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**DR. RAVINDRA KUMAR
SAMIR KHAN**

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Editor

Dr. Ravindra Kumar

Samir Khan

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Author

Dr. Ravindra Kumar and Samir Khan

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WALKING THROUGH THE SPECTRUM: A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION OF THE ADVANCES IN GENDER AND PSYCHOLOGY

Ms. Srishti Datta*, Ms. Semanti Mukherjee**

*Guest Lecturer, Scottish Church College, Kolkata (W.B.)

** Assistant Professor, Scottish Church College, Kolkata (W.B.)

ABSTRACT

As an emerging area of Psychology, studies on Gender have found its relevance and implication in individual and social well-being. When someone comes out, it is symbolic of coming out of the closet and announcing their non-cisheteronormative identity; on the other hand, being in the closet would refer to someone who has not disclosed their non-cisheteronormative identity. Undoubtedly, keeping one's non-cisheteronormative identity concealed in a prejudiced country like India has been viewed as a more favorable way of life for many. The idea around the closet revolves around the central premise that everyone possesses a cisheteronormative identity unless said otherwise. Gender identity cannot be contained in boxes, it is not an airtight conception that can be confined and restricted. Fluidity in gender is not a product of Western influences, is not something brought upon by the so called "Tiktok generation". Gender has always traversed spaces in a flowing state, it is simply now that it is finding its full expression. Gender identity is associated with an individuals' psychological experience of how they identify with a gender such as cisgender male, cisgender female, transgender, nonbinary, or genderqueer. One such minority is undoubtedly the LBGTQIA+ community which has faced much stigmatization and has fought a long battle to bring forth positive changes. We often hear from elders that "homosexuality is against the Indian culture" while history begs to differ. Although sex and sexuality are tabooed subjects in the present day and age, ancient Indian culture was rather vociferous in both the expression and understanding of sex. The notion of homosexuality is stigmatized in various countries around the world, including in India. Sexual minority members in India have reported actual, felt and internalized stigma, and carrying such stigmatized identity can lead to negative consequences. One's identity on one hand may be seen as the culmination of one's self-image, self-awareness and self-esteem, each of which is influenced by life experiences that contain 'social learning'. Gender as an emerging area of research in Psychology may work towards exploring family environment correlates that interact with gender as the key communicator of gender norms, gender stereotypes and roles, as the powerful influence