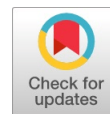


The Portrayal of LGBTQIA+ Community, in Different Religions in India; A Comparative Analysis of Hindu, Muslim & Christian Scriptures



Nifil Bashid, R. Rama Prabha

Abstract: *The controversy surrounding the recognition and embrace of the LGBTQIA+ community is not unique to India. Despite the legalization of homosexuality in 2018, discrimination and marginalization against LGBTQIA+ individuals persist in Indian society, especially within religious circles. Therefore, this research aims to examine the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Hindu, Islamic, and Christian religious texts, employing comparative analysis methods to identify patterns and differences in the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people in religious literature. Given the social and legal issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in India, it is essential to understand the root causes of prejudice and intolerance towards this group. Religious thoughts, expressions of faith and religious observances significantly influence societal perceptions of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Hence, this study involves a qualitative analysis of relevant religious texts, focusing on themes, metaphors, and attitudes towards non-heterosexual and homosexual identities. The research findings will provide insights into the convergence of religion and LGBTQIA+ identities in India, and may suggest ways to promote inclusion and tolerance towards this community.*

Keywords: Gender, LGBTQIA+, Non- heterosexual, Queer Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of religion on attitudes towards gender and sexuality remains significant, despite growing acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in recent times. This study aims to compare representations of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the scriptures of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity to explore how religious texts and interpretations affect societal views. The study examines the historical and cultural context of these texts and commentary to shed light on how religion influences attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people, highlighting similarities and differences among each tradition. There is a growing movement within Hinduism that advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights and challenges traditional gender roles.

The Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic writings offer nuanced portrayals of LGBTQIA+ people, with different interpretations among different schools of thought and regions. The Bible and other Christian scriptures have also been subject to varying interpretations by scholars. This research aims to explore how these interpretations influence the perception of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Indian society. By examining religious texts and their interpretations, the study seeks to raise awareness of the relationship between religion, culture, and LGBTQIA+ rights in India, promoting greater recognition and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

II. HINDU, MUSLIM & CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity all have varied perspectives on gender and sexuality, and the representation of the LGBTQIA+ community in these religions has evolved. In Hinduism, the Kama Sutra is an essential text that recognizes multiple sexual orientations and provides guidelines for same-sex relationships. In contrast, other traditional texts prohibit such relationships and impose harsh punishments. Hinduism acknowledges transgender individuals in various ways, but there has also been a history of prejudice and violence against the LGBTQIA+ community. However, there is a growing movement within Hinduism that advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights and challenges traditional gender roles.

Islam has a complex and contradictory perspective on gender and sexuality. While it acknowledges various sexual orientations and gender identities, traditional interpretations of Islamic scriptures often reject same-sex relationships and inconsistent gender identities. However, other interpretations provide a more inclusive view of gender identity and sexual orientation, and some contemporary Islamic thinkers have taken a more progressive approach to these issues. Despite this, the LGBTQIA+ community still faces significant levels of violence and discrimination in Muslim-majority countries, but there is a growing movement within the Muslim community advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights.

In Christianity, while different sexual orientations and gender identities are recognized, same-sex behaviour and inconsistent gender identities are often condemned by the Church. The Bible and other Christian texts are frequently used to justify prejudice against LGBTQIA+ people, resulting in high levels of discrimination, bigotry, and violence against them.

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However, some Christian theologians argue for a more inclusive and tolerant interpretation of gender identities and sexual orientations, and some Christian churches have started ordaining LGBTQIA+ people to the priesthood and accepting same-sex unions. Nonetheless, not all Christian communities accept these interpretations, and the issue remains a topic of debate among Christian scholars.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The representation of queer identity and its relationship with religion in India is explored in several literary works. Ahmed, M. & Ali, F. focus on gender diversity and Islam in their article “Gender Diversity and Islam: A Study of Contemporary Perspectives in India” (2020) [1]. They examine contemporary perspectives within Islam in India regarding gender diversity and explore how these perspectives shape the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals within the Muslim community. Ali, Z. & Hassan, R. critically analyzed Islamic perspectives on transgender identity in their article “Islamic Perspectives on Transgender Identity: A Critical Analysis” (2019) [2]. They addressed the challenges and debates surrounding transgender identity within Islamic contexts, offering a nuanced analysis of the religious perspectives on this topic.

