Chapter 3

Historical Development of Sexuality Education

3.1. Introduction

As the title suggests, the following chapter is dedicated to the historical exploration of sexuality education; it’s development as a social phenomenon across and within cultures. The contemporary understanding and ideas associated with sexuality education have definite historical roots. The taboo associated with sexuality education is related to the taboo associated with sex which in turn is elevated by the stringent sexual mores governing sexual discipline in most societies. The ‘risk discourse’ embedded in sexuality education can be traced to both sexual revolutions taking places in different historical periods and to their social repercussions. Sexual revolutions of seventeenth century celebrated sex and relaxed the sexual mores. But the libertine ways of people in twentieth century led to rising rate of unplanned pregnancy, disease and death. The repressive undertone found in sexuality education is rooted in the need to control of passion and desires so that a safe life can be ensured. Sexuality education is fundamentally linked to the conceptualisation of sex and sexuality. The complex historical trajectory of sexuality, following Foucault, is a discourse in itself; it is a source of constituent knowledge, social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations. The discourse of sexuality is marked by contradictions and patriarchal power relations. In both Western societies and Eastern traditions, sexuality had been repressed and celebrated in alternative epochs; a reflection of such inconsistency is found in historical perception about sexuality education. It is perceived as knowledge necessary for sexual satisfaction yet society remains in constantly apprehensive of its capability of ‘polluting innocence’.

So the main objective of this chapter is to chronologically trace the socio- historical development of sexual mores and its implications on ideas associated with sexuality education in West and in India in past. This first section deals with sexuality in West and describes how it shapes informal and formal
school-based sexuality education in the twentieth century. In the second section, the sexual order of
Indian tradition is discussed followed by emergence of public deliberation on implementing school-
based sexuality education in post-independence India. In both the sections, attempt has been made to
link the present circumstances and complications associated with institutionalizing sexuality education
with the social tendencies and inclinations of the past. In other words, this engagement with the past is
to locate and understand the root of modern discourses on sexuality education.

3.2. Sexuality Education in the West

In Europe, sex education was integrated within the development process of children and adolescents
since the Enlightenment period. Thinkers Rousseau and Diderot deliberated on guiding adolescents into
adulthood in a proper manner so as not to alienate Church and social mores. Sex education was
included in public schools in America at the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, at
a cultural context when civil society critically argued about various social ills and the potentiality of
education to address the overall degeneration. The key message of almost all twentieth-century sex
education attempts was abstinence from sex outside marriage. The same period, Moran identify, was
marked by adults emphasising on keeping adolescents chaste by stressing on the dangers of venereal
disease (Carter 2001: 214). Around middle of the century, classes in family life gained popularity
which was later again dominated by renewed discussion of disease prevention. A major section of
population came to believe that there was a direct connection between venereal disease and the
breakdown of marriage and sex education was the solution to combat both the threats. But controversy
and ambivalence regarding role of sex education was evident in both Europe and America. All forms of
sex education was not perceived as benign since it was seen as capable of corrupting individuals by
instigating promiscuous sexual activity; that sexual knowledge will transform into sexual activity. Thus
according to Carter, sex education occupied ‘an uncomfortably ambivalent epistemological field’
caught in between “the desire to shape sexual activity and the fear of stimulating it, between the wish to
enforce some forms of sexuality and the dread of accidentally fostering others’ (ibid.: 217).
3.2.1. The First Sexual Revolution and Thoughts on Sexuality Education

In Europe, the period between 1660 and 1800 marked secular changes in sexual attitudes and behaviour. But the period before that presents a different picture; the culture of self-discipline at all sphere of life was taken as the mark of civilization and unchastity was denounced as weakness. The fundamental ethic was that men and women are personally responsible for their action no matter how great the temptation was. Dabhoiwala (2012) roots the foundation of sexual discipline in the basic patriarchal principle which held that ‘every woman was the property of her father or husband’; so when any stranger have sex with her, it was regarded as a theft (ibid.: 27). In addition to that, prostitution was accused of spreading venereal disease, discord within family, provoked crime and led to other sins like drunkenness, cheating and murder.

Prior to the first sexual liberation certain conditions developed that helped in the change in attitude towards sex. The demographic pressure and shortage of resources lessened and the fear of inheritance problems due to increasing bastard children receded to some extent. The English Civil War and the American Revolution of seventeenth and eighteenth century highlighted the notion of personal liberty and the rights of the subject became a central political issue. The main theological and philosophical controversy in the early Enlightenment era on defining moral laws, the status of Bible and the proper foundation of ethical authority caused civil society debate about the prohibitions that guarded the notion of chastity. Consequently, moral norms became more pluralist and liberal in nature. Together, these factors cumulated to create a new openness about sex by the end of eighteenth century transforming the culture of the English-speaking world. However, it was primarily the sexual urge of urban, white, heterosexual, propertied men located in London and North American colonies that was celebrated (ibid.: 343). The first sexual revolution acted as the watershed between the two periods in the sense that the moral policing by the Church and the State ceased to a great extent. Sex outside marriage was no more considered dangerous and wrong. The huge variety of the new media acted as
the catalyst to the process. Special masculine clubs were set up to celebrate sexual pleasure in groups. The period is also marked by increasing popularity of courtesans who were not only mistresses but independent entrepreneurs with good amount fame and fortune. Sexual disease and sexual health were publicly debated. Pornographic writings that were largely confined to Latin, Greek and Italian literature now flourished as the ‘English erotica’ (ibid.: 348). In spite of drastic changes in sexual attitude, according to Dabhoiwala, the inherent contradiction and ambivalence related to sexuality persisted through simultaneous repression and celebration of sex. The new enlightened thinking did not wholly discard the distinction between permissible and impermissible sex; it only redefined it. There were stricter proscriptions for what is regarded as unnatural such as female lust, same-sex behaviour and sexual licence of the lower class. So modern thinking did not simply lead to greater liberty, at least not for everyone. The reflections and repercussions of the first sexual revolution on society and social thinkers were quite evident in the thoughts of Rousseau and Diderot for whom sex education was recognised as a necessity but only within a limited range of social roles, those within a marital relationship. As an education it got associated with sexual health and sexual knowledge. But it remained under social scrutiny so that it does not pollute innocence and morality.

