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# WORKSHOPS ON BEAUTIFUL MASCULINITIES

Sessions To Create Dialogues With Young People On Masculinities







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YOUNG PEOPLE ON MASCULINITIES



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# PREFACE

In March 2022, we went to a private university in Jaipur to conduct a session on relationships and masculinities trying out some newly put-together session designs. We wanted to experiment with some interactive processes to see how young people respond. We felt dialogues on gender, violence, and masculinities were going pretty well as we reached the last hour of the day. The conversation went towards identities such as caste, religion, and sexuality, as we had designed. However, the participants (mostly from privileged caste communities) used this as an opportunity to express their rather passionate opposition to caste-based reservations. We spent an hour trying to steer the conversation towards the discrimination faced by oppressed castes and its impact on their daily lives but to no avail. To unwind after the session, we went to a nearby tapri to have chai when a student came to us to seek advice about some relationship problems. A few minutes later, their partner also showed up presenting us with their side of the story, and left after a few words of some general advice. We immediately left the tapri before we became judge and jury to more relationship troubles.

When we started experimenting with some of this content on masculinities, we realized that it is starting to speak to the realities of young people. The fact that people could come to us, share their problems, and ask for our advice gave us hope that we had identified their issues and created a safer space to talk about it. However, the challenge was to make this content as intersectional as possible, in a way that creates space for marginalized people to be able to express their experiences and thoughts safely, and at the same time for privileged people to reflect on structural power they possess.

Interestingly, many of the conversations that young people wanted to have already were replete with a criss-cross of identities and

power, and all we had to do was to make visible what was happening beneath these discussions. For instance, one participant would ask - "But what about the violence done by a rich woman against a poor male security guard of an apartment building?" This was when we realized that what has been considered a 'challenge' in programming can become the opportunities we need; where conversations on gender, caste, class and power all at the same time can be had in the most relatable ways. The idea was to not wait and build up to a day when the complexity of identities will be understood, but to deep dive into it in a way that enables everyone to make sense of their realities in new ways.

Another dilemma that we were navigating on this rollercoaster of masculinities was about who was in the room. When we gave up on the idea of creating 'better men', we started thinking of who all would want to talk about masculinities. We had requests coming in from colleges where young women wanted to join masculinities sessions, adolescent girls in communities wanted to talk about masculine behaviors boys around them show, trans masculine people struggling to be seen in their expressions of masculinities and so on. It was evident we can talk to anyone about this, and an only-men session with law students in Varanasi showed us exactly why we needed to get everyone in the room to have this conversation. It wasn't just their scary belief that "most women misuse laws against men", but also the underlying certainty that they know women's realities without even talking to them about it, which nudged us towards the need for dialogues across genders. In such situations, having a mixed group meant that participants were exchanging experiences, rather than us telling them about the same. Similarly, we also realized that the conversation on masculinities is relevant to a lot of women and genderqueer people who might find joy in masculine expressions. These spaces were

becoming spaces for imagining what being masculine, feminine, nonbinary and so on in our expressions could really mean for everyone.

But there was one more dilemma lurking behind all this, that we had to confront before we could even think of calling these sessions useful. Who is the facilitator? We are a diverse young team consisting of trans and cis people, queer and straight people, bahun and savarna people, and so on. We all had our own relations with young people, our own anger, joy, grief, power dynamics and our own styles that we used in sessions. Every activity, question and prompt would be written down after we had discussed how we would have responded to them if we were participants of the session. And this was beautiful to us. We then invited a diverse cohort of young professionals across five states, working on a variety of issues, to join our journey of experimenting with these sessions. And long story short, they went ahead and made these processes their own. They showed us that if everyone can be part of the conversation on masculinities, then everyone can facilitate these in their own ways. Some of the facilitators shared instances of talking about constitutional values and relating them to gender. Another used this space to share his journey of being a trans man while educating people about gender.

During this journey, we learnt from this cohort what works and what doesn't, what is abrupt and what is smooth, what to keep and what to change.

In short, what you're about to read in this handbook is a product of many experiments and negotiations. The aim of these modules is not to provide solutions to the participants, but to hand over tools to unpack and reshape our realities in new ways. It is to identify how masculinities are used as a weapon by power structures, and be able to remould them into beautiful masculinities. Having already reached (in parts and whole) over 2300 young people in communities of places such as Banswara (Rajasthan), Bhopal (MP), Faizabad (UP), Delhi, and institutes like IIT (Delhi), SAGE University (Bhopal), Banaras Hindu University among a few, it is very difficult to call this concoction of sessions final. But here we are nonetheless, presenting a forever work-in-progress to you. We now invite you to try this, mould this, and make it your own. And most importantly, tell us how it went!  
Happy Facilitating...

- Siddhant, Aathira and Sagar





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would not have been able to create this handbook without the participation of all the young people who wholeheartedly poured their experiences, emotions and acting skills into the sessions. We are whole-heartedly grateful to the young facilitators who joined this journey of co-learning and co-experimenting with the sessions in this handbook. The support of our colleagues from the collaborating organizations who ensured that these sessions continue to reach young people was also invaluable.

We would also like to thank Arzoo Garg for being a co-traveller in making these processes robust and critical. Her insights and feedback have immensely influenced this document.

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# **GENDER AND RELATIONSHIP**

# SESSION SUMMARY

Activity	Key Message	Time (min)
<p><b>Activity 1: Introduction, Ice Breaker, and Ground Rule Settings</b></p> <p>Process: Facilitators and participants introduce themselves, conduct an ice-breaker activity, set the expectations for the training along with deciding some of the ground rules that need to be followed for the duration of the training.</p>	<p>This will be an interactive session where participants can share their own experiences and journey, and learn from each other. To be able to talk about sensitive topics, it is important to create a space where we can build trust with each other and only then will we be able to learn from each other.</p>	<p>40</p>
<p><b>Activity 2: What do we want in relationships?</b></p> <p>Process: Facilitators ask the participants to write what they want in relationships and then discuss how they get that.</p>	<p>There are basic things we all want in relationships such as love, trust, time, respect, etc., but we don't always get them. We will discuss how we can get a step closer to these things in our lives in the subsequent sessions.</p>	<p>30</p>
<p><b>Activity 3: What's More Desirable?</b></p> <p>Process: Cards are shown to the participants, who have to arrange them on the basis of desirable/undesirable in society. They will then identify masculine and feminine traits from this list, to understand how certain</p>	<p>Gender is a social construct that tries to put people into boxes. The behavior expected from men gets defined as masculinity and is more likely to be considered desirable in our society while the behavior expected from women is considered to be feminine and is not given the same value. These boxes also punish people who are not successful in fitting into these boxes.</p>	<p>60</p>

Activity	Key Message	Time (min)
<p>traits are expected from all genders and how values are assigned to each of them.</p>	<p>Transgender people are given much less value and opportunities in society because they are not given space in society's binary definition of gender.</p>	
<p><b>Activity 4: But what does consent mean?</b></p> <p>Process: Participants read out Aman and Naina's story from <a href="http://mardonwalibaat.com">mardonwalibaat.com</a> and discuss situations where consent is present/absent to understand the meaning of consent.</p>	<p>Consent is essential for pleasure in relationships. It is only valid if it is given enthusiastically, with full information, and under no pressure. Consent given for one thing does not apply to other things. Consent can also be given and taken back at any moment. Our identities play a role in how we negotiate consent.</p>	<p>90</p>



## Activity 1:

# Introduction, Ice Breaker, and Ground Rule Settings

Time: 40 Minutes

Materials: One Chart Paper, Sticky Notes, Markers, Pens, Tape

### Ice Breakers (15 Minutes)

#### Step 1

Introduce the "Name Game" icebreaker to help everyone get to know each other. Each participant will say their name and either mention something they would bring on a date or a word that describes them (for example, "Chanchal Chandni" or "Balwaan Babli) — both starting with the first letter of their name. After each introduction, the group repeats the person's name three times, followed by a group action: tap one foot on the floor, then the other, tap one hand on their shoulder, then the other, and finish with three claps."

*Note: The above introduction activity can serve as both an icebreaker and a way to introduce participants efficiently, saving time when we can't extend activities. This allows us to skip the zip-zap icebreaker below.*

#### Step 2

Introduce participants to another game called zip-zap-boing.

- Instructions for the game - Participants have to imagine that they have an air ball with them and that they have to pass that around the room.
- When someone says 'zip' they have to pass the ball around to their right side. Ask the participants to do a few rounds of zip in order to allow them to get comfortable.
- Now inform the participants that they can pass the ball to anyone in the room except for the person to their left or right by saying "zap".

- After a few rounds of zip and zap, inform the participants that they have the freedom to not accept the ball from someone by saying "boing".
- Play until participants get comfortable and then move to the elimination round.

### Introduction (10 Minutes)

#### Step 1

Give an introduction to your organization and inform the participants about the conversations we will be having over the next two days (or however long the session is planned for).