In the article “The Representation of Homosexuality in the Bible: A Comparative Analysis” (2019) [3] Anderson, J. & Lewis, M. conducted a comparative analysis of biblical passages to explore the representation of homosexuality within Christian scriptures. They revealed a range of perspectives and highlighted the evolving interpretations of these texts. Bhattacharya, R. & Dasgupta, S. conduct a comparative analysis of religious discourses and LGBTQIA+ rights in India in their article “Religious Discourses and LGBTQIA+ Rights in India: A Comparative Analysis” (2018) [4]. Their research examines how different religious perspectives and discourses shape the discourse and attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ rights in the country. In “Queerness and Christianity: Revisiting the Scriptures” (2018) [5], Carter, M. & Thompson, E. explored the scriptures to examine the relationship between queerness and Christianity. They analysed biblical passages and theological interpretations, highlighting the ongoing discussions and reinterpretations of Christian scriptures within the context of queer studies.

Gupta, S. & Choudhary, A. examined the role of gender and sexual diversity in Hindu mythology in their article “The Role of Gender and Sexual Diversity in Hindu Mythology” (2020) [6]. Through their analysis of various mythological narratives, they revealed instances of non-binary gender identities and the acceptance of diverse sexual orientations within Hindu texts. Joshi, A. & Patel, S. investigate the socio-cultural factors affecting LGBTQIA+ rights in Hindu society in their article “Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting LGBTQIA+ Rights in Hindu Society” (2020) [7]. Their study sheds light on the specific challenges and dynamics within Hindu society that impact the rights and acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community. Similarly, Khan, A. & Ahmed, S. provided a contemporary review in their article “Understanding Homosexuality in Islamic Scriptures: A Contemporary Review” (2017) [8]. They highlighted the complexity and diversity of Islamic views on same-sex relationships,

emphasizing the need for contextual interpretation and understanding. Khan, S., Ahmad, F. delve into the negotiation of queer Muslim identities in India in their article “Negotiating Queer Muslim Identities in India” (2020) [9]. Their research examines the experiences, identities, and challenges faced by queer individuals within the Muslim community in India, shedding light on the complex dynamics of identity formation and negotiation. Mehta, R. & Deshmukh, S. conduct a contemporary analysis of queer perspectives in Hindu scriptures in their article “Queer Perspectives in Hindu Scriptures: A Contemporary Analysis” (2018) [10]. They explore how Hindu scriptures can be interpreted to provide affirming perspectives on gender and sexual diversity. Menon, R. & Kapoor, A. focus on LGBTQIA+ activism within Hindu communities in their article “Challenging Heteronormativity: LGBTQIA+ Activism within Hindu Communities” (2022) [11]. They examine the activism efforts within Hindu communities, highlighting how individuals challenge and seek to transform hetero-normative beliefs and practices. Patel, R. & Desai, S. present a qualitative study on transgender lives and social inclusion in India in their article “Transgender Lives and Social Inclusion in India: A Qualitative Study” (2017) [12]. Through interviews and narratives, they examine the experiences and challenges faced by transgender individuals in Indian society, as well as the extent of social inclusion in this context. Rahman, F. & Ahmed, N. explore the intersection of queer identity and Islam in contemporary India in their article “The Intersection of Queer Identity and Islam in Contemporary India” (2021) [13]. They analyze the experiences and struggles faced by queer individuals within the Muslim community, highlighting the complex interplay between religious and queer identities.

In their article “The Construction of Queer Identity in Indian Religious Literature” (2017) [14], Sen, S. & Chatterjee, M. explore the construction of queer identity in Indian religious literature. They analyze various texts to understand how queer identities are represented, negotiated, and constructed within the context of Indian religious literature. Sharma, A. & Singhania, N. investigate the role of LGBTQIA+ supportive organizations in Hindu, Muslim, and Christian contexts in their article “Exploring the Role of LGBTQIA+ Supportive Organizations in Hindu, Muslim, and Christian Contexts” (2019) [15]. They examine how these organizations contribute to the support and inclusivity of LGBTQIA+ individuals within religious communities. In their article “Perceptions of Homosexuality in Hindu Religious Texts: A Comparative Study” (2018) [16], Sharma, R. & Singh, P. conducted a comparative analysis of Hindu religious texts. Their findings revealed varying interpretations and attitudes towards homosexuality within Hindu scriptures, with some texts displaying acceptance while others expressed reservations or condemnations of same-sex relationships. Singh, A., & Kapoor, R. undertake a comparative study of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian LGBTQIA+ individuals in India, investigating the relationship between religion, sexual orientation, and mental health in their article “Religion, Sexual Orientation, and Mental Health: A Comparative Study of Hindu, Muslim, and

