



The Philosophy of Sex and Love: From Mythology to Equality

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The concepts of sex and love have played a pivotal role in human history, particularly in the realms of religion and philosophy. Myths and ancient narratives across cultures have established the foundation for understanding gender roles, relationships, and love, shaping societal attitudes and structures to the present day. This article aims to explore the evolution of ideas about sex and love, from ancient mythology and religious doctrines to contemporary shifts toward equality and the acceptance of gender diversity.

Materials and Methods: This study employs qualitative research, with a focus on documentary analysis of primary sources, including mythological texts, religious scriptures, philosophical writings, and contemporary research. Cross-cultural comparisons and the synthesis of modern theories are also integral to this approach.

Results: This study identifies three key developments: (1) Myths and religious scriptures in various cultures have played a significant role in defining gender roles and relationships. (2) The conceptualization of love and sex has evolved from an emphasis on natural and religious roles to an embrace of diversity and equality. (3) Challenges to patriarchal systems and feminist movements have influenced shifts in societal attitudes and policies. (4) Contemporary societies increasingly demonstrate openness toward gender diversity and support for equality.

Conclusion: Examining the philosophical and religious foundations of sex and love enhances our understanding of the origins of social biases and structures. The transition toward equality and the acceptance of gender diversity necessitates a critical reevaluation of traditional ideologies and structural reforms at all levels of society.

Keywords: Sex, Love, Philosophy, Equality, Gender Diversity

Introduction

A comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of sex and love requires a multidimensional analysis encompassing cultural, religious, historical, and contemporary philosophical perspectives. These conceptual frameworks not only shape perceptions of gender roles and relationships but also influence power structures and social justice. This philosophical inquiry examines foundational ideologies and their evolution toward modern egalitarian principles.

The Cultural and Historical Dimensions of Sex and Love Cross-cultural and historical analyses reveal diverse and evolving conceptions of sex and love. Ancient Greek society notably celebrated alternative gender expressions, particularly valorizing male homoerotic relationships as noble and intellectually pure (LGBTIQA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025). Plato's Symposium documented profound debates elevating same-sex love as embodying fidelity and wisdom (LGBTIQA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025). Greek mythology further articulated a tripartite gender paradigm - male, female, and androgynous - reflecting sophisticated, non-binary understandings of human sexuality (LGBTIQA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025).



Comparative religious studies demonstrate equally complex frameworks. Indian traditions exhibit distinct gender and love paradigms, where ascetic practices were gender-differentiated yet culturally codified (Matichon, 2021). These examples underscore how religious and cultural contexts fundamentally shape conceptions of sexuality and intimacy.

Modern Philosophical and Ethical Analyses

Contemporary philosophy has expanded into ethical and human rights dimensions, critically examining sexuality's societal parameters. As an applied philosophical discipline, the philosophy of sex investigates prostitution, sexual violence, and gender identity (Wikipedia, 2019), revealing divergent ethical valuations. Kantian philosophy warns of sexuality's potential to objectify human dignity, while thinkers like Vannoy and Singer affirm its intrinsic value and pleasure (Wikipedia, 2019).

The classical Greek taxonomy of love, particularly Eros (passionate romantic love), remains epistemologically relevant (ALTV, 2021). Modern theorists like Robert Solomon advance this discourse through the concept of "shared identity," positing love as creating profound intersubjective bonds beyond physical connection (Spectrumth, 2022).

Impact on Power Structures and Social Justice

These philosophical investigations transcend interpersonal dynamics to interrogate macro-level power architectures. Critical gender philosophy exposes and challenges oppressive structures - from rigid gender roles to systemic discrimination (Wikipedia, 2019; LGBTQIA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025). Such analyses catalyze egalitarian movements by deconstructing institutionalized inequalities. This multidisciplinary examination - synthesizing cultural, religious, historical, and philosophical lenses - provides crucial insights into the ideological foundations shaping gender relations and the ongoing transformation toward sexual equality in contemporary societies.

