

УДК 101

© 2013 L.V. Zharov

**SPECIFICITY OF SEXUALITY EXPRESSION IN MODERN RUSSIA
(PRELIMINARY DIAGNOSIS AND FORECAST ATTEMPT)**

**[Л.В. Жаров. Специфика проявлений сексуальности
в современной России (предварительный диагноз и попытка прогноза)]**

The problem of sexuality manifestations in present-day Russia is studied. More than 3000 statements of forumers on 12 websites devoted to sexual problems for the recent 3 years are analyzed. There is a great number of the conducted interview among 100 young men (students) aged 18-22. There are outlined interconnected social groups determining sexual potential of the Russian society (taking into consideration transitional forms). The first group can be characterized as a fundamentalist one because its followers keep to traditional religious views on sexuality. The influence of this group for the recent quarter of a century has been increasing though its weight is relatively small and can hardly overstep 10% of the population. The second group consists of adherents of the western consumer society's values including all the range of thinkable sex services. The number of this group is also close to one tenth of the population. The third and the biggest group of forumers is "the silent majority" - they have got an opportunity to give at least half-anonymous opinions on the matters of sexual life they are interested in.

Key words: sexuality, sexual norm, pathology, sexual culture.

The recently gone patriarch of the native sexology science Academician Kon I.S. completed the 3rd edition of his monograph "Strawberries on the birch tree: sexual culture in Russia" rather sadly. He stated that a modern anti-sexual crusade in Russia is just one of the aspects of the phenomenon of non-traditionalism and for modern Russian sexual culture there is a vast gap between a declared system of religious-moral values and a real behavior of the youth [1]. From his point of view Russian sexual complexes are socio-cultural in their nature and are conditioned with a deeply rooted and centuries old custom to follow a group standard of behavior, with a considerable variety of opinions on the matter.

Unfortunately this problematic is becoming less demanded by both the scientific community and social consciousness. There are two dominating processes – uncon-

ditional condemnation of all non-canonical (from an Orthodox point of view) ways and forms of intimate and marital behavior of people and moral indignation concerning increase of frequency of sexual abuse cases and non-traditional forms of contacts. Strangely enough but either in the first or in the second case a profound scientific study of the phenomena is out of the question. At the same time more and more people try to understand what a real norm in sexual behavior is and it resembles the search of a real czar or an ideal state structure. We can remember the words of Dostoyevsky who once said that many people suffer exactly from their health, i.e. from being absolutely sure of their normality. (A Writer's Diary, 1877).

As for conditions to hold full mass and representative social studies of sexual manifestations in modern Russia, there are fewer and fewer of them due to disinterest of power structures, church, commercial and non-government organizations in the results. The only place where the thought of modern Russian is extremely active is various forums of the main internet sex sites.

Research and generalization of the opinions on such sites can be of great interest for both estimation of the real state of sexual behaviour of people and phenomena of sexual mythology in modern Russia. The undoubted merit of such a source is quite a high degree of frankness. Of course we should consider a phenomenon of trolling as a special form of internet addiction and because of it it's necessary to resort to a procedure of verification.

For these purposes there were analyzed more than 3000 statements of the visitors of 12 websites devoted to sexual problems of the Russians for the recent 3 years. The range of questions and answers is quite wide – from vitally important problems such as - why does a person need sex? - to completely technical or hygienic questions which seem to be known to any grown-up.

The breadth of views is also a question – is it a modification of the much talked about breadth of a Russian soul which is interested in everything, or the result of bad awareness, lack or absence of sex education including elements of anatomy and physiology of genitals?

It is appropriate to mention a very low level of knowledge of basic physiological processes in a human body and their regulation including a sexual function. There is an impression that the flow of information about “this” which has overwhelmed the Internet isn't converted to the elements of scientific knowledge but generates some fanciful sexual mythology.

What interests our contemporary in this complex and paradoxical sphere of human relations? The majority of statements and questions reduce to a perennial and “cursed” problem – am I normal and do my partner and me do “this” properly? Here it is supposed that our forefathers did everything properly and our descendants will be better than we in this respect, too. But what happens to our contemporaries is either inconceivable or demands urgent measures of a state or social character. The data of the interviews that are published from time to time, concerning the degree of satisfaction of the Russians with their intimate relationship are in constant contradiction with the statements on the forums. We can suppose that people, who are happy and lucky in this sphere, don’t need to speak about it and mostly failures debate on the topic on the forums. In any case, the general tone of the discussions is often very anxious and the character of the statements is absolutely illogical.