#### Step 2

Clarify to the participants that the session will not turn into a teaching or lecture mode where the facilitator will be telling the participants things. Rather, we will do an interactive session where participants can share their own experiences and journey, we can then help each other understand through each other's experiences.

- If and when the group is bored, they can convey this to the facilitator. Announce that the general approach is that we can use a different method if the group is bored. Methodologies like games, group activities, and watching videos will be used to make the interaction interesting.
- Explain that along with masculinities, varying topics like gender, power, violence, sexualities, identity, social media, law, and mental well-being will also be discussed. (Depending on the chosen topics by the facilitator for the session)

## Ground rules (15 Minutes)

### Step 1

The facilitator will establish that to be able to talk about sensitive topics it is important to create a space where we can build trust with each other and only then will we be able to learn from each other. In order to do this some ground rules have to be set.

### Step 2

Hand out sticky notes to the participants to write any rules that they would like the group to follow to create a safe learning space for everyone.

### Step 3

Then stick a chart paper or card with the title 'Ground Rules' to create a corner where participants can put up their sticky notes.

### Step 4

Once the participants are done sticking them, the facilitator will read the rules out loud to the group and explain their importance to them. For example, if someone writes that confidentiality is an important norm for today's session, the facilitator can add that people can put others at risk by revealing their experience outside of the room and hence, the facilitator can highlight the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

### Step 5

Do a quick check and note down what the group wants to add to these rules.

### Step 6

If the participants have missed out on any of the following ground rules the facilitator will add the same to the list and explain its importance to the group. Here are some basic norms:

- Please keep your phones in silent mode
- Acknowledge people's voices and listen attentively
- Give everyone a chance to complete their point
- Respect differing opinions and perspectives, even during disagreements
- Don't invalidate others' feelings while disagreeing
- Not to share each others' personal experiences with people outside the session. (Note: Sharing experiences would be a way to share our learnings with each other. Participants must be encouraged to share the learnings outside but without revealing peoples' experiences)

### Step 7

After laying the ground rules, the facilitator will check with the participants for questions and then start off with the activities.

## Activity 2:

# What do we want in relationships?

Time: 30 Minutes

Materials: Chart Paper, Sticky Notes, Markers, Tape

### Step 1

Ask the participants "What kind of relationships do we see around us?". This can include relationships like parents-children, siblings, teacher-student, friendships, spouses, colleagues, romantic partners, etc.

### Step 2

Now ask the participants to think about the question 'What do we want in relationships?' Ask them to stick their answers on the chart paper already pasted on the wall with this question. Clarify to the participants that the

question doesn't just apply to one kind of relationship but all of the relationships mentioned before.

### Step 3

Once collected, the facilitator reads the responses out loud. Point out what's getting repeated very often. For example, things like respect, love, trust, and loyalty tend to be mentioned more. Also, point out some less expected or funny responses to show how wide the range of responses is.

### Step 4

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on the last discussion: "Does anyone have anything to add?" Allow a moment for responses.

Then ask, "Do we really get everything we want in our relationships? Are our needs met, and if not, what holds us back?" Emphasize that today, we'll take a step closer to understanding and achieving these wants for ourselves and the people around us as well.

Explain: "We'll explore how concepts like gender, masculinity, femininity, and power connect to what we seek in relationships. These ideas shape who finds it easier to get what they want."

Guide the group to consider factors that influence this ease—such as access to resources, power, beauty standards, or decision-making authority—and how these affect what people receive in relationships.

Prompt them to reflect: "Who do we often see getting what they want without question or struggle? Is it related to power, status, or gender roles?"



**Key Message:** We all desire fundamental things in relationships, like love, trust, time, and respect, but we don't always receive them. In our upcoming sessions, we'll explore how societal factors affect our relationships and discuss ways to bridge these gaps. This reflection will help us understand how societal expectations shape our connections and guide us toward achieving what we want in our relationships, creating more equitable and fulfilling interactions in our lives.

## Activity 3:

# What's More Desirable?

Time: 60 Minutes

Materials: Chart Paper, Sticky Notes, Markers, White Board

### Step 1

Tell the participants that we will now create a picture of the society we live in. So let's focus on what we have mostly seen or observed around us.

### Step 2

Stick a chart paper with two columns titled—"Given Importance in Society" and "Not Given Importance in Society" respectively.

### Step 3

Read out the following sticky notes to the participants and ask them to put the sticky notes on either side of the board, based on whether these qualities are given importance in society or not.

- Qualities: Dependent, Independent, Emotional, Intelligent, Dominant, Submissive, Bread-Winner, Home-maker,

Brave, Coward, Strong, Weak.

#### Step 4

State each quality and ask them which side to place it on, and invite them to think about what we usually see around us. Encourage the participants to not focus on exceptions but on larger patterns around them. You can assure them that we will get back to the exceptions also in some time. Keep placing the sticky notes as the group assigns them.

*Note: If the majority feels contrary to the expected responses, encourage them to explore reasons, and invite the more silent participants to also share if they agree as well, or think otherwise. In case, the group is confused/divided about putting any particular quality in either of the columns then ask them to put it on the center.*

#### Step 5

Once all cards are done, invite the participants to revisit them by asking which qualities are considered Masculine or Feminine by society.

*Note: The participants must be reminded to not associate masculine and feminine qualities to men and women but simply as societal values.*

- Go one by one over all the qualities (try to make it a random order). Use the initials - M, F, or B (for Both) next to the qualities after discussing these markings. In some cases, participants might agree that quality is considered both feminine and masculine.
- Once done, ask participants to notice which quality is more dominant on the “Given Importance” side - Masculine or feminine. While there would be some cases of “Both” on this side, others would be usually Masculine.
- Similarly, ask them to notice which quality is dominant on the “NOT Given Importance” side. It is usually dominated by Feminine.
- Use this to point out that qualities that are given importance in society are often considered masculine and qualities that society does not value are considered to be feminine.

#### Step 6

Follow up with the question- If you do get “importance” in society then what do you actually get with it?

- List down all things they say such as money, power, respect, authority, acceptance, etc. Urge the participants to revisit the “What do we want in relationships?” chart paper to reflect on whether we see some of these things there. (There are often common things such as respect, status, money, etc.)
- Finally, ask the participants “Who is largely expected to be masculine in society?” to which people would usually say “Men”. Similarly, ask them “Who is largely expected to be feminine in society?” and write “women” as the response.
- Ask participants if this means that some people have easier access than others to get value or importance in society. This makes it easier for people to have access to power, resources, status, and all the things listed under “Importance”.

#### Step 7

Ask the participants: Do the things that we get listed under “Importance” (money, power, respect, status, etc.) help us in getting closer to what we want in relationships (refer back to the Relationships chart)? Let participants reflect a little bit on this.

- Write down the word “Patriarchy” on top of the two columns as a Heading and explain this to be an image of a patriarchal society. Ask the participants if they have heard about this word.

After a quick discussion, summarize that patriarchy is a social system that distributes power, roles, and expectations across identities in a way that men are expected to perform violence and dominance to be able to enjoy power and privilege. On the other hand, women are expected to perform roles that are more submissive and face violence without speaking up. Society gives rewards or punishments to everyone based on whether they comply with or reject these roles.

### Step 8

Finally, ask participants if they think that this image is complete. Or if some gender identities are missing?

- Start writing down the gender identities on board that has been shared by the participants
- Explain to the participants that there are multiple genders such as non-binary, and gender fluid. Introduce them to multiple identities and what comes under the umbrella term “transgender”. According to their responses, ask them the question, where in the two columns can trans\* people and trans\* identities be placed?
- A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from the gender identity that was assigned to them at birth. Use this video to help participants understand better.



Scan to watch video.

### Step 9

Ask the participant how people of different genders can move across these boxes on the board. Continue discussing with the participants through examples.

- For a man to move away from masculine expectations, he can be deprived of the importance and societal rewards that come with performing masculinity as he does not conform to the values associated with his gender.
- For a woman to move from feminine expectations, she is deprived of resources

that men get easily and has to struggle more than men to get rewards like money, respect, power etc. If she manages to achieve societal rewards they are usually lesser than men.

- For a trans\* person who aspires to achieve any of these, is faced with more struggles as society denies their visibility since birth because they do not fit the binary boxes of gender.
- Shed light on how gender identity and gender expression can help and deprive us of getting value in society. Ask the participants to navigate through how it is more difficult for genders across the spectrum.
- Take questions from participants, once Q & A is done, move on to the next activity.

**Key Message:** Gender is a social construct that tries to put people into boxes. The behaviour expected from men gets defined as masculinity and is more likely to be considered desirable in our society while the behaviour expected by women is considered to be feminine and is not given the same value but is appreciated if the woman follows the feminine norms of expression and responsibilities. These boxes also punish people who are not successful in fitting into the boxes. Queer and Transgender people are given much less value and opportunities in society because they do not fit into society's binary definition of gender.