Objectives

1. Examine the philosophical and religious foundations underlying conceptions of sex and love
2. Investigate the influence of mythological and scriptural traditions on gender roles and relational paradigms
3. Analyze contemporary transformations in the conceptualization of sex and love within modern societies
4. Construct philosophical frameworks to inform inclusive gender policies and education

Literature review

Mythological and Scriptural Traditions

Greek Mythology (Plato, 1996)

Plato's *Symposium* preserves the seminal myth of primal humans existing in three genders: male, female, and androgynous (combining male and female). These primordial beings possessed spherical forms with dual faces, four arms, and four legs (LGBTQIA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025). According to the narrative, their extraordinary power provoked Zeus to split them asunder, condemning humans to perpetually seek their "other half" to restore primordial wholeness. This etiology frames love fundamentally as a quest for completion (LGBTQIA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025). The myth notably legitimizes same-sex love as natural and noble, particularly male homoerotic relationships, which were valorized not as carnal indulgence but as expressions of courage and intellectual virtue (LGBTQIA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025).

Hindu Scriptures: Padma Purana (Doniger, 1975)

The *Padma Purana* presents sophisticated conceptions of human creation that transcend binary gender constructs. Hindu cosmology embraces gender fluidity through deities like Ardhanarishvara (the androgynous Shiva-Parvati composite), reflecting doctrinal acceptance of gender diversity as intrinsic to universal unity (Doniger, 1975). This theological framework demonstrates Hinduism's historical flexibility regarding gender roles and sexual identities.

Jainism (Jaini, 1991)

Jain soteriology reveals contentious gender debates, particularly regarding women's capacity for spiritual liberation (moksha). While some sects affirmed female enlightenment, others restricted

this possibility to males (Jaini, 1991). These doctrinal disputes illuminate the complex intersections between gender interpretation and religious authority.

Modern Philosophical Discourses

Patriarchal Structures (Beauvoir, 1949; Chakraborty, 2018)

Simone de Beauvoir's foundational critique in *The Second Sex* (1949) analyzes how patriarchal systems construct women as "the Other," institutionalizing gender oppression. Contemporary research (Chakraborty, 2018) demonstrates how these structures permeate cultural institutions, perpetuating systemic inequalities across familial, educational, and political spheres.

Feminist Challenges (Narayan, 1997)

Feminist theory extends beyond advocating women's rights to fundamentally interrogate socioculturally constructed gender roles (Narayan, 1997). This paradigm shift facilitates critical engagement with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations while challenging patriarchal power dynamics.

Gender Diversity Recognition (Butler, 1990; APA, 2015; Inglehart & Norris, 2016)

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990) deconstructs essentialist notions of sex, demonstrating how gender is iteratively constituted through discursive practices. Institutional validation emerges through the American Psychological Association's guidelines (2015) affirming gender diversity, while sociological research (Inglehart & Norris, 2016) documents global trends toward greater acceptance of sexual minorities. These developments reflect evolving paradigms that accommodate fluid gender identities and relationships.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this article is grounded in philosophical and sociological analysis, focusing on the "ideational roots" that shape gender roles and love. It employs cross-cultural comparison and synthesizes contemporary concepts related to issues of equality and sexual diversity. This approach aims to uncover the foundational ideas that influence how gender and love are understood across different societies and historical contexts, while integrating modern perspectives on inclusivity and social justice.