So question number one – are there real men and women in Russia and what is the proper way of their behaviour in their intimate relations? We should point out that in mass consciousness the notions of “love”, “sex” and “marriage” stand quite apart and though many people would like to have this cocktail “in one glass”, life is rich in other examples. Nevertheless, the majority want to be loved, sexually attractive and happy in marriages though the opinions concerning these life phenomena are in a very wide range. It mostly concerns a role and behaviour of “real” men and women in love, sex and marriage. The essence of the problem consists in the fact, that many people feel intuitively that the real, original image of a man and a woman has been distorted and they try to find it in the glorious past without analyzing the corresponding historic sources and with no logics in their statements. Both men and women accuse each other, power, westernists, adherents of a different faith, non-Russians, oligarchs, mass media and the whole world in their own misery and lack of a necessary order in Russia.

It’s interesting to mention that the majority of the forumers, declaring themselves as unbelievers, are busy with the search of some ideal of men and women’s behaviour which can be seen in life of our “glorious” forefathers who did everything properly but for some reason didn’t pass it on or somebody prevented them from doing it.

When we try to explain corruption of the ideal we can pay attention to one more peculiarity. Many people persistently explain present-day problems of sexual life according to a principle – “after that means because of that”. Comprehension

of complex dialectics of the cause-effect relation in this sphere is the fate of only few people and not on the theoretical but on the intuitive level. In the majority of cases the reason of all sexual problems is searched not in oneself but in another one or others, also in circumstances of education, environment, influence of some evil powers of social or spiritual character, etc.

So we can state that the majority of participants of net discussions on the topics of sexuality are in fact out of the field of modern science and scientific outlook, and use just scrappy data from unverified sources and semi-literate interpretations of scientific data in mass media.

It is no wonder that para-scientific and mythological constructions, mystical practices and empirical “discoveries” of the facts that have been known for a long period of time, flourish nowadays. So attention is drawn to appearing and expansion of the phenomenon of asexuality in modern Russian culture as a special new model of the world outlook and behaviour [2; 3]. In any way the majority of the forumers strive to an active and successful sexual life considering it to be not only a supplement to love and marriage but an independent source which makes life more happy and sensible. This hedonistic guideline has an evident compensatory character when people search in sex the things which they don't have in their real life due to some obstacles, mainly personal ones.

In this respect it's worth regarding the data of the interview among 100 young men (students) aged 18-22 which was conducted on our basis. (Ibragimova A.A. 2013) [4].

Despite a widespread opinion more than half of the interviewed (53%) supposes that a norm of a man's behaviour is to have a consecrated marriage aiming to have children and further consolidation of their matrimony union. The rest of the interviewed supports the opportunity of a civil marriage or just cohabitation.

Three fourths of the interviewed think that a sexual norm doesn't stay unchanged but subjects to fluctuation during life.

It's extremely interesting to give the opinion of more than half of men (56%) concerning the fact that a present-day unsatisfactory state of male sexuality is connected with the phenomenon of female emancipation and the growth of their sexual needs. At the same time every fifth interviewed connected this phenomenon with the change of a traditional role of a man in a family, and secondly with the increase of amale asexuality phenomenon in our society.

Answering the questions about deviations and perversions of male sexuality the majority of the interviewed attributed homosexuality to them (as a deviation – 66%, perversion – 30%). Then there followed pedophilia, fetishism, sadomasochism, zoophilia, necrophilia, transvestism. Three fourth of the interviewed disapprove of the phenomena of male homosexuality, and the others almost equally treat it either positively or neutrally.

It may seem strange but the majority of medical students believe that a genetic factor in homosexual behavior occupies just 39% while other opinions were equally divided between the role of fashion and perverting in the process.

Taking into consideration a considerable increase of sexual abuse in our society in general, it was of great interest to study opinions of the interviewed concerning the reasons of the phenomenon. It turns out that 54% of the interviewed connect the increase of such abuse with the decay of spirituality, 24% connect it with changing of a traditional male role and 15 % consider bean counter to be the cause of it.