## Activity 4:

# But what does consent mean?

Time: 90 Minutes

Materials: Projector, Laptop, Speakers, Video of Consent, Chart Paper, Marker, [link to Aman and Naina's Story](#)

### Step 1

Inform the participants that we will be looking at the story to understand how relationships and dating play out in our daily lives. Tell them that in the story Aman and Naina are going on a date and participants have to choose how Aman responds in various situations. This has to be based on what the participants have seen around themselves.

### Step 2

Present the Aman and Naina story on the projector. ([mardonwalibaat.com](http://mardonwalibaat.com))

Start the story slides on the projector, narrating as each slide appears to allow participants to read along.

At each decision point in the story, pause and ask participants which direction they'd like the story to take next. Emphasize that there's no right or wrong choice—just follow their curiosity.

Hold a quick vote to decide the next step, then continue the story based on the chosen path.

After the story ends, ask participants: “Why did we choose the options we did? What made us skip the others? Have you seen similar scenarios in real life?”

### Step 3

In the next step draw two columns on the board or chart paper titled- “Consent was present” and “Consent was not present.”

Encourage the participants to list down incidents in the story where there was an exchange of consent and where there was not.

*Note: Disagreement of participants will only encourage more discussion around consent, and encourage them to reflect, and see what more people agree to.*

### Step 4

Exploring the Spectrum of Consent

List Out Situations from the Story: Begin by listing incidents or situations from the story where consent may have played a role or been ambiguous. Highlight any complex or nuanced scenarios to encourage reflection.

Example: If the story includes someone sharing personal space, physical touch, or emotional support, list those specific moments.

Discuss Consent Across Situations: Direct the conversation by asking participants how they think consent might look different depending on the people or relationships involved (e.g., friend vs. authority figure).

Encourage participants to relate these situations to real-life experiences and invite them to share, if comfortable, how they perceive consent in different contexts.

### The Prism of Consent

- Draw a large prism on the board.
- On the left side of the prism, write down a particular situation from the story (e.g., "sharing personal space" or "helping with an emotional issue").
- On the prism itself, write down the relationships or people involved (e.g., close friend, teacher, acquaintance).

- On the right side of the prism, reflect diverse spectrums of consent that may apply to the same situation with different people. For example:
- With a close friend, consent might feel more relaxed or natural.
- With an authority figure, consent might require more explicit or verbal affirmation.
- With an acquaintance, boundaries might be more formal or cautious.

### Invite Opinions on the Spectrum of Consent

Open the floor for participants to share their thoughts on the concept of consent varying across relationships and situations.

Encourage them to express any additional observations or opinions about how consent may feel different depending on the dynamics at play.

### Example Discussion

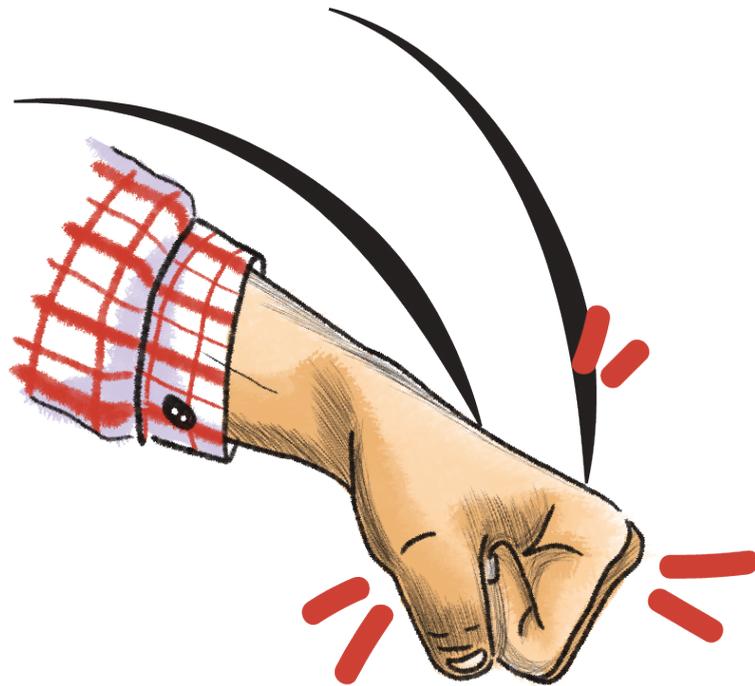
Participants might discuss how consent in personal space may feel more flexible with friends than with strangers or authority figures.

Lastly, connect the definitions to the chart paper on consent. And how consent is the root to understand people, the way to make relationships pleasurable and arrive at all the listed things people want in their relationships.

**Key Message:** Consent is essential for healthy, pleasurable relationships and must be given freely, enthusiastically, and without pressure. It's specific to each action and can be withdrawn at any time. Consent exists on a spectrum that can shift depending on the context and the people involved, and our identities influence how we understand and express it. Recognizing the fluid, nuanced nature of consent helps us respect each other's boundaries and create more inclusive, supportive relationships.







# MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE

# SESSION SUMMARY

Activity	Key Message	Time (min)
<p><b>Activity 1: Masculinity as a country</b></p> <p>Process: Participants are divided into four groups, they have to create how a country called “Masculinity” and its features will look like, based on what they see around them.</p>	<p>Gender norms are reinforced through various systems, and structures that we see around us. These structures perpetuate hierarchies within masculinities that include and exclude different people on the basis of Caste, Class, Religion, Gender, Sexuality and many more which reflects how masculinity can also be diverse.</p>	80
<p><b>Activity 2: Let’s Act Masculinities</b></p> <p>Process: Participants are divided into four groups and they are asked to role-play masculinities, power, and violence in relation to caste, sexuality, religion, and gender identities.</p>	<p>Our social status is influenced by a lot of identities including caste, gender, sexuality, and religion. While some of these identities give us power, it is possible that some might also be taking power away from us. Those who are in power are expected to perpetuate or enable violence, while others are expected to be submissively on the receiving end of violence.</p>	90



## Activity 1:

# Masculinities as a Country

Time: 1 Hour and 20 minutes

Materials: Chart Papers, Sketch Pens, White Board, White Board Marker and Duster, Himanshu's Story - Risky Love to debrief the session in the end

### Step 1

Divide the participants into four groups.

### Step 2

Inform the participants that they have to create a country called "Masculinities" and brainstorm how it would look like if it were to represent the masculinities that we see around us. The country they have to create should represent the notions that are associated with masculinities in society. They can think about the shape of the country, how the borders would look like, what would the constitution be like, who would stay in the center and who would stay near the borders, what holidays would be celebrated, its flag, its national animal etc. Write these prompts on the board for reference. Inform the participants that these are some of the prompts they have to think about, they can also do things outside this.

### Step 3

Inform the participants that they have 15 minutes to do the discussion and 15 minutes to draw the country.

### Step 4

After 30 minutes, ask the groups to present what they have written. One by one, ask all the groups to present. After each presentation, ask the participants if they have something else to add or share.

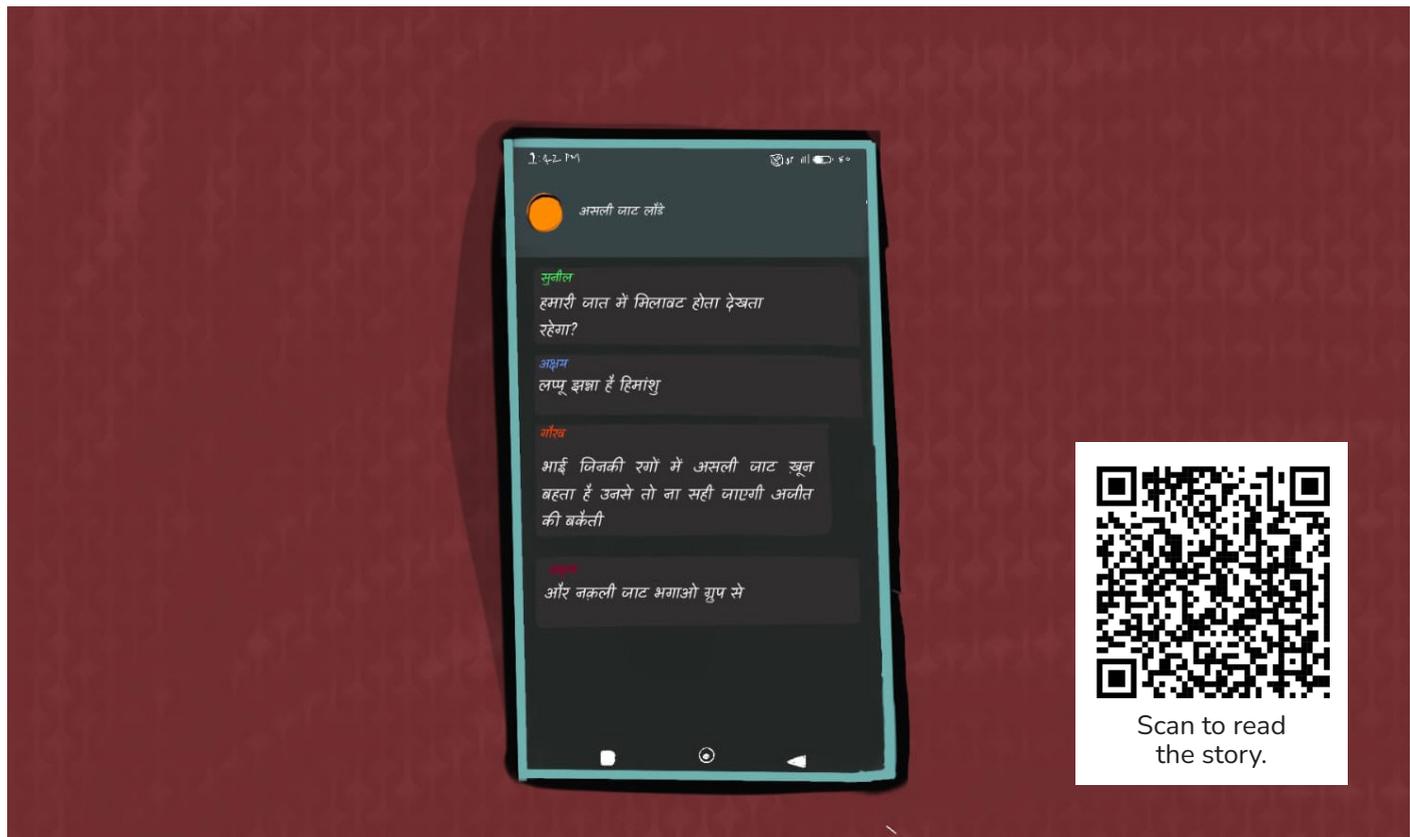
Prompt the participants to encourage each group by clapping for their presentations.