Christian LGBTQIA+ Individuals in India” (2021) [17]. They explore the mental health experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals across different religious contexts. Thomas, M. & Mathew, S. examine the relationship between Christianity, sexual diversity, and social change in India in their article “Christianity, Sexual Diversity, and Social Change in India” (2021) [18]. They explore how Christianity interacts with issues of sexual diversity and its influence on social change within the Indian context. Verma, P. & Sharma, D. delve into the exploration of interfaith dialogue and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in India in their article “Exploring Interfaith Dialogue and LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity in India” (2022) [19]. They examine the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting inclusivity and understanding of LGBTQIA+ individuals across different religious traditions.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study has the following questions:

1. What are the factors that influence the varying attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community in different religious communities, and how do they impact the level of acceptance and discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals? (**CASE 1**)
2. What is the impact of Westernization and globalization on attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community among different religious communities in India, and how do traditional and conservative religious communities differ in their responses to these changes? (**CASE 2**)
3. What is the impact of media representation on attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community in mainstream Indian culture, and how can positive and accurate representation in media facilitate greater acceptance and understanding of the community? (**CASE 3**)
4. What is the impact of religious rejection and stigmatization on the mental well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals, and how does it contribute to their lack of access to resources and safe spaces for seeking help and support? (**CASE 4**)

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The purpose of this study is to compare the depiction of LGBTQIA+ people in Hindu, Muslim, and Christian scriptures in India. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach consisting of a quantitative survey and qualitative document analysis will be employed. This research design is well-suited for collecting textual information, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how these religions perceive and represent the LGBTQIA+ community. While there have been certain encouraging developments, including acceptance by certain religious groups and the ordination of LGBTQIA+ individuals as clergy, there is still much work to be done in promoting full inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals within religious communities in India.

B. Variables and Measurements

For this study, the central variable of interest is the representation of LGBTQIA+ community in the holy scriptures of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity in India. The assessment of this variable will be based on the language employed to describe the LGBTQIA+ community, their

societal roles, and any ethical or moral evaluations of them. The following sub-variables will be analyzed:

- **Language:** The examination of the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people in Hindu, Muslim, and Christian scriptures in India will focus on the language used to describe them. The use of pronouns, adjectives, and nouns will be analysed to determine whether the language is inclusive, neutral, or derogatory towards the LGBTQIA+ community.
- **Role:** The portrayal of LGBTQIA+ individuals in scripture, particularly about their societal roles, will be evaluated. This encompasses their depiction as leaders, followers, marginalized, or excluded from society.
- **Moral Judgments:** The study will also examine the moral judgments that the scriptures make about LGBTQIA+ individuals, including whether they are depicted as sinful or morally depraved, or simply as individuals having diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

The variables will be measured using a qualitative analysis of the scriptures. The scriptures will be studied and analyzed in detail, with instances of the variables being noted. The data obtained through the qualitative analysis will be analyzed using content analysis techniques to study the frequency and patterns of the variables in the scriptures. Furthermore, the study will investigate the variations in the variables between different religions and their scriptures.

C. Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

For this research, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling was utilized as the sampling strategy. Purposive sampling method was applied to identify participants who belonged to the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities in India and possessed knowledge of their respective religious scriptures. Subsequently, snowball sampling was implemented to identify additional participants through referrals from the initial participants. The sample size for the study was set at 100 participants. This sample size was deemed appropriate, as it was sufficiently large to encompass a broad range of perspectives from each religious community while remaining small enough to facilitate a thorough analysis of the data.

To be eligible for participation in this study, individuals must meet any of the following criteria:

- Self-identification as a member of the Hindu, Muslim, or Christian community in India.
- Possession of knowledge regarding their respective religious scriptures.
- Self-identification as LGBTQIA+ or having knowledge and experience working with the LGBTQIA+ community in India.

As part of the participant selection process, some individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community, within the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religions in India, were contacted. These contacts were requested to refer individuals who met the study criteria. Upon identifying potential participants, they were contacted and provided with details about the study.

D. Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This study employed online surveys and interviews to collect data. The survey was distributed through a Google Form. It included closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather information on participants' religious affiliation, knowledge of religious scriptures, and attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. The survey was shared with potential participants through LGBTQIA+ groups, as well as on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Participants who completed the survey and expressed interest were then selected for the interviews. A subset of 10 participants from different religious communities was then interviewed to obtain more detailed information on their experiences and perspectives. The interviews were conducted both online and offline.

E. Data Analysis Techniques

To analyse the data, a thematic analysis was conducted based on the responses obtained from both the online surveys and the interviews. This process identified recurring themes and patterns within the data, allowing us to gain insights into the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people in various religious scriptures. Moreover, a content analysis approach was employed to examine the data collected through document analysis. Through this approach, the study identified key themes and patterns within the scriptures related to the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people. It examined their attitudes and beliefs within each religious community. Overall, the data analysis techniques utilized in this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ individuals in various religious scriptures and the attitudes of different religious communities towards them.

Table I: Survey Data

Q. No.	Questions	Responses	(%)
1	What is your age group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 18 - 25 ■ 26 - 35 ■ 36 - 45 ■ 46 and above 	74.4 % 25.6 % - % - %
2	What is your gender identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Male ■ Female ■ Non-binary ■ Prefer not to disclose 	65.1 % 30.2 % 2.3 % 2.3 %
3	What is your sexual orientation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heterosexual ■ Homosexual ■ Bisexual ■ Pansexual ■ Asexual ■ Prefer not to disclose ■ Demisexual ■ Queer 	18.6 % 34.9 % 18.6 % 4.7 % 2.3 % 11.6 % 2.3 % 2.3 %
4	What is your education qualification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secondary school ■ Higher secondary ■ Bachelor's degree ■ Master's degree ■ Doctorate ■ Diploma 	- % 23.3 % 55.8 % 18.6 % - % 2.3 %
5	What is your occupation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student ■ Employed, part-time ■ Employed, full-time ■ Unemployed ■ Self employed 	67.4 % 9.3 % 20.9 % 2.3 % - %
6	What is your religious affiliation, if any?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hindu ■ Muslim ■ Christian ■ None 	39.5 % 37.2 % 9.3 % 14 %
7	Do you believe that your religion is accepting of LGBTQIA+ individuals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Yes ■ No 	76.7 % 23.3 %
8	How supportive do you feel your religious community is of LGBTQIA+ individuals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very supportive ■ Somewhat supportive ■ Not very supportive ■ Not at all supportive 	23.3 % 14 % 46.5 % 37.2 %
9	How do you think your religion can better address issues faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase education and awareness ■ Encourage dialogue and discussion ■ Promote acceptance and equality ■ Others 	32.6 % 16.3 % 46.5 % 4.6 %
10	Do you think that having a sexual orientation other than "heterosexual or cis-gender" is a sin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Yes ■ No 	90.7 % 9.3 %
11	How do you perceive the LGBTQIA+ community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Positive ■ Negative ■ Neutral 	67.4 % 2.3 % 30.2 %

12	How would you rate your level of knowledge about LGBTQIA+ community issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very knowledgeable Somewhat knowledgeable Neutral Somewhat uninformed Very uninformed 	27.9 % 41.9 % 23.3 % 4.7 % 2.3 %
13	Do you think religion plays a role in shaping attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No 	79.1 % 20.9 %
14	If yes, in your opinion, does religion shape what kind of attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Negative Neutral 	2.3 % 79.1 % 18.6 %
15	Do you personally know someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No 	90.7 % 9.3 %
16	If one of your close friends revealed to you that they were lesbian / gay / bisexual / transgender, etc., how would you respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive Neutral Disapproving Don't know 	93 % 4.7 % - % 2.3 %
17	Do you believe that members of the LGBTQIA+ community should have the same rights and protections as other individuals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No 	95.3 % 4.7 %
18	In your opinion, which of the following is the most critical factor in determining one's sexual orientation or gender identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genetics Environmental factors Personal choice Others 	14 % 4.7 % 62.8 % 18.5 %
19	How comfortable are you interacting with an LGBTQIA+ person?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very comfortable Somewhat comfortable Neutral Somewhat uncomfortable Very uncomfortable 	79.1 % 11.6 % 9.3 % - % - %
20	How comfortable are you discussing LGBTQIA+ issues with others, including friends and family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very comfortable Somewhat comfortable Neutral Somewhat uncomfortable Very uncomfortable 	39.5 % 30.2 % 25.6 % 4.7 % - %
21	Have you ever personally experienced discrimination or prejudice based on your sexual orientation or gender identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No 	60.5 % 39.5 %

