viewed the eradication of such practices as part of their 'civilizing mission'. The most enduring impact came through Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (1861), enacted under British rule. Drawing from English common law (Buggery Act of 1533), it criminalized 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature', effectively importing Victorian moral conservatism into Indian legal culture. This marked a sharp departure from the more ambiguous medieval Islamic attitudes, replacing them with rigid criminalization.

4.3. Comparative Overview of Religious Perspectives

Table No. 1 - Comparative Overview of Religious Perspectives

Religion	Ancient / Pre-Colonial Perspective	Colonial Era Perspective	Modern India (Post-2018)
Hinduism	Depictions of same-sex intimacy in Kama Sutra, temple art (Khajuraho, Konark); myths of gender-fluid deities like <i>Ardhanarishvara</i> and Mohini; acceptance of third-gender identities.	Victorian morality reshaped religious discourse; many Hindu reformers adopted colonial attitudes condemning homosexuality.	No central authority; conservative groups oppose same-sex marriage; reformist scholars cite ancient acceptance; some urban temples and groups support LGBTQAI+ inclusion.

Islam	Mughal court poetry and art sometimes celebrated homoeroticism; Islamic law generally disapproved of homosexual acts.	British law (Section 377) reinforced legal prohibitions; Islamic scholars aligned with traditional prohibitions.	No central authority; conservative groups oppose same-sex marriage; reformist scholars cite ancient acceptance; some urban temples and groups support LGBTQ+ inclusion.
Christianity	Minimal presence before colonialism; early Syrian Christian communities did not have codified laws on homosexuality	Missionary influence + Victorian values strongly condemned homosexuality; supported Section 377.	Catholic Church in India opposes homosexual acts but urges compassion; some Protestant churches in urban India are beginning to affirm LGBTQ+ rights.
Sikhism	Scripture focuses on spiritual union with God, not sexual orientation; no explicit condemnation in Guru Granth Sahib.	British influence introduced rigid norms; colonial morality overshadowed Sikh egalitarian ethos.	Akal Takht opposes same-sex marriage; younger Sikh voices support for inclusivity in gurdwaras.
Buddhism	Early texts focused on avoiding sexual misconduct, not on gender of partners; gender diversity acknowledged.	Colonial laws overrode Buddhist ethical flexibility; societal attitudes mirrored dominant religious conservatism.	Modern Indian Buddhists often align with human rights principles; Dalit Buddhist leaders tend to support LGBTQAI+ rights as part of anti-caste and equality movements.
Jainism	Ancient Jain texts classified diverse sexual behaviours without strong moral condemnation; emphasis on non-harm (ahimsa).	Colonial morality influenced Jain social norms; public discussion on sexuality diminished.	Contemporary Jain leaders rarely speak on LGBTQAI+ issues; younger Jains in India push for acceptance using principles of compassion and non-violence.

4.4. Contemporary Religious Stances in India

In Hinduism, there is no central Hindu authority, so views vary. Conservative voices, often influenced by colonial morality, view homosexuality as contrary to dharma. Reformist Hindu scholars argue that ancient texts and mythology indicate a cultural acceptance of sexual diversity. Whereas, many Indian Islamic scholars maintain traditional prohibitions, citing Quranic verses and Hadiths. Progressive

Muslim voices in India advocate for a contextual reading of scripture, separating personal morality from legal rights.

The Catholic Church in India upholds the global position that homosexual acts are sinful, though orientation itself is not condemned. Some Protestant groups, especially in urban areas, adopt more inclusive stances, though this remains a minority position. Sikh scripture (Guru Granth Sahib) does not explicitly address homosexuality, focusing instead on spiritual union with God. The Akal Takht, the highest temporal authority in Sikhism, has historically opposed same-sex marriage, but younger Sikh voices in India and the diaspora push for inclusivity. Both Buddhism and Jainism traditions in India focus on ethics of non-harm and personal discipline rather than explicit condemnation of same-sex relationships, leaving interpretation to cultural norms.