### Step 5

Once participants are done presenting, tell them that the point of this exercise was to see how notions of masculinities are embedded all around us.

- Masculinities are not just roles and behaviours that people perform but also symbols and narratives that are embedded within structures around us like the constitution, laws, flags, symbols etc.
- And these structures are used to maintain the roles and behaviours assigned to people of different genders. The masculine systems provide benefits to men while taking power away from women and trans folks which is evident from the chart papers created here.
- Point out any other identities such as caste, class, religion, sexuality, disabilities etc. that participants may have identified here and discuss how masculine systems create hierarchies among those as well.
- The country is just an example, this would be similar realities if we made a house or town or village or any other space relevant to our works and spaces called "Masculinities", just with different examples.

## Himanshu's Story - Risky Love



Emphasizing on how caste plays a role in masculinity, bring Himanshu's story, display it and facilitate the discussion around caste and other identities to introduce the concept of intersectional masculinity.

### Step 1

Inform the participants that we will be looking at the story to understand how identities play out in our daily lives. Tell them that in the story of Himanshu participants have to choose how characters respond in various situations. This has to be based on what the participants have seen around themselves.

### Step 2

Present Himanshu's story on the projector. (mardonwalibaat.com)

- Start the story slides on the projector, narrating as each slide appears to allow participants to read along.
- At each decision point in the story, pause and ask participants which direction they'd like the story to take next. Emphasize that there's no right or wrong choice—just follow their curiosity.

- Hold a quick vote to decide the next step, then continue the story based on the chosen path.
- After the story ends, ask participants: “Why did we choose the options we did? What made us skip the others? Have you seen similar scenarios in real life?”

**Key Message:** Masculinities take diverse forms and are deeply embedded in the structures around us, reinforcing and sustaining traditional gender norms. Recognizing the intersectional nature of masculinity, it is shaped not only by gender but also by factors like class, caste, race, religion and disability, which together influence how masculinity is expressed and experienced. This understanding challenges the single, dominant model of masculinity and opens space for inclusive, varied, and equitable expressions of gender.

Note: This activity can be adapted to suit different groups and focus areas. For instance, if working with a tribal group, the spaces and identities can be adjusted accordingly. Additionally, this activity is effective for leadership cohorts; they can first identify and

model toxic masculinity and then envision a positive masculinity model they would like to see in their spaces. This approach also supports the "Bridging the Gaps" exercise, providing a practical path to create meaningful shifts and changes.

## Activity 2: Let's Act Masculinity

Time: 1 Hour 30 Minutes  
Materials: White Board, Marker

### Step 1

Divide the participants into four groups and inform them that they would each be given a topic.

### Step 2

Distribute four chits amongst the participants with the following identities written -

- "Dalit Disabled man and Brahman man",
- "Muslim Poor Person and Hindu person",
- "Transgender person and cis person",
- "Gay person and straight person"

Once the participants are given the chits, explain to participants that they have to make a skit that shows violence and masculinities in their everyday lives.

Check with each group individually if they understand the meaning of the identities that have been assigned to them.

*Note: Tell the participants that they must be careful to not cause any hurt to each other while showing violence. They only have to act.*

### Step 3

Give participants twenty minutes to prepare the skit. Check with them if they are clear about the instructions.

### Step 6

While they prepare, create the following table on the board:

1. Identities given in the chit	2. How was violence taking place?	3. Who was performing the violence?	4. Who was enabling violence?	5. Whom did it impact and how?

### Step 5

Once they're ready, inform the participants that while they are watching other groups perform, they should look for answers to the questions written in the play.

### Step 6

Invite the first group to act their skit out. When they are done acting, ask the rest of the participants to answer each of the questions and keep noting down their responses in the table.

*Note: For the "Enabling Violence" column, encourage them to think of people who were not directly performing the violence, but were promoting or creating the conditions for it to happen.*

For the Impact column, encourage participants to think of multiple effects of any act. Eg, if beating up can cause physical injury, prompt them to think of what other impacts physical injury can cause. This can lead them to identify the mental impact of such acts like a prevailing sense of fear in the future etc.

### Step 7

Repeat the previous step with each group.

### Step 8

Once each group is done presenting and the table has been filled up, debrief through each column (vertical) by discussing the responses collected under each question on the board.

- Under **Column 2** explain and introduce the kinds of violence- emotional, mental, physical, sexual, and financial.

**Physical Violence** directly harms the body or body parts of a person. Eg - Beating, slapping, etc.

**Emotional or Mental Violence** harms a person psychologically, hurting their dignity or personhood. Eg - Blackmail, cyberbullying, etc.

**Verbal Violence** is caused by using words and speech to harm a person. Eg - Hurling verbal abuses.

**Sexual Violence** is any act of coercion upon another person which is sexual in nature. Eg - Rape, voyeurism, groping, etc.

**Economic Violence** is the use of power to reduce, restrict and control the financial capacity of a person. Eg - Exerting control over someone's bank account or income.

- Explain to the participants that largely many forms of violence go unnoticed and unacknowledged and only physical violence gets some recognition in society.
- For **Column 3**, explain that different kinds of people perform different kinds of violence. Give examples through relationships and characters, fathers, mothers, neighbors, strangers, and in-laws. Point out how most people listed are \*in positions of power and invite them to think about where they get this power from. Invite them to identify whether this power is influenced by various identities such as gender, religion, caste, or sexuality. And point out that this is mostly performed against marginalized groups in order to maintain the power status.
- Move to **Column 4** to explain how violence is enabled, if not performed directly. Often participants tend to place people in power (eg. politicians, fathers, brothers, etc) who do not stop violence, as well as survivors (eg. women, queer folks) and vulnerable bystanders (eg. mothers), in this column together. In this case, ask them if all these people have the same power. And which of them are likely to face violence if they try to stop it? In various situations, the survivors and vulnerable bystanders have to tolerate violence in order to not face further violence in turn. As talked about in Masculinities is a Country Activity, the systems around us also enable violence. Speaking up against violence for people who do not possess power in society can be a risky and unfair choice, and therefore, we cannot blame them for this. We need to be conscious of people's power to be able to speak up against violence to hold them accountable.

- **Column 5** is to understand the impact of violence. Point out how violence can have short-term as well as long-term impacts, and how it instills fear and trauma within people. Point out that these were such seemingly individual acts that we saw today but we were able to imagine such deep long-lasting impact of these. And this is the kind of thinking we don't get to do when such acts occur. But violence follows patterns and is systemic, therefore, its impact also piles up.
- The facilitator will finally ask the participants if they have any doubts, through a quick Q & A round on masculinities and violence before ending this activity.

**Key Message:** Our social status is shaped/ influenced by multiple identities, including caste, gender, sexuality, and religion. Some of these identities may grant us power, while others may limit it. For individuals who belong to intersections of multiple marginalized identities, the impact of oppression is compounded, increasing their exposure to various forms of violence and discrimination. Those in positions of power are often expected to perpetuate or enable this cycle of violence, while those marginalized are positioned to be passively subjected to it. This dynamic underscores the layered and intersecting nature of oppression.