Agin (2002) discussed two prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment era, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot who deliberated on emerging sexuality of adolescents and youth and the appropriate form of sex education that could be imparted without offending the Church. Both experienced the difficulties in bearing and rearing children, a crisis that plagued the eighteenth century French society. High infant mortality rates, widespread practice of abandoning children, increasing maternal mortality at childbirth along with high immoral indulgences of the youth led France to reflect upon the notion of family and ponder over educating the youth against debauchery. Interestingly, Rousseau and Diderot provided quite different measures for appropriate sex education. Both were able to explicate ways of imparting sexual knowledge to children while preserving their innocence but their reasoning and discourse was contradictory. Rousseau emphasized on the role of imagination in curbing passion while formulating the ideal pupil Emile but Diderot practically explained sex to his daughter. Following
Rousseau, the adult educator needs to imbed images in the mind of his pupil in order to divert sexual desires and develop morality. But Diderot arranged instruction on anatomy by experts for his daughter believing that it will prepare her for post-marital duties which she will be able to fulfil without forfeiting sexual decency. Innocence of Diderot’s daughter was assured through education; she enters her life as an adult having the required knowledge. Emile’s innocence, on the other hand was maintained through manipulation of his imagination and he emerge as an adult without being informed of certain types of facts. Rousseau spoke of curbing adolescents’ curiosity by focusing on the unfavourable aspects of sexual union; instead of lying to adolescents or avoiding their questions Rousseau proposed that human sexual union be associated with images such as mating dogs, woman painfully urinating children, sickness and death. However, Rousseau’s Emile had to grow up and fulfil his duty as a husband. Here also, Emile’s imagination was triggered to form the idea of a morally pure female partner and he was advised not to demand sex; rather he always needed to ensure that sex was consensual. In this way Emile would fulfil adult duties without acquiring any vice. Unlike Rousseau, Diderot never supported the shrouded projections of sexual relations. His daughter was informed about physiological aspects of child birth, measures to be taken to ensure smooth delivery, male and female anatomy and process of sexual union. Marie Marguerite Biheron needs a special mention as playing the role in public demonstrations of anatomical knowledge. The youngest daughter of a typical middle-class Parisian family, she studied anatomy and later applied artistic skills to her anatomical training to build lifelike models of the parts of the human body which she used while addressing her audience (ibid.:733). Sex education could not be taught independently of Church strictures, so Diderot had to justify that his daughter in learning about anatomy did not show inappropriate conduct. Diderot argued that understanding sexual mechanism will ensure happier marriage for his daughter; being content she will never opt for immoral behaviour. Rousseau followed Church’s dictum by ensuring that his imaginary pupil Emile reaches his wedding night free from the vice; his sexual act will be guided by nature and his virtuous upbringing will satisfy his passions. Maurice. A. Bigelow writing in 1916 could envision sex education in a broader sense. It included ethical, social and religious instructions and
influences which directly and indirectly may help prepare young people to solve for themselves the problems of sex that inevitably come in some form into the life of every normal human individual. Bigelow also emphasised that sex education aims for a purer and higher understanding of sex in human life implying that it was not meant to instigate immoral sexual behaviour. He urged to include term ‘sex’ as a part of dignified, scientific vocabulary so that teachers and parents could perceive it as a part of education and school curriculum of the children. Bigelow held that instruction should begin from early childhood and graded for each period of life up to maturity and should extend beyond adolescence; brief instructions on sex would not serve the purpose. He conceptualised sex education to include essential topics such as personal sex-hygiene, social diseases and evils, sexual morality, sexual problems and marriage.

Though the essential character of early twentieth century sex education campaigns were dominated by narrative of fear about unruly impulses, innocent children, promiscuity, contamination, and illness; highlighting the dangers rather than the pleasures of sex, some modern educators tried to cautiously nurture rather than suppressing children’s sexual instinct. Few of them analysed sex education within the model of modern education and experimental schools. In this context, the work of English sex reformers and educators, Bertrand and Dora Russell and their founding of Beacon Hill School to positively direct sex education ‘to white middle-class children’s future potential for love, heterosexual marriage, and creative use of sexual energies for upholding civilization’, becomes significant (Hustak 2013:447). Bertrand Russell (1926) emphasised on answering questions in a truthful manner while imparting sex education; parents were asked to maintain naturalness without being embarrassed. Sex-knowledge must be told in a ‘purely scientific spirit’ and the whole thing must be ‘utterly matter-of-fact’; the whole act of sex education should be ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ (ibid.: 141). According to Russell everything about sex needs to be told before puberty that is before the adolescent is overtaken by the physical and emotional changes. Russell advised parents to include sexual morality that they believe in. Hygiene was another important topic included as young people should know about venereal diseases, truthfully and without exaggeration so that learn how to avoid them and cure them. Russell
also brought up the issue of teenage pregnancy; he stated that young people should realise that having a child is a very serious issue and this responsibility should not be taken until and unless the child has a reasonable prospect of health and happiness. Girls should be taught to expect that one day they are likely to be mothers and they should acquire knowledge in this regard because Russell believed that instinct without knowledge was inadequate. Hustak (2013) however critically analyse the role of The Beacon Hill School as it invoked sex education’s themes of love and pleasure only within the privileged white middle-class domains. They were also training the adolescents toward the formation of idealized, loving, and healthy heterosexual families that will contribute in the realization of the future racial and class potential of the children. But it needs to be noted that Dora Russell was eager towards ‘radical socialist experiments in redefining community relations and authority through emotional ties of love’ and ‘was much more interested in exploring emotions as ways of undermining the patriarchal privileging of rationality’ (ibid.: 448). Actually, these sex reformers struggled with Victorian middle-class morality and their philosophies as sex educators; they were at ambiguous crossroads while cultivating future sexually vigorous adults and remembering their own childhoods of sexual shame.

Thus from Enlightenment era to the early twentieth century the cyclical development of sex education discourses vacillated between sexual discipline and freedom of sexual expression; between the need for sexual knowledge and the moral stipulation of sexual purity. Enlightenment being the era of reason recognised the potential role of sex education as a positive, learning and enhancing endeavour, later development saw to the institutionalisation of sex education through schools but the ambiguity remained as society in general but failed to relieve it from the strong discourse of morality.

3.2.2. Formal Sexuality Education in the Twentieth Century

Three broad trajectories while analyzing twentieth-century sex education in English-speaking cultures became evident. First trajectory involved the concurrent existence of fear against sex education and sexological sources that addressed post-marital life-stage. The second trajectory focused on the rising need to sex education to counter problematic sexual liaisons. And the third trajectory concentrated on
the institutional development of formal sex instruction as a holistic intervention. Thus, the following section discusses the course taken by sexuality education in twentieth century.