VI. RESULTS & FINDINGS

- **CASE 1:** According to research, several factors influence varying attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community in different religious communities. These factors include cultural norms, socialization, religious teachings, and the interpretation of religious texts. For instance, some religious communities may view homosexuality as a sin or an abomination, based on their interpretation of religious texts such as the Bible or the Quran. Leviticus 18:22 in the Bible states, "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable." This interpretation leads to the rejection and discrimination of LGBTQIA+ individuals in some religious communities. However, other religious communities may interpret religious texts differently and advocate for inclusivity and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals. For example, some progressive Christian denominations interpret Jesus' teachings on love and acceptance as extending to LGBTQIA+ individuals. Galatians 3:28 in the Bible states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The level of acceptance and discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals vary depending on the attitudes of the religious community they belong to. In some cases, LGBTQIA+ individuals face discrimination, exclusion, and even violence. However, in more accepting religious communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals are welcomed and treated with respect and dignity.
- **CASE 2:** According to the research, Westernization and globalization have had varying impacts on attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals across different religious

communities in India. While urban, educated, and liberal segments of society are more accepting of LGBTQIA+ people, traditional and conservative religious communities have resisted such changes. In Hinduism, there is a long history of same-sex relationships and gender non-conforming individuals, as evidenced in ancient texts such as the Kama Sutra. However, modern Hindu society has been influenced by Western ideas of gender and sexuality, leading to a shift towards more conservative attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. This is evident in the opposition of some Hindu leaders to the decriminalization of homosexuality in India in 2018. In Islam, attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community are generally negative, as homosexuality is considered a sin. This is based on interpretations of the Quran and Hadith, which prohibit same-sex relationships. However, some Muslim individuals and organizations advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance, citing principles of compassion and justice. Christianity in India is diverse, with different denominations holding varying views on LGBTQIA+ individuals. While some Christian organizations and leaders support LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance, Others adhere to more conservative interpretations of the Bible that view homosexuality as a sin. For example, the Catholic Church in India has opposed decriminalization of homosexuality, citing the biblical view of marriage as between one man and one woman.

- **CASE 3:** According to the research, media representation has a significant impact on attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community in mainstream Indian culture.

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The media is a powerful tool in shaping public opinion, and positive and accurate representation in the media can facilitate greater acceptance and understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community. Unfortunately, media representation of the LGBTQIA+ community in India has often been negative or non-existent, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and contributing to their marginalization. For example, LGBTQIA+ characters in Bollywood films are usually depicted as flamboyant or effeminate, reinforcing gender binaries and perpetuating dangerous stereotypes. News coverage of LGBTQIA+ issues often focus on negative stories such as violence or discrimination, rather than positive representation or advocacy efforts. However, there have been some positive examples of media representation that have had a significant impact on public attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community. For example, the popular TV show *Satyamev Jayate* aired an episode on LGBTQIA+ issues, featuring interviews with LGBTQIA+ individuals and advocates that helped raise awareness and promote a greater understanding of the community. Similarly, the film *Aligarh*, based on the real-life story of a gay professor who faced discrimination and persecution, helped to humanize LGBTQIA+ individuals and raise awareness of their struggles. Positive and accurate media representation of the LGBTQIA+ community can help to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote greater acceptance and understanding. By portraying LGBTQIA+ individuals in a positive and nuanced manner, the media can help break down barriers and foster greater social inclusion. Media can also be used as a tool for advocacy, raising awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues and encouraging greater support for the community. However, recent web series, such as “Made in Heaven” and “Four More Shots Please”, have shown positive representations of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