### Activity 3:

## Self-Reflection Activity on Intersectionality

Time: 1 Hour 30 Minutes

Materials: A4 sheets of paper, Colored markers or pens, Sticky notes (optional), Whiteboard/Flipchart (for facilitation)

#### Introduction (10 minutes)

##### Step 1

Begin by explaining the concept of intersectionality briefly: Highlight how our identities (gender, class, caste, religion, etc.) intersect to shape our experiences of privilege or oppression.

##### Step 2

Emphasize the importance of reflecting on how power operates through these identities in relationships and societal dynamics.

#### Individual Identity Mapping (20 minutes)

##### Step 1

Distribute A4 sheets and colored markers to participants.

##### Step 2

Ask participants to list their identities on a sheet. Encourage them to think broadly, considering aspects such as gender, caste, religion, class, ability, sexual orientation, age, and more. You can also prompt them to reflect on identities they were assigned at birth, those they developed over time, and the ones they personally identify with.

### Step 3

After participants have listed their identities, guide them to categorize each identity as:

- Powerful (if it provides them with privilege or advantage)
- Powerless (if it makes them vulnerable or disadvantaged).
- Ask them to darken the colors of the identities that they feel are more powerful or more powerless.

### Step 4

Encourage them to take their time and reflect deeply.

## Group Discussion on Reflections (20 minutes)

### Step 1

Two of the Facilitators (if comfortable) can show their identity maps and can briefly reflect on their own thoughts and feelings to make the group comfortable for further discussion.

### Step 2

Bring the group together and ask reflective questions:

- Were there identities that were easy to think of and some that took more time? Why do you think this was happening?
- While marking them as powerful or powerless, did specific instances come to mind?
- Were you connecting these instances with themes discussed in previous workshops?

## Exploring Power in Relationships (15 minutes)

### Step 1

Ask participants to consider:

- Can you identify situations where power affected your relationships?

- Were there moments when you had power in one context but felt powerless in another with the same identity? Share examples.

### Step 2

Allow time for group sharing or small-group discussions.

## Self-Reflection (15 minutes)

### Step 1

Ask participants to look at their identity sheets again and reflect individually:

- When I look at my sheet now, what am I feeling?
- Is it telling me something new or unexpected?

### Step 2

Encourage them to write down personal insights or emotions on sticky notes and, if comfortable, share with the group.

## Closing and Key Message (10 minutes)

### Step 1

Facilitate a brief discussion on the collective insights gained.

### Step 2

Share the following key message:

- Our identities (inherited or self-created) affect how we experience the world. Power within these identities influences relationships, pleasure, consent, violence, and love.
- Power is relational and contextual—it depends on who or what is being compared and the situation at hand.
- Reflecting on and understanding these dynamics is crucial for creating equitable and respectful relationships.

### Step 3

Encourage participants to stay mindful of power dynamics in their personal and social lives.

**Key Message:** Understanding power within our identities is essential to challenge inequities and advances fairness in our relationships. By recognizing the roots of power and its effects, we enable ourselves to create change.







# **MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITY**

# SESSION SUMMARY

Activity	Key Message	Time (min)
<p><b>Activity 1: A Tale of Two Handshakes</b></p> <p>Process: Participants are asked to shake hands with each other. After a feel check, they are asked to greet each other again, but this time, they are asked to have a conversation about how they would like to be greeted.</p>	<p>While the patriarchal society might make us want to believe that there is only one right way to have sex, there exists a wide variety of what sex could even mean for different people. The enormous expectation of having to perform penetrative sex which centers on male pleasure and ejaculation also comes at a cost. These expectations can result in bad, painful sex or sex that isn't consenting: either feeling like feeling forced to take part in someone else's handshake, or doing it under pressure because it's expected, or one thing leading to another without anyone checking in that this is what they wanted.</p>	<p>60</p>
<p><b>Activity 2: Love is Possible!</b></p> <p>Process: The activity, through different identity dice, initiates a conversation about diversity within the realm of attraction and reinforces that different individuals express and experience sexuality in different ways.</p>	<p>People have diverse sexual desires. We can be attracted to anyone we want. It is important to understand that we should not form an opinion, be judgmental about anyone or make someone uncomfortable merely due to their sexual orientation or sexual identity.</p>	<p>20</p>

Activity	Key Message	Time (min)
<p>Activity 3: <b>What will people say?</b></p> <p>Process: Participants are given some cases of relationships between different social identities, they have to identify the impact - in terms of acceptance and nonacceptance that they will receive from people/society.</p>	<p>People who challenge the social norms and patriarchal structures of relationships and families are usually not accepted by society and face violence. This also leads to a violation of their fundamental rights. It is important to challenge notions of what is considered masculine and feminine in society because those are the spaces where we can change how society operates.</p>	<p>40</p>

**Note for Facilitator before starting the session:**

*It can be useful to remind people about ground rules around maintaining confidentiality, sensitivity, and being non-judgemental during the following session. Since sex and sexuality can be difficult topics for some people, offer the participants space to step out if they feel uncomfortable or triggered during the session.*



## Activity 1:

# A Tale of two handshakes

Adapted from Justin Hancock's module for BISH Training.

Time: 1 Hour

Materials: A White Board, Markers and Sticky Notes

### Step 1: Round 1 - Handshakes

1. Tell the participants that you are going to play a song and everyone has to walk around the room covering every part of the room. Instruct them to stop, when the music stops, and shake hands with the person nearest to them.
2. Ask the participants to settle back into the nearest seats when they are done with the handshake.

Once everyone has settled back down, ask the group the following questions and try to make sure different views are heard. (Write their responses on the board)

- How was that? How did it feel?
- What were some of the initial thoughts you had in your mind after the instruction was given?
- Was there any thought on what a good handshake might feel like?

### Step 2 : Round 2 - Meet and Greet

1. Ask the participants to again walk around the room when the song plays and stop when the music stops. However, this time they have to ask the person nearest to them these questions:

- How would you like to be greeted?
- Would they like a hug, a handshake, a fist bump, or anything else altogether?

2. Through these questions, invite the participants to explore what each of them is comfortable with, and come to an agreement.

3. Then allow everyone who greets whichever way they want to and notice what happens in the room.

4. Once they settle down, ask the following questions -

- How did it make you feel?
- How was it compared to the first handshake?

5. As the next step, invite the participants to revisit the second round in detail. Use these prompts to think about the different ways in which they communicated with each other.

Look for these details -

- how they stood
- how 'in tune' they were with the other person
- whether they copied or mirrored what the other person was doing
- what kind of words they might have used
- the noises they made
- how the facial expressions were

6. Take responses, write them on the board, and use them to connect body language to the responses we got when we asked how it felt after the second round.

### Step 3 : DISCUSSION

1. Tell the participants that we are going to decode the first and the second greeting now.
2. In the first round, there was an instruction to shake hands. This approach might have made us follow a script - that defines what

1. a 'good' handshake is - firm, short, etc. Even so, not everyone might like this way of shaking hands ( refer to the feel check after the first round) or even the handshake.

#### **Step 4 : Scripts around Sex**

1. Ask the participants if there are scripts that we follow for any other physical interactions too. (Take responses, and explore them for a few minutes)
2. Tell them that now we'll explore some scripts around the idea of sex.
3. Ask them what is the first image that comes to our mind, when we hear the word - sex. Who is doing it and what are they doing? (Publish them - penetrative, man on top of woman, able-bodied, missionary, etc)
4. Ask them: Where all do we learn about sex from? Take responses that would generally include movies, porn, friends, etc.
5. Ask them: In these images that come from pornography or movies, do we usually see people asking each other whether they're enjoying themselves and how they want to have sex? In most cases, there's an absence of such conversation on what people like during sex.
6. Just like the two greeting rounds, it's possible that some people like to have sex the way it's shown popularly in movies, etc. However, there are many other ways in which people can have sex, but we will not know what they like till we just talk to them about it.
7. And because we don't talk about these things openly with consent, we end up only focussing on one kind of pleasure, which is only a few people's ideas of pleasure.

#### **Step 5 : Masculine Scripts**

1. Ask the participants to think about the kinds of expectations that this script on sex has from men / masculine people. (long-lasting, big penis, etc)
2. Now ask what are the expectations from feminine / female-bodied persons. (Take responses)
3. Now ask the participants about the impact of these expectations on people. Do they feel the pressure of any kind? Do they have

1. to behave in a certain way? (Insecurities in people about their performance etc)
2. Conclude this section by saying how sometimes these expectations can result in bad, painful sex or sex that isn't consenting: either like feeling forced to take part insomeone else's handshake, or doing it under pressure because it's expected, or one thing leading to another without anyone checking in that this is what they wanted.