1. **Instructional Sexuality Education**

Instances were located in England in 1914 when the central government emphasised on the responsibilities of parents in educating their own children about sex, with the help of the support it provided by organizing evening courses on ‘sex hygiene’ for parents (Pilcher 2005: 155). Formal sex education was initiated by publication of sexological books such as Marie Stopes’s best-seller, *Married Love* (1918) and the instructional materials of professional sex educators Havelock Ellis’s *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897). Along with books, Bashford and Strange (2004) narrates the role played by magazines in the transmission of sexual knowledge. These magazines were much more accessible to working-class people than the expensive books. More specifically, it is the genre of women’s magazine that popularised the advice column on intimate affairs; a unique feature of the women’s magazine that became the vehicle for mass sex education. The work of Dr Norman Haire (1892–1952), one of the twentieth century’s pioneers in popular sexual pedagogy in Britain and Australia highlights the role of popular culture and print journalism in imparting sex education. For a decade Haire published a sex-education page in the Australian magazine *Woman*; it provided a conventional, benign and relatively uncontroversial medium for Haire to impart sexual information. Haire stressed on the need for frank and nonsectarian sex education and his work ‘trace the first transition between public speaking on sexual issues and the public broadcasting of explicit sexual information’ (ibid.: 77). This domain of sex education was unaffected by established social institutions like the military or the school; relatively unregulated they emerged as new channels for sex education in the twentieth century. In comparison to magazines, books were subjected to various censorships. For example, in 1950, police seized sex-advice books from booksellers in Blackpool, including several of Haire’s publications (ibid.: 78). His columns included both medical information and advice on various nuances of sexuality. Haire initially addressed the declining birth-rate, a major political and social issue in Australia thereby initiating public discussion of sex as a social or political crisis. Later he wrote widely on reproductive
and heterosexual sex, on variety of issues related to pregnancy and childbirth such as miscarriage, pain control during birth and breastfeeding. Controversial issues such as male sterility, artificial insemination and test tube babies, abortion and its effects, heterosexual desire, frigidity, loss of interest in sex after childbirth, sexual incompatibility, and impotence were also addressed. He advised about hormone treatments for menopause and menstrual pain as well as about contraceptive techniques. Significant attention was given on explaining concepts of infantile sexuality suggesting the ways to have frank and open discussions of sex with children and adolescents. Haire even spoke of masturbation but projected it as a self-abuse that can act as a sexual reason for suicide. In spite of his own homosexual tendency, he treated homosexuality as an abnormality that when untreated can lead to self-harm.

The interesting point to note is the prominent role of mass media as a source of sexuality education as found in contemporary society has a parallel reference in the beginning of twentieth century. The issues printed in women’s magazine were hardly thinkable or can be publicly discussed through other medium. Unlike books, the magazines also became medium for exchanging information. Actual and implied communication took place between the experts and the readers. Readers also trusted women’s magazines as sources of information and direct and personal communication which was unavailable at school, at home, or in the local library. According to Bashford and Stranger, this mutual communication between experts in and consumers of sexual knowledge also shaped twentieth-century sex education.

II. The Sexual Revolution of 1960s and 1970s

The most drastic changes shaping sexuality in twentieth century was the sexual revolution of 1960s and 1970s in Western Europe and United States of America; it acted as a catalyst aiding the emergence of abstinence-only, institutionalized sexuality education. During this period the rates of premarital sexual activity climbed steeply. Surveys taken before and after World War II provide evidence of a major shift towards sexual permissiveness, especially in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia (Baron and Byrne 2004: 325). Pilcher (2005) narrates the development of school-based sex education in post
World War II England as a result of the moral panic about young people’s sexuality in time of war. Between the 1940s and 1960s, sex related handbooks had moved from a position of absence to be part of the official guidance on health education. During the 1950s and 1960s, a range of pressures had built up for the expansion of sex education programmes for children in schools (ibid.: 162). Anxiety about the sexual morality of young people was further heightened due to studies reporting increasing incidence of venereal disease amongst young people and its links with increasing teenage sexual intercourse. A number of organisations from different social sectors held conferences or published reports on sex education, including the Church of England, the British Medical Association, Birmingham Education Committee and London County Council. Within four years of war, UK’s central government guidance on sex education for head teachers and teachers became less ambiguous. In 1943, with Arthur McNalty as Chief Medical Officer, the Board of Education published twenty two page booklet on sex education for use in schools and youth organisations (ibid.: 157).

By 1980s and 1990s as society became increasingly aware of the serious consequences of indiscriminate sex such as unwanted teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. According to medical evidence, the spread of HIV and AIDS first took place from apes to human in the seventeenth century, but only in the 1980s, after sexual revolution that it did burst into the world scene as an epidemic. So there was this large proportion of sexually active teenagers and young adults who failed to use effective contraceptives or used them inconsistently. Casual sex and casual contraception resulted in more than one million teenage pregnancies in United States and similar data was reported in other countries as well. Teenage pregnancy epidemic became an acute source of stress for individuals concerned and for society at large.

III. Sexuality Education after HIV Epidemic

Historians generally concur that in United States the federal government's response to HIV-AIDS during the 1980s and early 1990s was inadequate and constrained by moralism (Sendziuk 2008: 55). President Ronald Reagan famously refused to publicly address the issue of AIDS even five years after
the first reported cases of AIDS. The U.S. Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, fought a losing battle against Reagan and Secretary of Education William J. Bennett to introduce pragmatic sex education classes into American high schools. The move toward abstinence-based sex education programs began in the early 1980s and received a boost in 1996, when Congress, under the auspices of a welfare reform bill, committed 50 million dollar per year to support abstinence-based education. By 1999, a third of public school districts in United States of America were using abstinence-only curricula in their classrooms. The embrace of abstinence appears nearly unanimous but the question was whether abstinence is the only thing to teach. SIECUS had been America’s flagship advocate and a valiant defender of comprehensive sexuality education since 1964. SIECUS then president Debra Haffner said in a speech in 1990 that SIECUS support abstinence but it does not support teaching young people only about abstinence (Kimmel and Plante 2004: 440). The founder of modern and progressive, comprehensive sexuality education, Dr Mary S. Calderone was also not a supporter of abstinence-only programmes since it was quite evident that abstinence education was not practical, rather it was ideological. Dr Calderone asked the youth to wait; she promised them a youthful freedom and adult satisfaction that could be gained only by avoiding premarital sex but she also agreed that sex, if not always approved, was nonetheless normative teen behaviour. According to Judith Levine (ibid.: 452) comprehensive sexuality educators had an upper hand in the 1970’s but they allowed the propagators of abstinence-only, to gain ground and seize more and more power until they controlled the law, the language and the cultural consensus. Supporters of comprehensive sexuality education failed to make Americans see that comprehensive, non-abstinence sexuality education is more effective that abstinence-only education. Americans were still convinced that teen pregnancy is pandemic and therefore containing of adolescents’ sexuality was an attractive notion to parents as well as educators. By 1997, as many as six studies that have been published in the scientific literature to prove that abstinence programme do not change students’ attitude for long neither are they effective in delaying intercourse among adolescents. Advocates of comprehensive sexuality educators were guided by reliable data and not by conservative and anti-sexual ideologies but they were tired, worn down and
financially broken by a decade of furious battering from conservative quarters of the society. Classroom teachers were under increasing surveillance, some even got rid of the anonymous question box into which students used to place embarrassing queries (ibid.: 445). More and more dropped controversial topics such as abortion or stopped informing students about where they could get birth control. In 1998 SIECUS published a book to fill up the gaps in sexuality education programme, focusing on topics such as safer sex, condoms, sexual orientation, diversity, pregnancy options, and sexual behaviour but along with that they also talked about abstinence. Everybody was forced to support abstinence in order to stay in the job whether as a teacher or as a stakeholder. Comprehensive sexuality education started to refer itself as abstinence-plus education to distinguish itself from abstinence-only sexuality education. In England, after mid-1980s, the provision for sex education in schools was decidedly integrated into the curriculum as a whole. However, in about the same time the British political New Right became increasingly agitated over the content of sex education; they were concerned that school-based sex education programmes will encourage precocious and promiscuous heterosexuality as well as homosexuality as an acceptable form of sexuality (Pilcher 2005: 165). By the end of twentieth century, the Labour Government issued its new guidelines that directed teachers and school organizing committees on the teaching of ‘sex and relationship education’ in schools. Attitude towards homosexuality became more inclusive and an uncompromising position was held on children’s need to know about contraception and about HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, the current guidance on sex education is set within the established government legislation and continues to reflect highly politicised perceptions on HIV/AIDS, homosexuality and child sexuality.