People who see religion as less important in their daily lives are more accepting of homosexuality

% who say homosexuality *should* be accepted by society

	Religion is very important %	Religion is NOT very important %	Diff
Israel	22	62	+40
Czech Rep.	27	65	+38
South Korea	13	51	+38
Canada	60	93	+33
U.S.	57	86	+29
Slovakia	22	51	+29
Greece	34	62	+28
Turkey	19	45	+26
France	65	89	+24
Australia	61	85	+24
Poland	29	53	+24
UK	67	90	+23
Sweden	73	95	+22
Hungary	34	53	+19
Germany	73	91	+18
Italy	62	80	+18
Argentina	67	84	+17
Netherlands	79	95	+16
Spain	77	93	+16
Lithuania	18	31	+13
South Africa	52	63	+11
Brazil	66	76	+10
Bulgaria	24	34	+10
Lebanon	10	19	+9
Mexico	65	73	+8

Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Respondents who said religion was somewhat, not too or not at all important in their lives make up the "Religion is NOT very important" category.
Source: Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey, Q31.

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Figure No. 1 - World's view on interconnection between religion and homosexuality

5. LEGAL LANDMARKS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

• Naz Foundation - the First Opening

In 2009, *Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi and Others* (2009 (6) SCC 712), a petition as a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed before the High Court of Delhi to challenge the constitutional validity of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) by Naz Foundation, a non-governmental Organisation (NGO). Section 377 of the IPC penalised 'Unnatural Offences' to the extent that the provision criminalised consensual sexual acts between adults in private. The petition is based on its contention that Section 377 IPC, by encompassing sexual actions between consenting adults in private, is violative of fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 of the Constitution of India. Limiting their plea, the petitioners submit that Section 377 IPC

should apply only to non-consensual penile non-vaginal sex and penile non- vaginal sex involving minors. The Delhi High Court read down Section 377 insofar as it criminalised consensual sexual acts between adults in private, an important step for rights-based recognition and public discourse.

- **Suresh Kumar Koushal – the Backlash**

In *Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Naz Foundation* ((2013) 204 DLT 533), the Supreme Court overturned the Delhi High Court's reading, reinstating the criminal status of homosexual acts and concluding that reform should come from Parliament rather than the judiciary, an outcome that re-entrenched stigma. The Supreme Court criticised the High Court for excessively relying on decisions from other courts in its concern to uphold the 'so-called rights of LGBT persons' rather than carefully examining how Article 21 applied to the High Court's finding that Section 377 violated the right to privacy, autonomy, and dignity. Without providing any more details, it said in its conclusion that 'Section 377 does not suffer from the vice of unconstitutionality'. Further, dismissing the writ petition, the Apex court said Section 377 of the IPC is not unconstitutional.

- **NALSA judgment - Recognition of Third Gender**

In a separate but related strand of jurisprudence, the Supreme Court in *NALSA v. Union of India* ((2014) 5 SCC 438), recognised the rights of transgender persons and affirmed legal recognition for a 'third gender', directing measures for social and administrative inclusion. This judgment marked judicial acknowledgement of gender diversity even as debates on sexual orientation continued.

- **Navtej Singh Johar - Decriminalisation of homosexuality**

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (AIR 2018 SC(CRI)1169), decriminalised consensual same-sex acts among adults and reaffirmed constitutional guarantees of dignity, privacy, and equality for LGBTQ+ persons. The judgment was a legal turning point that removed the immediate criminal sanction and created space for rights mobilisation.

- **Marriage Equality Litigation and Aftermath**

From late 2022, multiple petitions sought legal recognition for same-sex marriages under the Special Marriage Act and the Constitution. In October 2023 the Supreme Court in *Supriyo Chakrabarty v Union of India* (W.P. (C) No.1011/2022), declined to legally recognise same-sex marriage, saying that creating or changing marriage law is primarily the legislature's domain while nonetheless urging legislative and administrative remedies to remove discrimination against queer couples. This left marriage recognition to Parliament and prompted debates about the pace and locus of reform.

6. POLICY-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK FOR COEXISTENCE IN INDIA

This framework proposes steps at three levels i.e., religious institutions, civil society, and government to bridge faith and LGBTQ+ rights without compelling theological compromise.