#### **Step 6 : Exploring with consent and communication**

1. Now, begin the last section by going back to the response from the participants after the second round.
2. Highlight the difference in experience that can happen when we build interactions on the foundation of consent and communication.
3. Say that not only are we asking, to greet them, but are also going beyond the yes or no to actually explore the ways in which they would like to be greeted, which might also mean getting to know the boundaries of our partners. When we take this approach in sex, we open up ways to really pay attention to what people want and try to make it mutually pleasurable.
4. Ask the participants to think about other ways of having sex, that are not tied around penetrative sex. Ask them to think about what would give them pleasure, or whatever they associate with sex - closeness, intimacy, etc when coming up with alternate ways.
5. To make it easier for the participants to share this, use sticky notes that they can stick to a chart paper themselves, allowing them to be anonymous.
6. Read out the responses from the chart paper for everyone.
7. If there is no response that includes non-sexual acts of intimacy then ask if they would want to add more to this list, that can also mean something that doesn't include sexual/ reproductive organs. For instance - cuddling, holding hands, tracing the partner's body with fingers, etc.

8. As a final step, go back to the expectations of masculine and feminine people from the dominant idea of sex that we started with.
9. Highlight how in the second round approach the burden of expectation from masculine people (to perform a porn-level lasting long penetrative act) and feminine people (to look and act in a submissive way that validates the masculine person) can be shifted to an act of collaboration where partners together find pleasure for each other.

### Step 7: Conclusion

1. End the activity by saying how this approach also does is - centers pleasure and intimacy while also visiblising the multiple ways in which people with various sexual identities and orientations define sex.
2. Highlight how focusing on the tiny micro-communications of the other person: eye contact, nodding, shaking heads, facial expression, noises, short words, phrases, and how bodies move towards or against each other - can lead to a much more consensual, pleasurable sex.



**Key Message:** While the patriarchal society might make us want to believe that there is only one right way to have sex, there exists a wide variety of what sex could even mean for different people. The enormous expectation of having to perform penetrative sex which centers on male pleasure and ejaculation also comes at a cost. This cost expects masculine people to take full control of what they need to do and also make sure it is pleasurable (at least at the surface level) for their partners. What these expectations do in reality, is give birth to multiple insecurities in people of all genders, which at a minimum might lead to non-pleasurable sex and at a maximum, lead to non-consensual, painful, and sometimes traumatic sexual experiences. Agency in defining what sex would mean to people brings back the power to individuals to not only re-define sex but also reject the script which is rooted in notions of how a “real man” and “good woman” would be in bed. Consent and Pleasure, when laid as a foundation for these experiences, helps open up conversations on - one, what one would like, and two - what one's boundaries would be while exploring pleasure and intimacy together.

## Activity 2:

# Love is Possible!

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: 2 sexuality dice

### Step 1

Ask participants to share what they understand by 'attraction'. Can they give some examples to support this?

*Note: Since attraction is being talked about here. It is important that a link between sexuality and attraction is also formed. Like attraction is a small part of sexuality.*

## Step 2

Tell them that generally, we discuss only a certain type of attraction, which is the attraction between a man and woman. Now ask them if they think that there can be an attraction between someone else as well?

*Note: Wherever the term Man or Woman is used, it includes every person who identifies themselves as a Man or Woman. It doesn't matter if they are cisgender or trans\*. Therefore if you get two transgender persons on the dice, then you may tell the participants about what all can be their sexual orientation based on their gender identity. Also, the sexuality of any person is exactly what is decided by the person and not what has been decided for them by others.*

## Step 3

Tell the participants that some identities may have been easier to guess, because we have seen them, or at least heard of them from others, such as a man who is attracted to a woman and a woman who is attracted to a man. Other identities (for example, a man who is attracted to another man) are harder to guess because they are lesser-known or hardly talked about. However, we don't have much information about any of these identities. It is difficult to presume or gauge the attraction of a male towards another male because we seldom hear such things and also because such attraction is viewed with a Cis-normative heteropatriarchal perspective only. Inform the participants that we would now try and understand a variety of attractions and relations with the help of an interesting game. Hand the dice to two volunteers and ask them to roll the dice in front of the group of participants.

## Step 4

Call the attention of the participants to the identities on the top face of both dice. Now ask them if there can be an attraction or a relationship between the people of these identities? Take their responses and then note down the two identities (from the top face of the dice) and their replies on the flipchart.

## Step 5

Repeat this process with different sets of volunteers a few times till the time all possible combinations of identities are covered.

### Suggestions for the facilitator

Wherever the term Man or Woman is used, it includes every person who identifies themselves as a Man or Woman. It doesn't matter if they are cisgender or trans\*. Therefore if you get two transgender persons on the dice, then you may tell the participants about what all can be their sexual orientation based on their gender identity. Also, the sexuality of any person is exactly what is decided by the person and not what has been decided for them by others.

## Step 6

Inform the participants that it is possible that during this activity we may come across some pairs or identities about whom we do not know much, for example – a pair of a transgender person and a man or a pair of people with similar genders. Tell them that:

- We may have known about persons of these identities, but never tried to be friends with them or to know more about them by talking to them.
- It is also possible that we may be having wrong notions about persons who identify beyond the cis gender binary. It could be that we have formed various assumptions about the conduct and behavior of such people in our minds
- Tell them that everyone has the right to choose their own sexual identity and to feel attracted to anyone as per their own will. We have no right to decide this for them or form an opinion about them for the way they express themselves.

## Step 7

Now explain to the participants some of the sexual identities that people commonly use to describe or express their sexual identity with the help of the following information:

## More Identities

- Men who are romantically and sexually attracted to women and women who are romantically and sexually attracted to men can identify themselves as Heterosexual.
- Men who are romantically or sexually attracted towards other men can identify themselves as Gay or Homosexual.
- Women who are romantically or sexually attracted only towards other women can identify themselves as Lesbians or homosexuals.
- Tell participants that some people get attracted to people of more than one gender. They may identify themselves as Bisexual.
- A person who feels little to no sexual attraction to others, regardless of gender, may identify as asexual. A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction to is sexually not attracted to another person of any gender can identify themselves as Asexual.

*Note: Asexuality is a sexual orientation on a spectrum, and those who identify as asexual may experience varying degrees of emotional or romantic attraction.*

**Key Message:** Sexuality is an integral part of our lives and there is no defined correct or incorrect way of experiencing one's sexuality. People have varied sexual inclinations and desires. We can feel attraction in whichever way we want. People mustn't be judged based on their sexual preferences and those we do not form an opinion about them due to this reason. This body is our own. The right to choose what to wear, how to express oneself, whom to be attracted to or not rests entirely with an individual and this decision depends on the context and situation of that person.



### Activity 3:

## What Will People Say?

Time: 40 minutes

Materials: A chart paper with five concentric circles drawn, a Marker pen, a flipchart, and case studies

### Step 1

Draw 5 concentric circles on the ground in an open space with chalk. Keep their size a little bigger and leave space between them.

### Step 2

Tell the participants that this session will focus on the level of acceptance that certain relationships and families may receive in their communities. Each circle on the ground/chart signifies a level of acceptance.

- The innermost circle is 'acceptance by society'.
- The second circle represents 'neighborhood gossip and mockery'.
- The third circle represents the 'verbal backlash at the family or community level'.
- The fourth circle represents 'physical violence, beating up, attacks'.
- The outermost circle represents 'riots, murders, and more serious physical violence'.

### Step 3

Tell the participants that information about all these different situations will be shared with them and they will have to identify and discuss the community's response to each of the situations.

- Mr. and Mrs. Sharma are an affluent upper-middle-class couple from North India. Mr. Sharma is around 35 years and Mrs. Sharma is 31. They have two children.
- A Dalit woman and a Brahmin man from a village in Bihar, want to get married and start a family
- Two gay men are living together in the same house in Delhi and are planning to adopt a baby
- A Muslim man and a Hindu woman want to get married
- A trans person who is unwilling to live in their own home and wants to live with members of the Hijra Community.
- Two homosexual women/Lesbians in a Chhattisgarh village want to live together.

*Note: Facilitators can introduce additional scenarios or expand on the existing ones. For example, an interfaith queer couple, a Brahmin woman and a Dalit man (Himanshu's story can be used here as an example), a single person, a widowed woman, a Hindu man and a Muslim woman, someone from a non-mainland region, a person with a disability (PwD), or a couple with a significant age difference.*

### Step 4

This activity can be organized in two different ways. You may decide on the appropriate method as per the number of participants available.

In case there are 7 to 10 participants available for the session:

- Distribute chits of each of the above-mentioned situations among the participants so that each participant or a pair of participants gets one chit.

- Now ask the participants to read the chits out loud for everyone else.
- Depending on the identity and situation of the given relationship or family, the rest of the participants should place the volunteers (with chits) in the appropriate circle according to what they hear and see in their community after a mutual consensus. The reason behind which circle is being selected will also have to be discussed after every situation.
- In this manner, 6 participants/pairs will need to be placed in various concentric circles.

*Note: In case the circles are drawn on a chart paper instead of on the ground, then the participants should be asked to paste or place the chits with situations on the chart in the chosen circle.*

In case there are fewer than 6 participants in the session

- Read out and describe the situations one by one and ask the participants to share their thoughts on the community's reactions to each of these.
- Ask the participants to think about the reactions in their communities about non-normative couples and families and then place them in the appropriate concentric circles.

