

An Indian-Australian research partnership

Project Title:	Alternative Sexualities, Queer Cultures: Negotiations, Performances, Activisms	
Project Number	HSS0772	
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Research Clusters:

Research Themes:

Highlight which of the Academy's CLUSTERS this project will address? <i>(Please nominate JUST one. For more information, see www.iitbmonash.org)</i>		Highlight which of the Academy's Theme(s) this project will address? <i>(Feel free to nominate more than one. For more information, see www.iitbmonash.org)</i>	
1	Material Science/Engineering (including Nano, Metallurgy)	1	Advanced computational engineering, simulation and manufacture
2	Energy, Green Chem, Chemistry, Catalysis, Reaction Eng	2	Infrastructure Engineering
3	Math, CFD, Modelling, Manufacturing	3	Clean Energy
4	CSE, IT, Optimisation, Data, Sensors, Systems, Signal Processing, Control	4	Water
5	Earth Sciences and Civil Engineering (Geo, Water, Climate)	5	Nanotechnology
6	Bio, Stem Cells, Bio Chem, Pharma, Food	6	Biotechnology and Stem Cell Research
7	Semi-Conductors, Optics, Photonics, Networks, Telecomm, Power Eng	7	Humanities and social sciences
8	HSS , Design, Management	8	Design

The research problem

Define the problem

India has a rich culture of the acknowledgement and acceptance of diverse bodies, genders and sexualities. However, a coda of compulsory reproductive heteronormativity came to govern attitudes and laws around these, during two hundred years of British rule in the subcontinent. Post-independence, and starting from the mid-twentieth century, these silences, repressions and discriminations against alternative bodies, genders and sexualities started to be robustly contested through social activism, legal challenges and theoretical conceptualisations.

Much of the dominant work in the global academic arena around alternative sexualities and queer cultures has been driven by Western binary thought and Eurocentric epistemological frameworks. These negate the diverse definitional and differential conditions that have flourished around negotiations of gender and sexuality in South Asia. In the last 30 years though, an important body of scholarship has emerged from the subcontinent and its diasporas that critiques the framework of the western hegemony in the construction of non-heterosexual bodies, relationships and emotions, and asserts a context-specific, geo-politically-aware examination of the same.

In line with this potential interrogation of the wide range of embodied, gendered and sexualised representations in the context of hegemonic desires and aspirations, the project will draw attention to wider patterns of material inequality and agentic disenfranchisement at both global and local levels. It will develop a unique theoretical perspective on the South-South alliance, with the further aim to sharing new ideas and theoretical contributions on gender and sexuality at large.

Project aims

Define the aims of the project

This project invites explorations of the ontological and epistemological positioning of South Asian identities that do not conform to a compulsory reproductive heteronormativity, especially under increasingly fundamentalist and neoliberal factors that have been handmaidens to globalisation. It will address the politics of sexual diversity, with a renegotiation of the entrenched sexual and gender categories, as informed by Western hegemonic models. Instead, it will attempt to analyse the multiple ways of representations, models and the range of gender(ed) and sex(ed) expressions emergent in the myriad transnational geographies of the diaspora and the homeland. Furthermore, this intellectual alignment of new scholarship and activism will drive a relationship and network amongst those interested in South Asian non-normative embodied, gendered and sexual representations, that would try to connect a way of mutual learning, and a sense of solidarity-politics. In this fashion, it will promote a more upfront politics, however provisional and mediated, about the radically different ideas, desires and experiences that arise from a broad focus on South Asia.

Individual projects may adopt an interpretive approach to the broad topic including, but not limited to, one or more of the following threads:

- South Asian perspectives on gender and sexuality, with specific attention to scriptures/sculptures/songs etc.
- Places, Spaces, Imaginations, Performativity of non-normative/non-heterosexual identified representations
- Law, activism, civil society and the challenge to normative or compulsory reproductive heterosexuality
- Traditional practices, religious sanctions and social mediation in alternative genders and sexualities
- Colonial era narratives, queer case-studies, controversies and their relationship to the metropolis
- Contemporary representations of non-cisgendered identities in popular culture, media and film
- Institutional and Individual agency in the conceptualisation and transformation of the body
- The question of the 'trans': negotiating gender liminalities and gender transgressions.
- Contested territories/contested histories of the plurality of gender(ed) representations.
- Neoliberalism, globalised markets and the uses of non-normative bodies
- Solidarity-politics and the negotiations of embodied alterity in South Asia
- A new history of subcontinental alternative gender and sexuality

Expected outcomes

Highlight the expected outcomes of the project

We hope to make productive inroads in forming, shaping, and answering questions of gender and sexuality in relation to embodied alternative subject formations in the specific context of the subcontinent and its diasporas. We stand to gain further understandings into how the historical, political, social, legal and activist shaping of non-normative alterities create new histories and narratives of sexuality in South Asia and its diasporas. We also hope to have a better understanding of the tools of self-description and self-definition of non-cisgendered subjects and the ontological, epistemological and performative aspects of the same.

How will the project address the Goals of the above Themes?

Describe how the project will address the goals of one or more of the 6 Themes listed above

This project, is interdisciplinary in nature and offers rich scope for exploration in the fields of Sociology, Literary and Cultural Studies. It identifies a field of enquiry that is not internal to one discipline solely and needs to be navigated and mapped in conversation with other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences such as Gender and Sexuality, Feminism and Activism, History and Anthropology. Thus, it will be collaborative and interdisciplinary in nature.

Capabilities and Degrees Required

List the ideal set of capabilities that a student should have for this project. Feel free to be as specific or as general as you like. These capabilities will be input into the online application form and students who opt for this project will be required to show that they can demonstrate these capabilities.

Students should have a Masters of Philosophy (MPhil) in Sociology or Anthropology, English or Literary and Cultural Studies, or Gender and Sexuality studies or an allied discipline in Humanities and Social Sciences.

A proposal, no longer than 1000 words, with a specific topic, title and indicating research questions, is to be submitted. **Applications without a proposal will not be considered or shortlisted.**

Potential Collaborators

Please visit the IITB website www.iitb.ac.in OR Monash Website www.monash.edu to highlight some potential collaborators that would be best suited for the area of research you are intending to float.

Select up to **(4)** keywords from the Academy's approved keyword list (**available at <http://www.iitbmonash.org/becoming-a-research-supervisor/>**) relating to this project to make it easier for the students to apply.

Alternative gender and sexuality, compulsory reproductive heteronormativity, non-cisgender identities, queer cultures