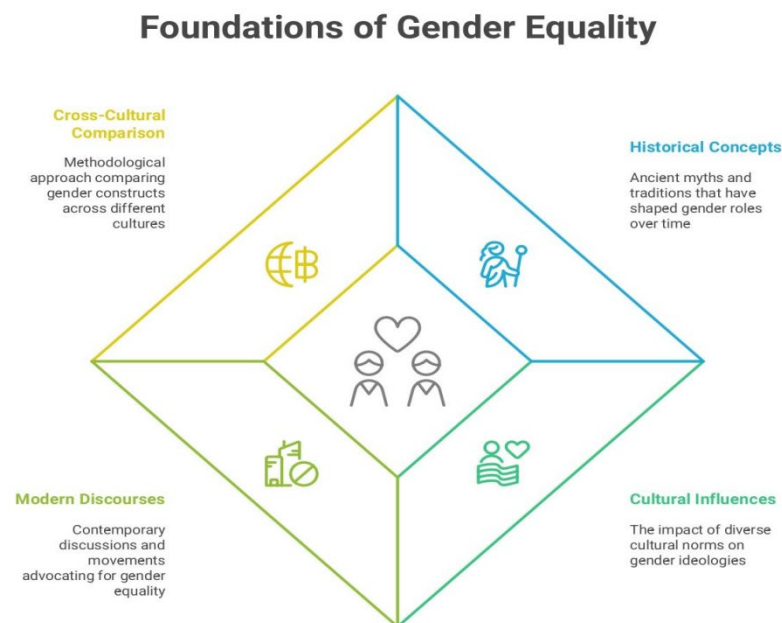


Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Methodology

Analysis of Primary Texts

This method involves studying original and foundational texts such as ancient myths, religious scriptures, philosophical writings, and dialogues from various historical periods. Analyzing these primary sources allows for a deep understanding of original ideas and conceptual foundations related to gender and love. The approach emphasizes detailed interpretation of texts to uncover hidden meanings and relevant cultural contexts. For example, analyzing Greek myths that describe the existence of three genders and the search for the “other half,” or studying the *Padma Purana*, which reflects gender diversity in Hinduism. This method establishes a solid knowledge base for in-depth conceptual analysis.

Academic Literature Review

This involves systematically collecting and analyzing scholarly research, articles, and academic texts related to the study topic, such as gender philosophy, feminism, patriarchy, or theories of love. The literature review provides an overview of existing knowledge, highlights academic debates, and identifies gaps that require further investigation. It also helps researchers formulate research questions and theoretical frameworks in a reasoned and structured manner.

Cross-cultural Comparison

Cross-cultural comparison is a research approach that examines concepts or phenomena across different cultures to identify similarities and differences in perspectives on gender and love. For instance, comparing the concept of love in Greek philosophy with Theravāda Buddhist philosophy, or studying gender diversity in Hinduism alongside Jainism. This method broadens perspectives, reduces cultural bias, and enhances understanding of the complexity and diversity of ideas on a global scale.

Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Modern Concepts

This method compares traditional ideas—such as myths, religious doctrines, and ancient philosophies—with modern concepts like feminism, gender theory, and the acceptance of gender diversity. It investigates the evolution and development of ideas about gender and love, revealing how societies respond to power structures. This analysis highlights challenges to patriarchy and promotes gender equality in contemporary contexts. It also clarifies the role of philosophy as a tool for social change.

Together, these four methodological tools work synergistically to provide a comprehensive and nuanced study. Starting with the analysis of key primary data, followed by synthesizing academic knowledge, comparing cultural perspectives, and finally analyzing the transformation of ideas over time, this approach enables a broad and profound understanding of the philosophy of gender and love.

Results

Firstly, in the realm of mythology and religion, Greek and Hindu myths reflect a more complex and inclusive understanding of gender diversity and forms of love than is often recognized in modern society. Greek mythology presents the concept of three genders and the search for the “missing half,” symbolizing love as a quest for wholeness and unity. Hindu religious narratives similarly depict acceptance of diverse genders and gender roles beyond the male-female binary. However, Jainism reveals deeply rooted gender inequality, as evidenced by debates restricting women’s roles in attaining spiritual liberation, highlighting the divergent gender perspectives across different religious traditions. Secondly, regarding philosophy and patriarchy, the study finds that patriarchal systems have been supported and legitimized through sacred texts and cultural traditions. Biological determinism has been used as a tool to affirm and maintain male dominance in society, systematically oppressing and limiting the roles of women. These ideas are deeply embedded in cultural norms and institutions, contributing to multifaceted gender inequalities.

Lastly, in the context of contemporary society, significant changes have emerged from feminist thought and movements advocating for gender equality. These have played a crucial role in challenging patriarchal systems and promoting acceptance of gender diversity and new forms of relationships. Contemporary societies are increasingly open to and accepting of the complexity of gender identities, resulting in cultural and structural transformations that genuinely support gender equality and diversity.