- **CASE 4:** According to the research, religious rejection and stigmatization have a significant impact on the mental well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals in India. The social stigma associated with being LGBTQIA+ is amplified in spiritual communities, where the idea of homosexuality is often condemned and considered a sin. For example, the Bible states that homosexuality is a sin and an abomination (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13), and Islamic texts consider it haram or forbidden. Hinduism, on the other hand, has varied perspectives on the subject, with some scriptures acknowledging the existence of transgender and intersex individuals. This rejection and stigmatization can lead to internalized shame, guilt, and fear, and can result in a lack of self-esteem, depression, and anxiety among the LGBTQIA+ individuals. This, in turn, can lead to a lack of access to resources and safe spaces for seeking help and support. The 2013 Supreme Court decision to criminalize homosexuality in India has only exacerbated the situation, leading to increased discrimination and harassment towards the LGBTQIA+ community. Religious leaders and LGBTQIA+ activists are making efforts to create safe and inclusive spaces within religious communities. For example, some Christian churches have started openly accepting and welcoming LGBTQIA+ individuals, while some Islamic leaders have advocated for a more compassionate and understanding approach towards the community. It is essential to recognize that religion and

LGBTQIA+ identity are not mutually exclusive, and positive dialogue and understanding can go a long way in addressing the mental health issues faced by the community.

VII. ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Discrimination and marginalization pose significant challenges for the LGBTQIA+ community in India, particularly within religious communities where traditional gender roles and patriarchal attitudes shape negative perceptions towards non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientations. Media representation plays a vital role in shaping attitudes towards this community, and the lack of positive and accurate representation in mainstream media contributes to negative perceptions of the community in some religious communities. Unfortunately, Bollywood movies often depict gay characters as effeminate or villainous, perpetuating harmful stereotypes. However, particular Indian web series have recently portrayed the community in a positive light, challenging these stereotypes and promoting greater acceptance and understanding. Religious stigma and rejection of LGBTQIA+ individuals have severely affected their mental health, causing significant mental stress and trauma due to social and familial pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations. Moreover, the lack of support and affirmation from religious communities often leads to feelings of isolation and despair. While some religious leaders and organizations have made efforts towards greater acceptance, religious reform remains a slow and challenging process due to the deeply ingrained resistance to change within many religious communities. Legal decisions also have a significant impact on the community, as seen in the Supreme Court's decision to criminalize homosexuality in 2013, based on patriarchal and heteronormative understanding of sexuality, leading to further oppression and marginalization. However, the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 was a significant step towards creating greater acceptance and recognition of the community and their rights. This research highlights the ongoing challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in India, especially within religious communities. Positive representation in the media, along with the efforts of confident religious leaders and allied organisations, can contribute to greater understanding and acceptance. Legal decisions also play a crucial role in recognizing and protecting the community's rights. Therefore, society must work towards greater acceptance and inclusivity for the LGBTQIA+ community in India.

VIII. DISCUSSION

As per the study's findings, the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people in different religions in India varies significantly. The study revealed that while religious texts or scriptures of Hinduism are more accepting of LGBTQIA+ individuals, Muslim and Christian scriptures were less accepting.

The study also emphasized the negative as well as positive experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities from different religious backgrounds in India and the role played by the intersection of gender minorities and religion in shaping such experiences. These findings have



significant implications for the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people in religion in India. They indicate the need for greater acceptance and understanding of LGBTQIA+ individuals in religious communities, especially where there is a history of discrimination and marginalization. The findings highlight the need for religious institutions to advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The findings suggest the need for national policy changes that protect LGBTQIA+ individuals from discrimination and violence. Cultural and social factors play a crucial role in shaping the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ individuals in religion in India. Religious texts and traditions are often deeply ingrained in artistic practices and beliefs, making it challenging for religious communities to accept or adapt to changes in social norms and attitudes. Additionally, social norms and values, including gender roles and expectations, can also contribute to the stigmatization of LGBTQIA+ individuals in religious communities. For instance, in some conservative Hindu communities, there is a belief that same-sex attraction is a result of bad karma or moral weakness. Similarly, in some Muslim communities, homosexuality is considered a sin and a violation of religious law. These beliefs are often reinforced by social norms that value conformity and traditional gender roles. Overall, the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ individuals in religion in India is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and religious factors. Addressing these factors will require a wholehearted approach involving greater education and understanding of LGBTQIA+ individuals, advocacy for policy changes, and a shift in cultural attitudes towards gender and sexuality.