There appears a question - what is the character of the undoubtedly existing connection between a socio-political structure of a social body and forms of sexual experience of its members? After classical works by M. Foucault about interdependence of power and sexuality with his principle of isomorphism of gender and social relations and paradoxes of J. Baudrillard about “outstepping the sexuality limits” it is evident that we are to outline those social groups the interconnection of which determines sexual potential of the given society. We can differentiate between three groups, taking into account transitional forms, too.

The first group can be characterized as a fundamental one because its adherents follow traditional religious ideas on sexuality, accepting no innovations and exceptions.

Here there is no difference between Christians (with considerable confessional differences), Moslems, Buddhists, Judas and others. They all support the idea of a rigid limitation of sexuality, tabooing of its separate manifestations, rejection of any deviations from the ones recommended in their Holy Writs and traditions. The motto of this group – that’s the way our forefathers did, it is bequeathed from the above and this is the only way the wayward humanity can be saved from the filth. It looks like a motto “If you are not with us you are against us” but as a result everything is explained in Christianity through love - even to enemies. The influence of this group for the recent quarter of a century has been growing though its proportion is relatively small and can hardly overtep 10% of the population.

The second group consists of the followers of the western consumer society's liberal values including all the range of thinkable sexual services. The motto of this group is the following - Try and practice everything that you can and wish (a peculiar "pansexuality") taking into consideration traditions of the society and in consent with your partner or partners. "A humanistic sex" according to E. Bern's model is the highest achievement of civilization for them and various technical innovations are a desirable sphere of action, especially in the sphere of virtual communication. It resembles a so-called "NBICS" revolution [5]. The influence of the group, that was quite considerable in the 90s, now has greatly reduced and its followers are attributed with all thinkable and unthinkable vices and perversions, they are considered to be agents of a decadent western civilization the aim of which is to destroy our people and to lead them into the primeval forest of a sexual debauch. They are supposed to answer for sexual abuse especially regarding children and for all negative consequences of sexual liberalism and even for development of sexology as a science. Separate voices, claiming to respect human rights for free development and sensibility, sink in the chorus of pseudo criticism which turns into "zoological" hatred to its followers. Numerically this group is close to one tenth of the population as well.

The third and the biggest group of net discussions participants is "the silent majority"; they have got an opportunity for at least half-anonymous opinions on the matters of sexual life. Their outlook is very unstable -there are elements of belief in God, mysticism with superstitions, and everyday mythology. Scientific truths are regarded with distrust and scientists are supposed to be partisans either of their clients' money or their own sexual orientation. Everyday "sensations" and "shocking" details of somebody's sexual biography are regarded as the ultimate truth. In this group there is a relatively small contingent of people who try to comprehend what is going on and ask for some practical advice.

What is the dynamics of these groups and what is the direction of the development? It is impossible to answer the questions now. If we give a subjective prognosis of the foreseeable future we can say that the state of sexuality sphere will be connected with a clearer self-determination of people from the third group and with the potential increase of wealth of the majority of the population. Sexuality can be compared with a flower which blooms in the fertile soil with minimum of health and life dangers. It can make life either more beautiful or even more unbearable. We can conclude that our future is in our heads and hands.

REFERENCES

1. *Kon I.S.* Strawberries on the birch tree: sexual culture in Russia”, 3rd edition, Moscow, Time Publishers, 2010, p.561
2. *Zharov L.V.* Phenomenon of a dormant Eros in modern Russian culture (asexuality as our future). Humanities and social sciences, 2011, № 3 <http://www.hses-online.ru>
3. *Zharov L.V.* State of sexuality in present-day Russian culture (subjective notes of an objective process). Humanities and social sciences, 2012, № 2 <http://www.hses-online.ru>
4. *Ibragimova A.A.* Ideas of a sexual norm and its variants for men in present-day Russia. Federal Congress “Sexual health of a man. Current interests of science and health care”. 26-27 September, 2013, Russia, Rostov-on-Don, p. 40-41
5. *Alexeyeva I.Y., Arshinov V.I., Tchekletsov V.V.* “Techno-humans” via “post-humans” – NBICS-revolution and a man’s future. Russian studies in philosophy, 2013 № 3, p.12-21

*Rostov state medical
university. Rostov-on-Don, Russia*

November, 19, 2013