(i) Religious Institutions

Scriptural Reinterpretation Committees that lead to formation of panels of theologians, historians, and linguists to re-examine verses on sexuality in their historical-cultural context. Introducing inclusivity guidelines such as developing internal codes discouraging hate speech and encouraging respectful engagement with LGBTQAI+ members. Leadership training that includes *Pandits*, *Priests*, and *Grantis* in gender and sexuality awareness grounded in each faith's ethical principles. In addition, safe worship spaces by designating certain services or gatherings as explicitly inclusive, signalling welcome without altering doctrinal beliefs.

(ii) Civil Society and Interfaith Groups

Facilitating panels where religious leaders and LGBTQAI+ individuals share experiences, highlighting shared values of compassion and justice. Using culturally resonant storytelling i.e., mythology, Sufi poetry, Bhakti traditions to convey inclusion messages. Faith-based Support Networks for creating groups for LGBTQAI+ believers who wish to maintain religious practice without facing discrimination.

(iii) Government and Policy

Religious Literacy in Education by including modules in school curricula on diversity in Indian religious history, including depictions of same-sex love in art and literature. Introducing Fund joint projects between religious organisations and human rights groups aimed at reducing stigma. Non-

Discrimination Laws enforcement for the protections in education, employment, and housing while safeguarding religious freedom in worship practices. Public Awareness Campaigns to reach the corner of the nation via collaboration with Doordarshan, All India Reports, and social media influencers to highlight stories of coexistence.

7. EVOLUTION, ACCEPTANCE AND CHALLENGES

7.1. Evolution of Religious Attitudes

The relationship between religion and homosexuality has undergone significant transformation over the past century. Historically, many major religious traditions including Christianity, Islam, and Orthodox Judaism interpreted sacred texts as prohibiting same-sex relationships, shaping widespread social stigma and institutional exclusion (Boswell, 1980). These interpretations often emerged from patriarchal cultural contexts that framed heterosexual marriage as the normative foundation of moral and social life. From the late 20th century onward, several developments catalysed shifts in religious thinking. The rise of human rights discourse, feminist and queer theologies, and greater visibility of LGBTQAI+ individuals in religious communities prompted renewed debates around scriptural interpretation (Gushee, 2017). Progressive religious scholars began emphasizing socio-historical readings of sacred texts, arguing that ancient references to same-sex acts were context-specific and not reflective of modern consensual same-sex relationships (Kugle, 2010). Simultaneously, many indigenous and Eastern traditions such as Hinduism and certain Buddhist schools, revived historic understandings of gender diversity, embracing non-binary and same-sex expressions as part of longstanding spiritual cosmologies (Nanda, 2014).

7.2. Growing Acceptance within Faith Traditions

Acceptance of LGBTQAI+ individuals within faith communities varies widely but shows clear expansion in many regions. In Christianity, several denominations including the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, and some Lutheran and Methodist bodies, now affirm same-sex marriage and ordain LGBTQAI+ clergy (Goss & West, 2020). Jewish denominations such as Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism have fully integrated LGBTQAI+ inclusion into their theology and ritual practices, while even Conservative Judaism has adopted permissive positions since the early 2000s (Dessel et al., 2014). Within Islam, acceptance is emerging more slowly but meaningfully. Reformist scholars highlight Islamic principles of justice, compassion, and human dignity to argue for greater inclusion (Kugle, 2010). LGBTQAI+ Muslim communities and inclusive mosques such as the Unity Mosque in Canada and inclusive prayer groups in South Africa and the U.K., illustrate growing spaces for reconciling faith and sexual identity (Hendricks, 2019). Hindu and Buddhist communities in South Asia have also shown increasing public support for LGBTQAI+ rights, especially following legal reforms such as the decriminalization of homosexuality in India in 2018, which influenced broader cultural acceptance within religious communities (Srinivasan, 2020). Internationally, younger religious adherents exhibit more affirming views on LGBTQAI+ rights, reflecting generational changes influenced by globalization, education, and digital activism (Pew Research Center, 2020).