At present however comprehensive sexuality education which offers young people the opportunity to discuss sexual values and attitudes is pioneered and propagated more in contrast to abstinence-only sexuality education which teaches young people to abstain from all sexual behaviour until they are married. Thus, the twentieth century was no less a battle ground for the development of rational and open dialogue related to sex and sexuality. Even the imminent threat of disease, epidemic and risky
teen-behaviour failed to obliterate the general social fear of moral decadence. So, sexuality continued to exist as a domain of abstinence instead of emerging as an intimate space for free but informed expression of desire.

### 3.3. Development of Sexuality Education in India

Indian society, especially majority of Hindus postulates that sexuality education, if imparted, need to take specific covers; its content have to be bounded by community mores, religious strictures and presented in scientific, apathetic language that would not undermine social regulations on sexuality. In a way India’s dispute with sex education reflects similar ambiguities found in the West. There exists a clear hypocritical approach to sex. Interestingly, history shows that this hypocrisy has been implanted in Indian culture to some extent by foreign rulers. Ancient India did celebrated sex to some extent though the triumph of celibacy is also evident as the grip of patriarchal power tightened around free expression of sexuality. The following historical exploration attempts to link the present confrontations with sexuality education to the past’s engagement with sex and sexuality in the Indian culture. However, its need to be noted that these perspectives related to Indian sexuality primarily upholds the *Vedic* and largely the *Hindu* ideologies.

#### 3.3.1. The Age of *Kamastra*s

Sex, sexuality, sexual and gender roles have changed over centuries in India. A relevant proof of that change is the sexually explicit temple sculptures which seem to pose a challenge to the moral character and climate of contemporary Indian moral scenario. Rita Banerji (2008) posed the question what has caused this change in society’s perception of sexual permissibility and moral precepts. Such questions are pertinent to many cataclysmic issues challenging the world today which include AIDS, population explosion, teenage pregnancies, sex education, homosexuality, gender disparity and so on. In general it is found that religious outlook shapes the general notion about sex, sexuality and sexual relationship as a taboo and the understanding of morality pronounced by the religious institutions on sex and sex –
related issues continues to shape even at present, the way most societies think and function. Banerji identifies distinct periods of major changes in the moral tradition of Indian society (*ibid.*, 17). Each period ushered in a radically different role for sex and sexuality in the context of religious philosophies, moral values and social customs. For example, in the Vedic religion established prior to 500 BC, sex was regarded as the sacred duty of every man but in Buddhism that emerged after 500 BC renunciation of sex, sensuality and sensory existence became necessary and celibacy was widely accepted as the supreme path to salvation. But the utmost paradox of the contemporary sexual taboo is found in the golden age of Indian history that gave birth to an innovative vision of life and art. In this period sex was reinstated in societal mores as a normal and acceptable practice and it was also redefined as an intricate aspect of the sacred. For instance, we have the emergence of the *bhakti* cult which preached about salvation through devotion; devotion as found in the lovelorn. In contrast to Buddhism that suggested that life is to be tolerated as bitter medicine, *bhakti* cult affirmed life and all its processes such as senses and sexuality as sacred. In *bhakti* scriptures, devotees are found to be wooing and yearning for their chosen god as they would for a ‘lover’. There was revival of the concept of *kama* but not as in Vedic period, not as primarily composed of lust and reproduction but as a more complex concept which beside lust explored the notions of love, passion, desire and sensuality. The concept of *kama* as love-making was believed to be propagated by god themselves as a gift to mankind so that they can bond with each other and with god. Sexual intercourse became part of certain rituals necessary for salvation. The *devadasi* tradition, in which families would offer their young daughter as wives to the god, was practised in this era. These *devadasis* were duty-bound to serve their husbands by providing sex and entertainment at the altar. This open association between the sacred and sex has significant impact on the cultural practices and social attitudes of this period. For example sensuality became essential part of general living; even middle class homes came to possess love chambers where the owner would receive his mistresses and courtesans. Socially, it was permissible for people to revel openly the pleasures of their sex life and thus the kings would appoint poets to writes eulogies of their sex lives. Even priests and ascetics were entitled to bodily pleasures. The degree of social acceptability of sex in this period is
most evident in the esteem it bestowed on the prostitutes; the economically prosperous devadasis were considered highly respectable and honoured members of the society. It was understood that for prostitutes their work was their dharma or moral duty. Courtesans who served the upper section of the society were regarded as social celebrities, renowned for their beauties, intelligence and expertise in kamashastras (the art and science of love-making). Love-making was actually exalted as the highest form of art and science; it was meticulously studied and practised as a science (kamashastra) and was regarded as a requisite facet of civilized life. This led to the birth of sexology books used and read as guide books; this books, to name a few, the kama sutras (Anthologies of Love-making), rati rahasyam (The Secrets to Orgasms) and so on, were said to be written around seventh century BC. The authors of these books were awarded the title of acharya or supreme teachers. The kama sutras explored in great detail almost every sex-related issue, including sexuality, body types, courtship, seduction, psychology, sexual chemistry, foreplay, positions and orgasms. The presentations of information in these books are extremely methodical; people are classified into sex types based on their body form and tables were presented to suggest probable sexual compatibility between various sex types. Love play itself was said to have sixty-four elements with each elements having numerous creative variations. These books were meant to be used by all castes and class. Special study groups would discuss sex and love along with other issues and young men would join such groups to acquire social skills. Young unmarried upper-caste girls often studied kamashastras from an older, experienced maid. Kama was also about beauty of ethics, inspiration, poetry, emotions and expression. The art of this period including paintings, sculpture, architecture, music and literature were distinguished by the palpable influence of the sensually evocative social environment. The erotic sculptures that adorned the temple walls was the most unabashed and public expression of sexuality in this period. On the whole, this period developed a far more complex perception of sex than that was found in previous indigenous cultures. Sexual morality and ethics were far more liberal than ever before.
The degeneration of the golden period was partly due to noticeable regression in social order in terms of custom and mores; heightened corruption among priestly caste and increased hedonism among ruling castes. The other main cause was the invasion of India by foreign rulers, first the Turks, Afghans, Arabs, Mongolians followed by the British. The impact of these colonial powers was radical in the sense that it completely transformed the existing social and moral outlooks of the Indian subjects; the concepts of universal humanity, such as love, beauty, aesthetics, desire and pleasure that were nurtured in the golden age was now regarded as shameful and undesirable. Under the influence of Muslim rule, ‘the new Hindu morality’ emerged’; it decried sensuality as a way of living and condemned its expression in arts and literature (ibid.: 203). Open and liberal association between men and women became a taboo. The British rulers governed by the Church of England were more parochial, puritanical and intolerant and they regarded Hinduism with contempt believing it to be a pagan religion. They were most surprised by the sensual element of Hinduism given that in Victorian England became far more repressed with the institutionalism of Puritanism after 1880. British moralist came to belief that the only way to redeem Indian society is by redefining women. They propagated the model of ideal woman mostly targeted to middle and upper class women and denounced any expression of sexuality as crude and licentious.