In summary, this study demonstrates that the foundations of gender roles and love are complex and multifaceted, ranging from ancient myths and religions that reflect both diversity and inequality, to contemporary social changes aimed at equality and recognition of gender diversity. Together, these reflect the evolving processes of ideas and social structures related to gender and love in a broader and deeper dimension.

Discussion

The full picture: sexuality and love relationship explained by the point of the myth, religion, culture, and contemporary living perspective, the article is quite insightful. The authors mentioned that the sex and love myth of all time is still believed by many societies and interpreted to date. In Greek philosophy, Plato (1996) stated that in the beginning, three genders existed: male, female, and neuter (half-man and half-woman). The text also gives insight into another myth, which mentions the 'love quest' where the male and female were looking for their "other half" (LGBTIQA+ in Greek Philosophy, 2025). The story became supportive of the ideations about the 'other half,' and for same-sex love relationships, it was righteous to love in the right ways. Not only were these myths detaching the binaries of genders, but they were also providing equality in love search stories.

Sexuality: Towards a Liberation Theology article is also quite appealing. The article explains a situation similar to the previous discussion. Hindu philosophies portrayed the male and female powers by placing Ardhanareshvara, who depicted an ideal belief of male and female as one (Doniger, 1975). It represented that the genders in this context were fluid, and there are more than two types of gender identity. The other religion, Jainism, mentions that women are disallowed from having the concept of liberation. The soul, however, was attached to the social world, so women were assigned the status of property (Jaini, 1991). It is proven that cultures may agree or disagree with the freedom of the soul based on gender.

Sexuality and sexual relationships, contemporary and future aspects article, mentioned that contemporary philosophy faces gender discrimination at its critical point. In the previous context, the woman's soul is under the hand of a male. Simone de Beauvoir, a contemporary philosopher (1949), wrote the well-known novel, "Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)" where she argued that women were biologically branded as the 'Other'. After this, due to the increased percentage of feminism and reformation by different groups (APA, 2015; Butler, 1990; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2006; Butler, 2009), the contemporary gender norms changed and started to address the concept of fluid and more than two genders. Butler (1990) stated that gender identity is not fixed; instead, it is fluid because it is done through continuous performance. According to the study, recent gender norms and their relationship are becoming acceptable and have started to shape countries to have greater sex and gender diversity and rights to an equal relationship.

After revising all the articles, it is concluded that it is inspiring to review the past to move into the future and change the perception. Sexuality and love relationships in different contexts have shown that what society is living today has established its existence since the past. This ideology needs the courage of a critique to move onto the right path. The right in an aspect that the plurality in gender and love relationships has been built through historical circumstances, and continues to live with those mindsets. As a result, this initiates the need for supporting critical thinking and policies that move towards gender equality and a diverse relationship, and bridge the discrepancies.

Knowledge Contribution

The research results can be synthesized into new concepts as follows;

1. Love and Gender as Philosophical Constructs of Wholeness

The study reinterprets ancient myths (e.g., Plato's *Symposium*) not as mere stories, but as foundational philosophical constructs representing love as a quest for existential wholeness. The concept of humans seeking their "other half" illustrates an early understanding of relational identity that transcends modern binary gender norms. This myth supports the naturalization of same-sex love and introduces a tri-gender paradigm—male, female, and androgynous—thus forming a conceptual bridge to current ideas of gender fluidity and non-binary identities.



2. Gender Diversity as Theologically Embedded

By examining Hindu texts like the *Padma Purana* and the figure of Ardhanareshvara, the study introduces a new concept: the theological fluidity of gender identity. Unlike Abrahamic traditions, these Indic philosophies enshrine gender diversity within divinity itself, suggesting that gender variance is not just socially permissible but cosmically integrated. This contrasts sharply with Jainism, where spiritual liberation is contested along gender lines, exposing divergent doctrinal attitudes toward gender equity.