7.3. Persisting Challenges and Conflicts

Despite increasing acceptance, significant challenges remain across religious, social, and political domains. Many conservative religious institutions continue to uphold doctrines that identify same-sex relationships as sinful or unnatural, producing environments where LGBTQAI+ believers experience discrimination, forced celibacy, or exclusion from community life (Wilcox, 2009). Internalized stigma and spiritual conflict remain common among LGBTQAI+ individuals raised in restrictive religious traditions, often leading to psychological distress (Yip & Page, 2013). Religious resistance also strongly influences public policy debates. In many regions of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe, religious leaders play a central role in opposing LGBTQAI+ rights legislation including anti-discrimination protections and same-sex marriage, shaping national policies and public perceptions (Fulton et al., 2019). Conversion therapies, often justified through religious rhetoric, remain a global concern despite growing medical and legal condemnation. Doctrinal conflicts have also caused institutional fragmentation. For instance, the global Anglican Communion and the United Methodist Church have

experienced schisms over LGBTQAI+ inclusion, reflecting deep theological divides that challenge global religious unity (Jacobsen & Svensson, 2020).

Finally, LGBTQ individuals in religious minorities face compounded marginalization when cultural, ethnic, and caste identities intersect with sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly in South Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa. This intersectionality complicate supporters and highlights ongoing gaps in both religious reform and legal protection.

8. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The intersections between religion and homosexuality reveal a dynamic and often contentious landscape shaped by theology, cultural context, and evolving social norms. The findings across historical, doctrinal, and contemporary perspectives indicate that religious responses to homosexuality are neither monolithic nor static. Instead, they constitute a spectrum ranging from strict prohibition to full affirmation, with most believers and institutions situated somewhere in between. The evolution of religious attitudes reflects broader socio-political transformations. The emergence of human rights frameworks, queer theological scholarship, and increased visibility of LGBTQAI+ individuals within religious communities have challenged long-standing heteronormative assumptions embedded in religious traditions. While earlier interpretations emphasized notions of sin, order, and moral discipline, contemporary re-examinations foreground compassion, justice, and contextual understanding of sacred texts. This shift demonstrates that doctrinal changes are not merely theological debates but also responses to lived realities and shifting cultural landscapes. Despite these developments, acceptance remains uneven. In many Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim communities, inclusive interpretations coexist alongside deeply entrenched conservative positions. The fragmentation seen in global denominations such as the Methodist and Anglican schisms illustrates how sexuality has become a theological fault line exposing deeper conflicts over authority, scriptural literalism, and globalization. Additionally, the role of religious institutions in shaping public policy continues to significantly impact LGBTQAI+ rights, particularly in regions where religious identity is tightly woven into national identity and political power. The lived experiences of LGBTQAI+ believers further underscore the complexity of this intersection. Many navigate profound tensions between personal identity and communal belonging, often encountering spiritual trauma, familial rejection, or pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations. At the same time, religious spaces, when inclusive can serve as powerful sites of belonging, resilience, and ethical grounding. The emergence of affirming congregations, inclusive mosques, queer-led religious collectives, and online spiritual networks demonstrates the possibility of reconciling faith and sexuality, while challenging traditional gatekeepers of religious knowledge and authority. Looking ahead, the trajectory of religion and homosexuality suggests both promise and uncertainty. Generational trends reflect increasing acceptance among younger religious adherents, who often prioritize values of equality and personal authenticity over rigid doctrinal boundaries. Interfaith dialogues, contextual reinterpretations of sacred texts, and the global exchange of ideas through digital platforms further support the proliferation of inclusive perspectives. However, persistent challenges including religiously motivated political resistance, cultural conservatism, and the continued influence of fundamentalist interpretations pose significant barriers to full LGBTQAI+ inclusion. Overall, this study highlights that the relationship between religion and homosexuality is undergoing meaningful transformation, driven by a combination of scholarly reinterpretation, grassroots activism, and the lived agency of LGBTQAI+ individuals within faith traditions. While the path toward widespread acceptance remains uneven and contested, evolving global discourse and local reform movements indicate a shift toward more humane, justice-oriented understandings of sexuality within many religious contexts. Continued dialogue between religious ethics and human rights principles will be essential for fostering inclusive spiritual environments where LGBTQAI+ individuals can practice their faith without fear, exclusion, or compromise of identity.

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