The foundation of the sexual paradox that polarized twenty-first century India into two separate worlds, the conservative extolling Victorian morality and the neo-liberal advocating freedom of expression, was thus laid.

3.3.2. Prevalence of Celibacy or Brahmacarya

Celibacy is one of the key corner stone of Hinduism since Vedic ages. Its importance was renewed during the era of freedom struggle through Gandhi’s act of embracing brahmacharya. The practice of Brahmacarya can be traced back to the education system in ancient India. Das (1986) discusses the various ancient texts and sutras related to the educational system among ancient Hindus and it is quite evident that continence and abstinence of sexual behaviour and sexuality was advocated among
students. The Hindus from a very early time have held that each man is born a debtor and he repays his debts through various life stages. In the Hindu worldview, the fourfold life cycle scheme, *ashramadharma* consisted of *brahmacharya* (apprenticeship), *garhasthya* (householdership), *vanaprastha* (withdrawal), and *sannyas* (renunciation). In the first stage of *brahmacharya* (apprenticeship), the debt to the sages, the founders of one’s religion and culture, is repaid by the careful study of the Vedas. In here the mind is opened and disciplined and the body is made fit to carry out the orders of the mind. The life of the male student or the *brahmacharya* was highly regulated and it was regarded as a long, sacrificial period. The following regulations guiding the student to a life of abstinence have been discussed by the author; (i) the student cannot decorate or beautify his body through bathing, shaving, oiling and so on; (ii) since stability of character arises from restraining and curbing sexual impulses, he should avoid women; (iii) deliberate acts (masturbation) resulting in loss of seed (sperm) were regarded as an act of theft and murder of embryo and (iv) even unconscious emission of vital fluids (wet dreams/ nocturnal emission) has its expiatory rites for it implied not only loss of health, strength and shortening of life but also loss of intellectual and spiritual power. Das points out that the ancients were anxious to ensure that the students perform *brahmacharya* and steer clear of passion and temptation especially during adolescence. Manu advised to counteract sexual inclinations and premature awakening of the sexual impulse by providing the students mind absorbing work and plentiful exercises for the body (*ibid.*: 97). Since sexual ideas breed in the darkness of the closed room and in the luxury of the comfortable beds and belongings, all scriptures of Hindu, Buddhists and Jains unanimously condemns the use of perfumes, flowers and music. The students are instructed to control all their senses; he should curb his tongue, appetite, he should renounce lust, greed, fear, hatred, false pride, idleness, useless conversation, idle gossips, obscene words, intoxication, looking at women, conversing with women, female company and so on. However, *brahmacharya* may be a dominant way of constructing sexuality but it is not the only way. Mythological sources such as epics like *Mahabharata*, presents more open practices related to sexuality; there can be located socially approved customs that does not bear the stringency found in the practice of *brahmacharya*. For
instance, Mahabharata starts with *niyog pratha* whereas the composer of the epic *Sage Vyasa* bore children to *Ambalika* and *Ambika*, who by definition is supposed to be illegitimate but received legitimization from the society because it was necessary (Bandlamudi 2011: 223). Similarly, the *Pandavas* are biological sons of different gods but they are treated as legitimate sons of *King Pandu* because *Pandu* was unable to conceive children. In fact *Sage Vyasa* was himself conceived of unmarried mother, *Satyavati*. It is also noted by that in pre vedic period, sexuality was based on pleasure and fertility but not on progenitive that is the capacity of producing offspring (Joseph 2005: 70); for instance Mahabharata upholds sex change and men with doubtful sexuality incapable of procreation as in the case of *Sikhandin*. But again according to Banerji (2008) vedic religion emphasise on the duty of the householder in the stage of *garhasthya* to procreate and fulfil his duties towards ancestors. Even the prevalence of *niyog pratha* shows the importance of procreation.

In contrast, educational goals and ideals associated with female education does not emphasize on austerity, abstinence or celibacy. Das locates that *Kamasutra* was recommended as a reading for women when she attains youth; a married woman was supposed to study it with the consent of her husband. Women have been instructed to learn in her girlhood, the sixty four kinds of *kalas* or arts which can be understood by practice only. The following people have been recommended who can act an educator to the young girls; (i) a daughter of her nurse who has been brought up with her and had intercourse with man, (ii) a woman friend who speaks in a frank manner and likewise had intercourse with a man, (iii) her mother’s sister who is of her own age and (iv) her own elder sister. Thus the education for girls was entirely domestic and vocational in the sense that they were being prepared for that which was considered a woman’s principal work; the duties of the household. The sixty four *kalas* or arts that *Vatsayana* speaks of includes singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, painting, arranging flowers, arranging beds, ways of dressing and decorating oneself with flowers and ornaments, preparations of drugs and drinks, knowledge of messaging the body and dressing the hair and composing poems and riddles. One interesting art that was discussed is *taksakarmani*; it is the art
of making from gold, steel, wood, silver or any other substances, the forms of male organ for using them as substitutes in sexual intercourse. According to Chakravarti (2011), from the mid to late nineteenth century Victorian sexology and norms of sexual behaviour led to the dissemination of prescriptive and moralistic sex manuals in Indian vernaculars; these manuals treated sexuality as joyless procreation between married couples and generally recommended abstinence. Victorian ideals inculcated by the British got assimilated with Hindu, Brahmanical ideal of *brahmacharya* and emerged as a cornerstone of the emerging Hindu nationalism. The abjuring of sex by Gandhi also helped to reinforce the connections between nationalism and *brahmacharya*. Although *brahmacharya* was embraced as ancient Hindu/Aryan practice that defined nationalist masculinity, the texts promoting this ideal were often actually influenced by colonial, Victorian sexual norms. Numerous moralistic texts were written for young boys, enjoining them to conserve their semen, the source of their power and manhood, so that they could become fit soldiers in the battle in the national struggle for freedom. Sexual thoughts and desire would only result in wet dreams, masturbation or sexual experiments, which must be banished through proper diet, meditation and exercise. Conserving semen is identified as a ‘uniquely male form of celibacy’ (Abbott 1999: 197). Historically, male sexuality was upheld as both a moral and a physiological issue. The penis and semen are regarded as the key physical manifestations. Male health being of utmost importance, men chose sex or celibacy according to their needs; if ejaculation of sperm perceived as beneficial for health, they chose sex and if conservation of semen was needed to increase strength, they opted for celibacy. According to Abbott, in no other religion the power of semen as tangible physical dimension of celibate energy is as pronounced as in Hinduism. Semen is a ‘vital fluid’, ‘the essence of life’ (*ibid.*: 167). In Hinduism, celibacy is a mental act as well leading the incumbent towards *moksa*, the ultimate liberation. Thus the need to abstain from wasteful sex, especially by a student (*brahmacharin*) is affirmed in Indian Tradition.

