

Editorial.....✍

Paraphilia: The tale of forbidden love

Since ancient times taboo is associated with sexuality and it is more intense with deviant sexual behaviours, which are currently known as paraphilic disorders. Paraphilia was considered as an immoral act, which impairs the social integrity and defames the social dignity; hence, it was perceived as a crime till recently. On the other hand, there were many popular beliefs (myths) about paraphilia in several societies, which depict the paraphilia as a helpful behaviour. Paraphilia has been considered as a mental illness, if not so, as a phenotype of severe mental illnesses since the past few decades. As a result of which perception and understanding of paraphilia still remain illusive. Paraphilia (Paraphilic disorders) are less discussed and less researched disorders in mental health.

History revealed about the changing dimensions of paraphilia. The acts that were considered as paraphilia once upon a time are now considered as normal variants of sexual behaviour. Centuries ago, masturbation was considered as an unhealthy sexual behaviour, more so a deviant sexual behaviour. However, in the current scenario, it is considered to be a normal variant of sexual behaviour. Similarly, homosexuality and oral sex (cunnilingus and fellatio) were also considered as sexual perversions (paraphilia), years back. They are also now considered as normal variations in sexuality. Incest, though not considered as normal sexual behaviour in many cultures, certain societies allow incestuous relationship by sanctioning consanguineous marriage. Incest has also lost its paraphilic tag. There is broadening of the dimension of normal sexuality as a result of which taboo about sexuality is gradually reducing and the dimension of paraphilia is shrinking.

In this digital world, people have started experiencing sexual gratification online with a virtual partner. Distorted sexual behaviour for gratification is also reported through the online platform. Paraphilia is getting a brand-new wrap in the digital world.

Media reports reveal that among the online viewers of pornography, a significant number of viewers watch paraphilic contents like - zoophilia, voyeurism, sadomasochism, paedophilia, etc. These people may have increased inclination towards paraphilia and they may possibly indulge

in paraphilic behaviour. The exact number of such people is not known, but as per the online viewing data, it seems to be a large number globally. So, it can be claimed with certainty that the prevalence of paraphilia and inclination towards paraphilia are not an unusual phenomenon. The cases of paraphilia reported at the forensic setups or psychiatric clinics are just the tip of the iceberg. Medical curriculum though includes paraphilia, the learning was seldom adopted by the medical professionals during clinical evaluation of patients. As clinicians rarely explore about paraphilia during clinical evaluation, only overt reporting by the patient or their caregivers brings paraphilia to the clinical front.

There is a need for extensive research to understand the different dimensions of paraphilic behaviour. It will help in the prevention of sexual crimes, management of paraphilic disorders as well as possible restoration of social harmony.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We sincerely acknowledge the contribution of the reviewers, who carried out the review of various submissions to the Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality and Culture (IJHSC). The reviewers who helped in conducting the review of IJHSC in the year 2019 were :

Dr. Pritha Roy (Ranchi)

Dr. Jai Singh (Patna)

Dr. Sameer Belvi Mangalwedhe (Hubli)

Dr. Bheemsain Tekkalaki (Belgaon)

Dr. Debadatta Mohapatra (Bhubaneswar)

Dr. Praveen Pandey (Lucknow)

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Dr. Erika Pahuja (Bengaluru)