IX. CONCLUSION

The research on “The Portrayal of LGBTQIA+ community, in different religions in India; a comparative analysis of Hindu, Muslim & Christian scriptures” concluded that there are significant variations in attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people among these religions. While the Hindu scriptures were found to be more open to LGBTQIA+ people than the Muslim or Christian scriptures, there were also differences within each religion. Some texts were more accepting, while others were more limiting towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. The research also emphasized the unique experiences of LGBTQIA+ people from diverse religious backgrounds in India, and how their gender identity intersects with religion to shape their experiences. For example, LGBTQIA+ people from Muslim communities encountered different types of discrimination than those from Hindu or Christian communities. The findings highlight the need for greater acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals in religious groups and the whole society. The research also examined contemporary attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals in India and found that full acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals is still to be achieved. Even though homosexuality was decriminalized in India in 2018, there is still widespread discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals, including by family members, religious leaders, and the police. The study had many implications for policy and practice. Religious institutions must take a more proactive role in advocating for the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially by

challenging restrictive interpretations of religious texts. At the national level, policy changes are required to ensure that LGBTQIA+ individuals are protected from discrimination and violence, including anti-discrimination laws and policies that promote the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals in schools and the workplace.

FURTHER STUDY

To advance knowledge in this field, future study should delve deeper into the intersectionality of gender identity and religion, with a specific focus on understanding the experiences of marginalized LGBTQIA+ individuals belonging to communities such as Dalits and Adivasis. Additionally, there is a need for more research on the effects of positive media portrayals of LGBTQIA+ people in India and on the contribution of allies and advocates in fostering acceptance and equality for LGBTQIA+ individuals in religious settings. Given the conclusions of this study, there are a variety of promising directions for further research in this domain as follows:

- Further comparative studies are needed to enhance our understanding of the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people across various religious traditions in India. These studies should focus on religions that have received less attention in previous research. Conducting such studies can provide a more comprehensive view of the attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals across diverse religious practices in India.
- Further study is required to investigate the intersectionality of different castes, classes, and regional identities with gender identity and sexuality among LGBTQIA+ people in India. Such research can provide insight into how these complex identities and social structures interact to shape the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals, and can guide policy interventions aimed at addressing discrimination and promoting inclusion.
- Further studies can investigate the effects of recent legal and policy changes, including the decriminalization of homosexuality in India and policies that safeguard LGBTQIA+ people from prejudice, on perceptions towards LGBTQIA+ individuals in diverse religions. Such research can offer insight into the efficacy of these measures and inform forthcoming policy decisions.
- Further research is needed to research the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals who have been marginalized and excluded from mainstream society, such as hijras and other gender non-conforming individuals. Understanding their unique challenges can help inform policies and interventions that address their specific needs and requirements.

GLOSSARY

- **LGBTQIA+:** An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual, which refers to a diverse group of people who do not conform to traditional norms of gender and sexuality.
- **Gender:** The social, cultural, and psychological



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characteristics associated with being male or female.

- **Sexuality:** The complex range of human sexual desires, behaviors, and orientations.
- **Religion:** A set of beliefs, practices, and values related to the worship of a higher power or powers.
- **Hinduism:** The primary religion of India, characterized by a diverse set of beliefs and practices.
- **Islam:** A monotheistic religion founded in the Middle East, with significant adherents in India.
- **Christianity:** A monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, with a substantial presence in India.
- **Scriptures:** The sacred texts or writings of a particular religion.
- **Culture:** The customs, beliefs, arts, and other products of human thought and activity.
- **Tradition:** A practice or belief that has been passed down through generations.
- **Homosexuality:** Sexual attraction or behavior between members of the same sex.
- **Transgender:** A person whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex at birth.
- **Intersex:** A person who is born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit typical male or female classifications.
- **Queer theory:** An approach to gender and sexuality that challenges traditional categories and seeks to deconstruct them.
- **Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of a person or group based on characteristics such as race, gender, or sexuality.
- **Marginalization:** The process of pushing a person or group to the margins of society or social norms.
- **Intersectionality:** The concept that people can experience discrimination and oppression based on multiple social identities, such as race, gender, and sexuality.
- **Conversion therapy:** A discredited practice aimed at changing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Hijra:** A term used in South Asia to refer to individuals who do not identify as male or female and who may be assigned male at birth but adopt feminine gender expressions.
- **Homophobia:** Negative attitudes and feelings towards homosexuality and individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+.

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