However, this discussion should not lead to the conclusion that *brahmacharya* is the only facet of sexuality found in Hindu
3.3.3. Formal Sexuality Education in Post-Independent India

Public discourses on sexuality and governmental policies to determine, shape and control it, can be traced back to initiation of family planning programme in India. Rao (2004) provides a historical understanding of the family planning programme in India and the associated ideologies that marked the developments of Indian ethos regarding sex, sexuality and contraception. The Sub-Committee on Health formed as a part of the National Planning Committee established in 1938 under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru was first to promote birth control, instructions, demonstrations and consultations in maternal and child health services. It also favoured birth control in the interests of the development of the nation. In the unanimity that prevailed about the need for population control, Mahatma Gandhi opposed birth control because he believed that society would be enervated, weakened by birth control. He wrote that the sex urge is a fine and noble thing but it is only meant for the act of creation and any other use of it is a sin against god and humanity (Rao 2004: 21). According to Gandhi it would only increase self-indulgence. He succeeded in influencing policy-maker; thus the National Planning Commission of 1948, while defining women’s role in Planned economy, wrote that self-control is the best method for those who can exercise it without ill effects to their health, but this method which cannot be offered to average man and woman, hence knowledge of scientific methods of birth control must be made available to those who desire it (ibid.: 22). In India, Images of the ideal woman depicted in philosophical texts and epics diminish their status as independent actors of life. Beliefs and activities of Mahatma Gandhi idealizing celibacy in men ultimately strengthened the collective attitude that sex is damaging to human spirituality. Such attitude complemented the acquired the Victorian morality from our colonial masters.

The family planning programme launched in India was a part of a larger population discourse in the post-war years, primarily in the USA. As part of this discourse, wide range of private and public institutions deliberated on the need to intervene in what was seen as economically unviable population growth in the Third World countries. In 1969, a national seminar on Population Education was jointly
organized by the Indian Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning. The seminar evolved a national consensus in favour of introducing population education programme in order to increase awareness about India’s population problem. Government led drive to sterilisation began in the 1970s when, encouraged by loans amounting to tens of millions of dollars from the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Authority and the UN Population Fund, India embarked on an ambitious population control programme. During the 1975 Emergency, when civil liberties were suspended Sanjay Gandhi, son of the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, began gruesome campaign to sterilise poor men where it was reported villagers were virtually dragged to surgery. Thus, the population control initiatives were the windows through which government exercised their power to intervene and control private life and personal decisions. However, it is also to be noted that the Constitution of India recognises the fundamental human right to marry and found a family under Arc 19 irrespective of the consideration of race, nationality and religion, given that the men and women are of marriageable age (UNDP 2008: 285). The National Population Policy of 1975 explicitly recommended the introduction of population values into the educational system. These were meant to inculcate in the student the national value of the small family norm and link it up directly to national developmental goals which were jeopardized by high population growth. The National Population Education Project was launched in April 1980. Thus the post-1986 textbooks focused on family size and family welfare, delayed marriage and responsible parenthood. Thus the initiation of school-based sexuality education programme in India in the form of Adolescent Education Programme can be located in population education discourses (Nirantar Trust 2008:29). In the Draft Syllabus on Population Education developed by NCERT in 1971 objectives 7 and 8 were related to sex education. They were a) to develop an understanding of biological factors and phenomenon of reproduction and b)

2 This fundamental human right is recognised by the International Covenants.
to develop appreciation of small family norm as proper and desirable, appreciation of the relation between population size and the quality of life and appreciation of the fact that family size is a matter of deliberate choice and human regulation rather than of accident of forces.

The need for introducing sexuality education in schools was deliberated as early in 1976 at the seminar held by Indian Council for Child Welfare (I.C.C.W), New Delhi. The report of the seminar is studied to understand the contents of the early discourses regarding sexuality education in India. The objective of the seminar was (i) to ascertain public opinion on the subject; (ii) to assemble leading educators, parents and medical experts; (iii) to know the attitude of youth groups; (iv) to assess the need for sex education in the light of modern social changes; (v) to help young people to behave with dignity, restrain and responsibility while freeing them of guilt, shame and undue inhibitions towards sex related matters; (vi) to address gender inequality and how sex education can stress on the importance and role of women in society as individuals of equal capacity and not merely sex objects; (vii) to define the goals of sex education; (viii) to develop a programme of sex education that would prepare the young people to face the changing value system of the society and (ix) to think of the type of sex education that would suit the rural youth. The speakers at the seminar pointed out important factors related to sex education. For instance, Dr Prema Bali, associate professor at the Centre of Community Medicine and in charge of sex and marriage counselling clinic at A.I.I.M.S, New Delhi speaking in support of the introduction of sex education in schools stated that both teachers and parents needs to be trained so that their hesitation and doubts regarding how to impart sex education is lessened and that a properly developed sex education curricula should be commensurate to the psycho-sexual development of adolescents leading to positive thinking, understanding and behaviour among youth. Dr. D. Gopal Rao of NCERT commented that proper attention should be paid as to how facts of life are presented and imparted in classroom; it should not cause vulgar amusement, destroy the child’s innocence and evoke desires of sexual experimentation. D. P Panthaki Biology teacher at The Bombay International School shared the experience of introducing a programme of sex education in their school. They conducted a
survey on the students of this school and found that children belonging to upper class already were quite informed about sex and related facts from various sources including parents, magazines, and books. As such they were more interested in knowing ideas related to social prejudices, moral codes of the society, and emotional developments of teenagers, venereal diseases, homosexuality, and disorders of sex organs through discussions and participation in class. Another speaker, Dr. Promila Kapur pointed out that lack of adequate knowledge of sex, lack of realistic and healthy attitudes to sex may lead to marital disharmony. Thus according to her two major objective of sex education should be (i) to prepare the individual both males and females as successful partner in marriage and (ii) to dissociate any feelings of guilt.

The debate regarding sex education therefore had an early start and it continued till the government came out with an alternative which they suppose would be less controversial. In the following paragraphs, the development of school-based adolescent centric interventions, led by government, both at the centre and in the state of West Bengal where the study is located in lieu of sex education.