### Suggestions for the facilitator

*Ask participants to give examples of how the community might react in each situation. Note all the different ways in which violence can be committed by communities and note them down.*

### Step 5

After the participants have replied, ask the following questions:

- Why are some relationships and families less acceptable than others?
- What are the various factors that decide the acceptability of a relationship or a family?

There are some very specific social standards and norms associated with relationships that form the basis of marriage and a family.

Some of these social norms are discussed below:

- The married couple has to be heterosexual comprising of a man and a woman.
- The married couple should be capable of procreating or giving birth to an heir.
- It is most ideal when the woman is younger than the man.
- The couple should belong to the same religion and caste. This ensures that all personal assets for example land, money, and the family status/name are retained within their religion and caste.
- A family that is based on blood relations and whose members are biologically related to each other is considered to be a real 'family.'

Which relationship or family will face the least challenge in the community?

Mr. And Mrs. Sharma's relationship will face the least challenges as their relationship follows all social norms/standards. Both of them:

- Belong to the same caste and class.
- They are married
- They are in a heterosexual relationship.
- They have two children.

Which relationships or families are most vulnerable to violence?

Inter-caste and inter-religious relationships & marriages are likely to face violence. Violence is also resorted to safeguard and maintain the 'purity' of one's lineage.

- There is a greater chance of rejection of a relationship or violence when a Dalit person or a person from a minority religion forms a relationship with another person from the dominant caste or religion.
- Relationships that are not heterosexual in nature face more violence as they are considered incapable of procreation and society treats them as unnatural alliances.

Homosexual couples are often not accepted as parents or guardians and they are not considered capable of parenting a child.

- Those who define their own family by challenging not only the socially constructed gender norms but also family roles are often marginalized and sidelined.

Does this acceptability impact what is considered masculine in society?

- Many traits or behaviors popularly associated with masculinity are also linked to the more accepted forms of relationships in society. Performative traits among men like being virile, being able to get a girlfriend, etc., controlling and 'protecting' women of their communities, etc. reward heterosexual relationships by associating masculinities with them.
- Men who go against these norms often are vilified and not given the same masculine status. For example, in inter-caste relationships, men from marginalized communities tend to face violence from more privileged men.

What fundamental rights of individuals in the relationships discussed in this activity are being violated by society?

All those relationships or families that do not find a place in the innermost concentric circles face a threat to their rights

- Right to freedom and equality (Article 14): They are forced to hide their relationship or are unable to choose a partner of their choice due to a fear of violent backlash.
- Right to live without the threat of violence (Article 21): Emotional violence (perceived threat of people talking about them or making fun of them), verbal violence (abusing words), physical violence (beatings), etc.
- Right to live a life with dignity (Article 21): Lack of access to healthcare services due to one's sexual/gender identity, Losing the right to housing, employment, and education due to social eradication, and being more vulnerable to violence.

## Step 6

Open up the space for reflection: Ask the following questions:

1. Are there any thoughts and reflections after doing this activity?
2. Has anything similar happened around you, in your family, or community?
3. Are there any other relationships that might receive the most acceptance and no acceptance?
4. Are there things that we can do to change this in our own houses, families, and communities?

**Key Message:** People who challenge the social norms and patriarchal structures of relationships and families are usually not accepted by society and face violence. This also leads to a violation of their fundamental rights. Conclude by saying that even as society is something that cannot be changed overnight, there might be small things that we could do to bring a change. It is important to challenge notions of what is considered masculine and feminine in society because those are the spaces where we can change how society operates.





**AND MASCULINITIES  
MISINFORMATION**



# SESSION SUMMARY

Activity	Key Message	Time (min)
<p><b>Activity 1: Defend the Case</b></p> <p>Process: Participants are divided into two groups and they debate on a particular statement. One group to speak for the case and the other to speak against it, with each member adopting a unique character perspective. They then discuss how this made them feel.</p>	<p>When we debate any issue and defend our side, we are invested in the topic based on many things, such as our closeness to the issue based on our identity; or our need to prove ourselves right. This prevents us from looking at all aspects of the topic and understanding the needs and fears of people on the other side. Often, it can be more useful to use discussion and dialogue to bring people to see others' perspectives, instead of fighting about who is right and wrong.</p>	<p>60-70</p>
<p><b>Activity 2: Truth is Stranger than Fiction</b></p> <p>Process: Participants are given some false statements, they have to find out the correct version of the statements as well as the impact it'll have on people.</p>	<p>It is important to question who is being targeted and impacted by any piece of information, and the sources from which we receive these. Our perceptions are often misled to continuously create conflict among communities. Evoking dominant masculinities through misinformation is a very common tool in this process.</p>	<p>90</p>



## Activity 1:

# Defend The Case!

Time: 60 to 70 minutes

### Material

- **Case Statements:** Two thought-provoking case statements related to the themes of the workshop.
  - **Flipchart or Whiteboard:** To visually capture key points, arguments, and insights during the activity.
  - **Markers and Flipchart Paper/Whiteboard Markers:** For participants to write down their main points during group discussions.
  - **Timer or Stopwatch:** To manage the time allocated for each phase of the activity.
- While the world is moving towards neutralizing gender roles, the judiciary in India is revising, reforming, and focusing on women-centric laws, which raises concerns about whether this approach is making India regressive. or
  - Women should get reserved seats in public transport like buses and the metro.
  - “In a case where a teacher was accused of sexual harassment, students organized a campus protest demanding the teacher's dismissal. However, during the protest, four students carried placards advocating for a revision of the attendance policy, leading the college administration to misconstrue the protest as being focused on attendance policy revision rather than addressing the issue of sexual harassment.” Usually such protests are for creating situations of violence and unrest at campuses/public spaces.

### Step 1

Present a thought-provoking case and divide participants into two groups. Assign one group to speak for the case and the other to speak against it, with each member adopting a unique character perspective.

### Step 2

Give each group 20 minutes to develop arguments from their assigned perspective, encouraging them to gather evidence or examples that align with the side they are defending. Encourage those participants to speak up who are not getting a chance in the first few minutes.

### Step 3

Facilitate the debate by playing a “neutral” role like media person, allowing each side to present and counter arguments. Conclude with a reflection session to highlight the importance of understanding diverse perspectives, rather than solely aiming to win the debate. Statements:-

- There is a relationship between pleasure and well-being. or

### Step 4

Ask the participants the following questions one by one and encourage them to discuss each for a few minutes:

- How did this make you feel?
- Was I arguing for a point that I did not believe in? Why was I doing that?
- What are the things that stop us from learning new things, new perspectives?
- Is there a fear or discomfort in this process?
- How do media debates influence the way we form perspectives or opinions on different topics? Are they truly effective?
- Can we reflect on the sources of information we trust in our daily lives?

**Key Message:** As social beings, a lot of our judgments about social issues and topics can be outcomes of our realities that are tied to our identities and collective experiences. Our opinions, hence, don't exist in a vacuum, but are a culmination of multiple factors that shape our realities. Sometimes, we are expected to believe in an issue without critically challenging it. It could be because we are close to the issue because of our identity, or because people around us pressurize us to do so.

This prevents us from looking at all aspects of the topic and understanding the needs and fears of people on the other side. Since it is important to have informed opinions, it can also be useful to use discussion and dialogue to bring people in to see others' perspectives, instead of fighting about who is right and wrong. Acknowledging our biases before entering a space of conflict could help us make better judgments and choices.

## Activity 2:

# Truth is stranger than fiction

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Materials: Whiteboard and markers.

### Step 1

Divide the participants into three groups and give each of the groups one of the following statements on a chit:

- 80% of Domestic Violence cases are false
- Homosexuality can spread by touching
- Caste-based Reservation is a poverty alleviation of scheme
- Disability is a bad word

### Step 2

Inform the participants that all of the statements given to them are false and they have to find out what the correct version of this information would look like. Apart from this, the participants also have to find out the answer to three questions:

- Who is the intended audience for this message?

- Who is likely to be harmed by this misinformation?
- What impact could this misinformation have on both the audience and those it is about?
- What sources did we use to verify this information? (e.g., websites, news channels, reports)

### Step 3

Give the participants 20 minutes to do the group discussion. After 20 minutes, ask the participants to present what they discussed. As participants are sharing the discussion pointers, write down the answer to the four specified questions on the board. You can create a table for this and ask participants to answer them after each presentation

Who is the intended audience for this message?	Who is likely to be harmed by this misinformation?	What impact could this misinformation have on both the audience and those it is about?	What sources did we use to verify this information? (e.g., websites, news channels, reports)

#### Step 4

Once all the groups are done presenting - summarize the board.

- A lot of misinformation that we see around us is perpetuated by dominant groups in order to ensure that the status quo is maintained. Misinformation deliberately derails/or distracts the conversations that aim to create an inclusive society.
- It does so by villainizing/or run-down marginalized groups and stating that a lot of schemes and aids are being misused by them. Such as women filing false domestic violence cases or “rich-Dalit” people ‘misusing’ the reservations.
- This misinformation is used to create an atmosphere of mistrust amongst communities.