3. Patriarchy as an Institutionalized Epistemology

The article presents patriarchy not just as a social phenomenon but as a deeply embedded epistemology—one that legitimizes itself through religious texts, biological determinism, and philosophical exclusion (Beauvoir, 1949; Chakraborty, 2018). This leads to a conceptual shift: patriarchy is not just a power imbalance but a knowledge system, shaping what is accepted as moral, natural, or divine. Recognizing this allows for more targeted dismantling through education, policy, and critical theory.

4. Performativity and Identity as Social Practice

Following Butler's (1990) theory, the study reinforces the idea of gender as performative, arguing that identity is not an inherent essence but a continual social enactment. This view is bolstered by contemporary social movements and the increasing institutional acknowledgment of gender diversity (APA, 2015). The result is a new framework where identity is fluid, relational, and dynamic, demanding flexible legal and cultural structures.

5. Love and Equality as Interdependent Social Ideals

The contemporary reconceptualization of love includes equality as a core criterion. Moving beyond romantic or reproductive purposes, love is now understood as a space of mutual recognition and freedom, particularly in queer and feminist discourses. The article proposes that genuine love cannot exist under systems that deny agency or equality, thus aligning personal intimacy with political justice.

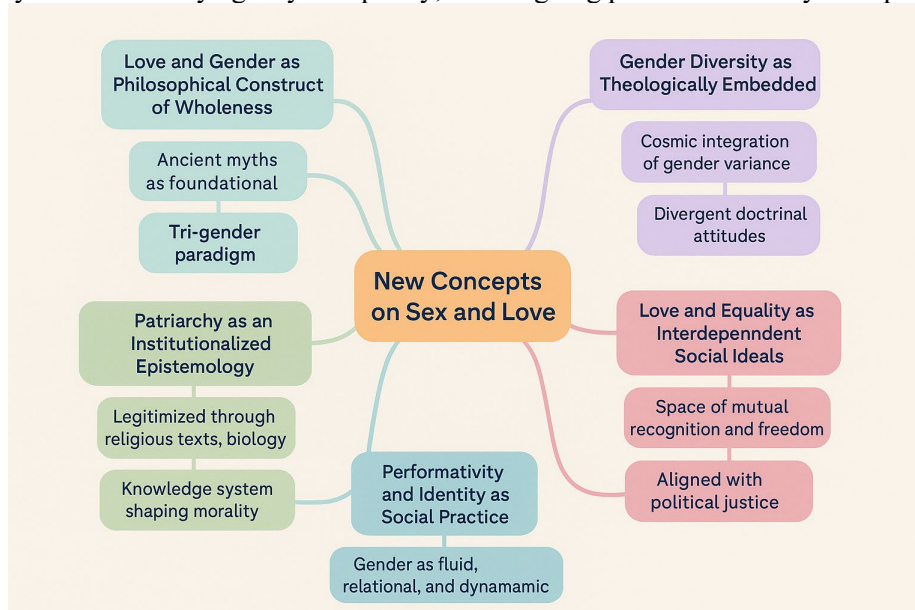


Figure 2: Knowledge Contribution

Recommendation

1. *Promote interdisciplinary research on gender and love within religious and philosophical dimensions.*

Encourage research that integrates knowledge from various disciplines such as religion, philosophy, and social sciences to gain a holistic understanding of gender and love. Exploring these dimensions offers new perspectives on values and gender roles in different societies,



as well as diverse concepts of love; such interdisciplinary studies can inform policies and practices that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of different beliefs and experiences.

2. *Advocate for curriculum reforms to include comprehensive coverage of gender diversity and equality.*

Push for educational reform at all levels to ensure that curricula thoroughly address gender diversity and equality. Early education on these topics helps instill respect for differences and reduces gender-based stigma in society.

Inclusive curricula prepare students to engage with a diverse world and foster peaceful, respectful coexistence.

3. *Support social movements aimed at eliminating gender bias and inequality.*

Support social movements that aim to eliminate gender bias and inequality in areas such as law, education, and employment. These movements play a critical role in raising awareness and driving systemic change across societies. Active participation from individuals, communities, and organizations is key to achieving sustainable gender equality.

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