I. Adolescence Education Programme in India

Adolescence Education (AE) was formally adopted in1993 as a part of school curriculum to address Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health. In a national seminar organized by NCERT (National Council Educational Research and Training), New Delhi, in the same year attended by eminent educationists, psychologists, medical scientists, curriculum developers, teacher-educators, school principals and teachers, government officials and non-government representatives involved in imparting education on sex, family life, AIDS, health, population and drug abuse the term Adolescence Education (AE) was proposed. It was propagated that AE has a much more comprehensive approach than sex education. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994 also marked a shift in discourse from population and the demographically charged ideology of school population education to the explicit targeting of the adolescent age group. The demand of researchers and activists working on reproductive health to provide a special focus on adolescents found strong
expression at this International Conference and also at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Bhattacharjee 2004: 214). As a result the focus shifted from population and development to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ARSH) in Indian education policy. However, Bhattacharjee noted that the approach towards adolescence education was not much different from the approach towards sexuality education. She narrates the experience of Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), Chennai. Not many schools came forward to begin adolescence education programme back in 1994. This was in spite of the fact that the community was struggling in managing adolescent sexuality which was showing lesser and lesser inhibition to premarital sexual association. This change was inevitable due to decline in the age of menarche that is attainment of puberty and rise in the age of marriage. It was quite clear even then that withholding information will not be a useful strategy to contain adolescent sexuality. Similar to the abstinence-only approach towards sexuality education found in USA, Bhattacharjee pointed out that the initial strategy of NCERT Adolescence Education modules propagated abstinence, social disapproval to pre-marital/extra-marital sexual relations as accepted socio-cultural norms of sexual behaviour that the student should adhere to. From 1997 to 2002, several national policies focused on adolescents as under-served group, which need special services that provide access to information, counselling and reproductive health. The National Youth Policy 2003 addressed the need to include information on reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and population issues in the educational curriculum. In 2006 the Adolescence Education Programme by MHRD, NCERT, NACO and UNICEF was to be launched in all schools in the country but it ran into controversy. The Rajya Sabha Committee which evaluated AEP stated in its report,

“AEP is a cleverly used euphemism whose real objective was to impart sex education to schoolchildren and promote promiscuity”.

The materials created by NACO and UNICEF triggered controversy resulting into several state governments such as that of Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh,

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Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan, banning sex education. Moreover it was pointed out that the approach of the materials prepared in collaboration with NACO and state AIDS prevention and control societies (SAPACS) is dominated by the narrowly defined agenda of HIV and AIDS prevention. Anandhi (2007) narrates the various criticisms forwarded by various state governments and political parties towards AEP. The chief minister of Karnataka has banned the AEP in schools claiming that sex education may be necessary in western countries but not in India. The BJP led Madhya Pradesh government has gone a step further by ordering replacement of sex education in schools with yoga classes and teaching of Indian traditions and values. Introduction of AEP paradoxically provoked organisations espousing *hindutva* such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJP, Islamic organisations like the Students Islamic Organisation (SIO) and left-wing organisations like the All India Democratic Students’ Organisation (AIDSO), affiliated to the Socialist Unity Centre of India, to speak the same language. In Orissa, AIDSO claimed that adolescent sex education will simply cause innocent children to be curious about sexual matters and it will affect their morale. The views of Dinanath Batra, secretary of the RSS-affiliated Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samiti, were that the concept of educating youngsters about the graphic details of sexual intercourse is nothing short of corrupting impressionable young minds. While opposing the efforts of the Tamil Nadu government to introduce sex education in state-run schools, L Ganesan, president of the Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP, warned the government that it would harm the country’s culture and described it as a conspiracy of the United States to bring in degraded values under the guise of AIDS awareness. Only in rare cases such as in the training programmes in slums of Madhya Pradesh conducted by CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere)\(^1\) was appreciated by the women, especially mothers of the adolescent girls.

AEP also had its internal, inherent ambiguities that were also present in the earlier population control programmes. The population control programmes represented the bodies of the poor as oversexed, limitlessly procreative, and hence a national problem. According to Anandhi (2007) similar line of

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\(^{1}\) International humanitarian organization
argument emanating in the sex manuals articulated in the National Health Policy of the government of India (1978) and the National Population Education Project (1980). The discourse of population control constructs national health was contingent upon the sexual reform of the poor. In AEP, adolescents have been substituted in the place of the poor in the name of HIV/AIDS control. Their bodies are marked, in the new discourse, by reckless permissive sexual abundance. To preserve and enhance the nation’s health, their bodies have to be disciplined. Manjrekar (Nirantar 2008: 31) observed that whereas population education promoted images of the illiterate and the poor as causes of India’s underdevelopment, adolescence education tends to view the nation’s adolescents as disruptors of its developmental, demographic and moral values. Bhattacharjee (2004) also criticised the content of National Population Education Programme in 1998 which did not include the critical elements of reproductive health such as sexual developments during adolescence and HIV/AIDS. This was due to the fact that in India, both the State and the community refused to admit that the unmarried can be sexually active. Both the State and the community refuse to talk to adolescent boys and girls about contraceptives referring to it as a moral and ethical step that goes against our tradition. From the very inception sexuality education received a ‘passive welcome’ (ibid.: 215); the roots these contradiction of the society is in its misunderstanding of what sexuality is\(^1\) and its reluctance to relate sexuality to actual life.

The Working Group Report on Empowerment of Women, Ministry of Women and Child Development, constituted as part of the 11th Five year Plan process in 2006 noted that issues of sexuality need to be addressed to provide children with information, enable them to make informed choices, make them aware of the diversity of expressions of sexuality and gender and to equip them to deal with violation. In the period 1998 to 2006, NCERT tried to formally and systematically develop school-based adolescent education programme in the state of Orissa but due to socio-cultural conflicts, moral opposition and political issues it could not be implemented in wider scale and came to a halt as reported

\(^1\) Sexuality was narrowly conceived as action such as kissing, fondling and so on.
by a UNESCO (2011) study. However the state of Orissa still provided a successful model of implementing a comprehensive, integrated, intra-curricular, fully scaled up and cost effective sexuality education programme. In Orissa two approaches were followed, firstly the broad themes were integrated in the existing school syllabi and in the school subjects, such that the needs and concerns of the adolescents are fully covered and secondly, co-curricular activities were also included to disseminate adolescent education content. The state board of secondary education along with National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and State Council for Educational Research and Training (Orissa) translated the adolescent education content in the following way; in class 8 one chapter on growing up, gender and sexuality, importance of adolescent sex education, in class 9 two chapters on reproductive system and in class 10 two chapters on HIV/AIDS, STIs and healthy sexuality. All these were part of biology section of the science book. For each topic, 10 to 12 classes, each of 45 minutes were allotted; the science teacher was entrusted with the teaching and the social science teacher with the co-curricular activities. Resource persons from ten districts including teachers and health workers were trained as master trainer. The programme was implemented in phases in the period 2009 to 2011.

II. Life Style Programme in West Bengal

The state of West Bengal conceived Life Style programme to address adolescent issues. A similar chain of events can be traced from 2001 onwards in West Bengal. The initial attempt towards training teachers to provide sexuality education in schools faced resistance from teachers themselves. They objected to the materials developed by West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) along with West Bengal State AIDS Prevention and Control Society (WBSAPCS) as being “sexually explicit”\(^1\). One of the teacher- respondents, T-28 has been a key resource person for Life Style programme. He was responsible for training teachers belonging to WBBSE affiliated schools in South Kolkata and was also involved with the development of Life Style text book. According to him initially

\(^1\) Times News Network,22/12/2004 (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india)
the stakeholders from West Bengal followed NCERT books on life skills and AEP but found the content as inapplicable to school situations. He narrated his experiences while composing the Life Style textbook. He stated,

“numbers of workshops were held, wide range of discussions took place among various stakeholders like the teachers, guardians, educationists, WBBSE members and officials, members of political parties; these discussions guided us in forming the book according to the needs of the society”.