#### Step 5

Ask the participants if they have any questions regarding what has been talked about till now. Also, invite them to identify any other bits of misinformation that they might have seen/heard from people around them.

Invite them to try keeping this framework in mind while looking at any piece of misinformation around us. The point of the activity is not that these four statements needed to be clarified, but that these tools can help us check a piece of information we receive on social media and WhatsApp and family and friends conversations.

#### Step 6

Now ask the participants to sit with their eyes closed and reflect on the following questions. (Alternatively, you can also ask the participants to do this with their eyes open and to write on a sheet of paper what they are reflecting).

- Have I received any news/information that might have been false or misleading?
- How am I verifying the news that I am reading/receiving?
- Have I accepted and forwarded any information that might have been false or misleading?
- Is there anything I can do to change this?

*Note: If time is short, we can skip step 6 and 7 and conclude the session at step 5 with a key message.*

#### Step 7

After two minutes ask the participants if there is anything they would like to share with the group - try not to pressure them or force them into speaking in this space.

**Key Message:** There are various forms of misinformation we might see around us and it might be targeting particular groups/communities, it is important we keep this in mind while looking at information around us. Because misinformation also invokes values like masculinity to create conflict among communities. And we become the actors/tools of the violence and discrimination that is caused thereon.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on some of the above statements

### Statement 1: 80% of Domestic Violence cases are false.

#### 1. If 80% of cases are acquitted by the court, doesn't it prove that they are false?

Truth: According to the figures from National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) Crime in India Report 2020, less than 8% of all cases under investigation for domestic violence were found to be 'false'.

#### 2. If not, then how come so many cases of Domestic Violence are acquitted?

Answer - It is because Domestic Violence Cases are very difficult to prove in courts. According to the law, Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, the following kinds of violence are recognized -

- **Physical Violence:** Bodily pain, harm, and threat such as pushing, punching, and slapping
- **Verbal Abuse:** Insults, Abuse, Humiliation,
- **Emotional Violence -** Repeated threats to cause harm
- **Sexual Violence:** Sexual harm that attempts to humiliate, degrade, and abuses the body of another person.
- **Economic Violence :** prohibition from earning any income, deprivation from household income, alienation from resources.

Moreover, these forms of violence can overlap and one might experience various forms of violence at once. For example, it might be difficult for physical violence and sexual violence might take place at once. Or Emotional violence might also take place with verbal violence.

Ask the participants how these forms of violence would be proved in court:

- **Physical Violence:** Marks on the body, doctors' examination.

- **Verbal Abuse:** Recordings, messages, and chats.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Recordings, psychiatrists' assessment
- **Sexual Violence:** Marks on the body, doctors' examination
- **Financial Violence:** Bank Records, ownership to assets

Some of these methods to prove might be common across different forms of abuse such as survivors' testimony, the testimony of a relative/friend/neighbor.

Now ask the participants if there is any difficulty a survivor would face in proving this form of violence in the court:

- **Physical Violence:** Marks will be less visible or not visible after a few months. A doctor can confirm the injury but not the source.
- **Verbal Violence:** Recording the violence might be difficult since they might not know when it will happen or might face retaliation if the abuser finds out about the case of violence + might not be ready
- **Emotional Violence:** Recording the violence might be difficult since they might not know when it will happen or might face retaliation if the abuser finds out about the case of violence. A psychiatrist might confirm that violence has taken place but would not confirm the source of abuse.
- **Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence often leaves fewer visible marks over time, making it harder to identify. Doctors can confirm abuse shortly after the incident but may only identify the type of violence later. This is especially challenging in marriage where forced sex is a form of abuse but not legally recognized in India, complicating recognition and justice.
- **Economical Violence:** Bank statements can show transactions that take place but not the context under which the transactions took place. For example, we might have bank accounts but it will not show how much control our parents have over it.

Few more challenges make it difficult to prove the cases of violence:

- **The courts, lawyers, judges, police officers, and doctors** are spaces occupied by people (mostly men) who are also conditioned by patriarchal norms. This results in a lack of sensitivity towards the survivors, and turns into victim blaming, questioning the realities of the survivor, asking invasive questions, and denying that violence took place at all. This can also mean extended emotional and mental trauma for survivors which discourages them from trusting and accessing these systems.
- **Pressure from families:** Families refuse to support the survivor with violence, and there is pressure to go back into their husbands' homes which results in violence. Police also suggest options such as sorting the case informally. There are also many instances where families force survivors of violence to not file cases.
- **Mass under-reporting:** Around one in three cases of violence happen in India but only one in ten are reported. Most women either prefer help from their own families, spouses' families, or religious leaders. Less than three percent of the cases are reported.
- **"But why so late":** One such question frequently asked by the authorities is why was the complaint filed so late, shifting the blame towards the survivor for not leaving the abuser before. There can be many reasons for a person to file a complaint/talk about it years after the incident happened. This can include being in physical proximity with the abuser, having no resources to file a complaint or immediate threat of violence to their children or close ones. In such situations, it is important to understand the survivor should address the violence however they want in whatever situation.

Note: When discussing domestic violence (DV) cases, it's essential to recognize that many marginalized communities have little to no access to legal services. Even those who manage to report the violence often lack

awareness, resources, or the capacity to collect evidence to support their claims. This lack of legal knowledge and access to resources makes it difficult for survivors to prove the violence they've experienced, which is a crucial aspect when addressing potential misconceptions about false claims.

### 3. What about one-stop centers and female police officers?

Access to one-stop centers or police stations is also dependent on the resources available to the survivor. They could be mentally distressed and might also be under a lot of threat of violence if the perpetrator comes to know about the complaint or their visit to the one-stop centers. Moreover, a lot of women are not supported enough by their natal families or even their own support systems to take legal action against their perpetrators. In addition to this, there is a lack of awareness about the existence and the difference of approaches to DV cases by One stop centers.

### 4. What about the false cases filed?

False cases only constitute a very small percentage of the overall cases filed against domestic violence in India. The number of cases that get reported only constitutes less than 10% of cases of domestic violence in India. How can it be fair to remove a law because of x number of false cases over the overwhelming number of cases that go unreported?

### Statement 2: Caste-based Reservation is a poverty alleviation of scheme??

False, reservation is a policy for representation and not poverty alleviation. Despite constituting the largest part of population in India, there is hardly any representation of people from the Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi communities in government, media, or any other financial institute. An example of a rich Dalit person is often used to say that reservations should be removed but that takes away the focus on the experiences of discrimination and violence that people from marginalized castes generally face.

## **1. They are not in a position of power because they are not suited for it.**

We see that not a lot of women are in power, is it also because they are ill-suited for it? There can be many reasons for this but we cannot know them since we are not familiar with their anxieties/experiences. However, the important thing to keep in mind is these are systemic issues that have resulted in one community getting more power than the other community.

The idea that women are "not suited for power" is an unfair generalization that overlooks the deeper, systemic reasons behind their underrepresentation. But is it just women who are excluded from power? What about other marginalized communities—those based on caste, race, disability, gender or sexuality? How often do we consider the barriers they face, such as limited access to education, discrimination, or societal expectations? These challenges are not reflections of capability, but of deeply rooted inequalities that have shaped their opportunities. Could it be that the lack of representation is less about individual ability and more about the systems that exclude them?

And? Firstly, reservation is not about poverty alleviation but about representation. We have all heard of the case of a Dalit friend having a car but they can still be discriminated against because casteism is a form of social discrimination and not just financial discrimination. We commonly find out about people's caste through their surname and that will be with them always.

We need to focus on asking larger questions about the lack of opportunities in educational institutions and livelihood opportunities, instead of fighting amongst each other for access to seats and jobs.

It is important to ask policy and lawmakers to invest in these opportunities so that everyone gets access to opportunities, instead of taking away from marginalized groups who already did not have this access.

Questions to Reflect:-

- Beyond reservation, how effective are the current employment policies in addressing the country's workforce needs?
- Have we achieved the goals set through reservation, or is there still progress to be made?

Facilitator Tip:

Drawing parallels between gender and caste throughout the session can help in drawing parallels between different forms of marginalization. Eg - Can we say all women and trans\* people have achieved equality, just because we know one or two women who have achieved a higher socioeconomic status?

## **2. How can we find out if a person is from a marginalized group?**

Why is it important to understand a person's social location? Is it to judge whether they "deserve" an opportunity? If that's the case, we need to reflect on ourselves and ask: Do we have the right to decide who gets what? And if we do, where is that judgment coming from? Could it be influenced by our own privilege or social position? It's important to check and be aware of this.





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## ABOUT THE YP FOUNDATION

The YP Foundation (TYPF) is a youth-led and focused organisation that facilitates young people's feminist and rights-based leadership on issues of health equity, gender justice, sexuality rights, and social justice. TYPF ensures that young people have the information, capacity, and opportunities to inform and lead the development and implementation of programmes and policies that impact their lives and are recognised as skilled and aware leaders of social change.

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