Teacher-respondent T-14 has been associated with Life Style education from the very beginning. He went to workshop organised by central government on life skill education in New Delhi. Apparently he is not against the introduction of school- based sexuality education. He held the opinion that issues related to adolescent reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) is the needed in the present social context. But from his experience from being involved with the programme he found that directly referring to sex which is a social taboo was altogether detrimental to the programme as well as the teachers. He describes his experience in the workshop,

“initially under the leadership of UNICEF and West Bengal State AIDS Prevention and Control Society, the approach was direct and in the workshops conducted for the teachers they tried to convey to the teachers that they need to address the ARSH issues to the students directly but ultimately it did not work out because of teachers’ inhibition and non-cooperation; so in the next stage we removed the explicit portions from the book that directly referred to sexual and reproductive organs and process. We included life skills, emphasis were given on social skill, negotiating skill, self awareness, self esteem, analytical skill and critical thinking”.

At this stage two more steps were taken to promote Life Style education. Firstly they started sangi-shikhon or peer-learning. In here, few students from each school were trained by teachers as peer educators. Secondly, components of Life Style education were integrated with all subjects. T-14 supported these changes and stated,
“we received positive responses in schools so far as peer learning was concerned and integration was Life Style in all other subjects was also a intelligent decision, in this way we could address all the critical issues and taboos without being too explicit so as to hurt the general public notions; even teachers appreciated this indirect approach.”

Consequently WBBSE came up with the concept of Life Style (jibon shoili). Just like the central government, the state government maintained that Life Style is not sex education. According to the various teachers, educators and officials interviewed, the left-front government in West Bengal, in spite of protests from different quarters, tried to implement Life Style Programme. During the implementation phase, from 2001 to 2008, experts were gathered; workshops were held and five teachers from each school from all most all the districts were made to attend these workshops. From among the teachers, few were appointed as key resource persons, who in turn provided training in the schools at district level. According to a consultant associated with Life Style Programme, by 2007-2008, around 10,000 schools were covered. Around this time Life Style programme faced opposition from political party Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI-C) on the ground that government-led Life Style education is an attempt to provide sexuality education. According to members of SUCI (C) party, sexuality educations in schools will destroy the moral character of the students. Rather, they propose that students should be taught the biographies of national /regional figures such Swami Vivekananda, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and so on. They also related sexuality education with western capitalist lifestyle characterized by preoccupation with sexual desires and pleasures; it was perceived as capable of luring children to promiscuous lifestyle increasing the rate of unwanted pregnancies and abortion. It this way the government ensured that the youth will not be able to fulfill their duties as responsible citizens. Sexuality education is seen as capitalist instrument that aims to sabotage the strength of youth force.

During my field visits, in 2010-2011, Life Style classes were still included in the routine in schools under WBBSE. In 2012, syllabus reform committee formed by newly formed state government abolished Life Style as a separate educational intervention. A teacher-respondent who was earlier
associated with Life Style programme and at present associated with the syllabus committee reported that the new revised subject textbooks will address the adolescent issues in a proper way, without being too explicit; so there will be no need for a separate educational programme. The state higher education minister commented in this context that the government will have to remember that although sex education may be taught in European countries, in case of West Bengal decision needs to be taken keeping the socio-cultural environment in mind (refer to Hindustan Times dated December 20, 2013). He added that he has asked the school syllabus expert committee to look into it. Before taking any decision, a survey will be conducted and it would aim to know from parents whether they would want their children to study sex education from class nine. Only after receiving the feedback, the final decision will be taken. It is noted that there is a shift in the conceptualization of sexuality education programmes; whereas earlier it was based on the experts’ knowledge and opinion, at present the state education ministry is opting for populism that is their decision will be guided by public opinion.

3.4. Conclusion

The significant points to be summarised from the above discussion on historical development of sexuality education are given below:

1. Enlightenment period Europe positively engaged with sex education as an educational endeavour, having a definite pedagogical considerations and methods but underlying fear to confront the state and the church remained. There are also evidences suggesting the presence of public enumeration of anatomy and sexual functions by experts. However, the conservative discourse related to sexuality education can also be located among Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau and Diderot as for whom sex education got associated with marital relationship and with sexual health and it remained under social supervision so as not instigate immorality.

2. Openness about sex became evident at the end of eighteenth century but it primarily celebrated the sexuality of urban, white, heterosexual, propertied men located in London and North American colonies.
3. Beginning of twentieth century saw some modern educators trying to envision sex education as instrumental in bringing about positive development among young people. Thus Bigelow and Russell deliberated on how sex education can help young people to solve the problems of sex. Bertrand and Dora Russell providing school-based sexuality education, though to white middle-class children only, succeeded in institutionalising sex education but failed to dissociate themselves fully from Victorian middle-class morality.

4. Twentieth century witnessed the popularity of sexological books and private columns in women’s magazines. The strong role of popular, accessible and cheap magazines in providing mass sex education became evident. They also became the site for the mutual communication between experts in and consumers of sexual knowledge. The sexual revolution of 1960s and 1970s in Western Europe and United States of America and the HIV epidemic along with rising rate of unplanned pregnancies provided the impetus for the abstinence-based, institutionalised sexuality education. But it was later opposed by SIECUS in North America in early 1980s and received a boost in 1996 though it failed to convince Americans about the effectiveness of informing about contraception through comprehensive sexuality education. In England, only after mid-1980s sex education got integrated in school curriculum. Much later UK’s Sex and Relationship Education succeeded in professing open attitude towards homosexuality, HIV and knowledge about contraception.

5. In Indian culture, especially those traits grounded on Hindu philosophy, there exists a clear hypocritical approach to sex. Historical understanding embeds this hypocrisy as an implanted idea, bought to Indian culture by foreign rulers. Ancient India celebrated sex to some extent though the triumph of celibacy is also evident. In the golden age of Indian history sex was reinstated in societal mores as a normal and acceptable practice and sensuality became essential part of general living. Courtesans became popular for their expertise in kama shastras (the art and science of love-making). Love-making was practised as a science (kama shastra) leading to the birth of sexology books, the kama sutras. The golden period was invaded by foreign rulers,
the Muslims and British rulers who transformed the existing social and moral outlooks of the Indian subjects regarding the concepts of universal humanity, such as love, beauty, aesthetics, desire and pleasure; they were now regarded as shameful and undesirable.

6. Celibacy at the life stage of *brahmacharya* is one of the key corner stone of Hinduism since Vedic ages. Its importance was renewed during the era of freedom struggle through Gandhi’s act of embracing *brahmacharya*. However mythological sources such as epics like *Mahabharata*, presents more open practices related to sexuality and socially approved customs that does not bear the stringency found in the practice of *brahmacharya*.

7. The family planning programme was launched in India under the influence of a larger population discourse in the post-Second World War years. It initiated the process where private and public institutions deliberated on the need to intervene in private sphere of life. The population discourse in post-independent era ultimately lead to emergence of Adolescence Education Programme and other school-based interventions by the middle of twentieth century.