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**MAIN LEAD**

*She is magnetic. She is as comfortable with her sexuality as she is with her innate femininity and power-packed board meets. AINDRILA MITRA and SAVIA RAJAGOPAL analyse the new breed of the sexually liberated women*

Remember Carrie Bradshaw from 'Sex and the City'— the character so smoothly role-played by Sara Jessica Parker, who is comfortable with her sexuality, while deriving fodder from real life sexual experiences for her columns. Well, Mumbai can well be termed as the New York of the East! Far removed from the coy, discreet conversations in the yesteryear, women today are talking about sex and expressing their sexuality openly. According to sociologist, Farida Lambay, "Education is responsible in a big way for this openness. Women today are empowered." She also attributes television and the media as being contributors to this phenomenon. Shedding some light, Dr. Kersi Chavda, consultant psychiatrist, Hinduja Hospital, explains, "This phenomenon is more common in the younger lot. Also, as intermingling between genders have increased, especially in the bigger metros, women have become aware of their sexuality." Dr. Shamsah Sonawalla, consultant psychiatrist, Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre, says, "The traditional roles of a man and woman have undergone drastic changes. Today, women are more independent, both economically and emotionally."

**It's about time...**

Television hostess and actress, Pooja Bedi, points out, "Acknowledging oneself as a sexual being is imperative as it lends to becoming a better lover, better wife and helps in keeping the spark alive in the relationship." Dr. Chavda dissects it further stating, "The mental body image has a significant role in accepting oneself as a sexual being. Whereas, women in their early 20s view sexuality as a part of gaining confidence, with motherhood and menopause, sexuality becomes almost synonymous with one's comfort level, growth and development."

**Basic instinct**

Dr. Rajan Bhonsle, consultant in sexual medicine and counsellor, believes that this openness is a step in the right direction and it's a welcome change. "Women have a right to enjoy and be comfortable about their sexuality. Indian culture in itself has emphasised the role of equal partners and 'sambhog', which is equal satisfaction. Even in the Kamasutra, woman's role is of an equal." The urban woman is ready to discuss sex unapologetically. Dr Prakash Kothari, Professor of Sexology, KEM Hospital and GS Medical College, illustrates this by saying that even two decades back, there were hardly any women who came to seek professional help in sexual matters. But now, more women come forward and at times, even drag their spouses for help.

**Time to capitalise...**

How often have you seen women using sex as a way to get what they want? In the contemporary scenario, when competition is all-encompassing, be it in your professional or personal sphere of relationships, a lot of women acquiesce to use sex to their advantage. "There is a transition taking place. But this is in the age group of 25 to 35-year-olds. The ruling thought is that there is nothing bad about having sex," says Lambay. Dr. Chavda claims, "It's also a personal choice whether one wants to jump the professional ladder by using their sexuality. The whole concept of give and take has become an order of the day. Sex is no longer considered as sacred and nor is it idolised. It's perceived as a biological function." Dr Kothari

further adds that there are women who use sex as power whether it's in the work area, or personally. But, he points out that it also depends on an individual's personality. "Why not use it, if you have it," fires off Gautami Baweja, media person. However, Pooja has a different opinion. "An element of flirtation is fine. But I personally feel men use sex more when compared to women."

### **Perfect timing...**

No longer are women waiting for men to figure out what they want. "Most women today, fairly know what they want. So if they are indulging in casual sex, more often than not, she has a game plan in mind and knows what she wants or is doing. And that necessarily does not have to be wrong," iterates Dr. Chavda. Pooja agrees: "It's an individual decision and if you're emotionally ready for it, and are sensible about it and take proper precautions, then I don't see the problem. And in most cases, it's a mutual decision." Dr. Sonawalla claims, "Attitudes are changing. Now, a woman is curious, intrigued and at the same time enjoys her sexuality. She's no longer repressed. Intellectual freedom has also led to women becoming more aggressive and independent. They are vocal about their sexual needs, are ready to take initiatives and experiment. It's become more about individual fulfilment rather than anything else."

### **FACT OR FICTION?**

#### **Do men really prefer women who are sexually aggressive?**

**Yudi, veejay/ anchor**

"I think it's absolutely fine with women being sexually aggressive, especially in today's day and age when behaving coy does not really help. There's no time to play games and it's much better if a woman can speak her mind, be it about her sexual intentions or otherwise, as long as she is tasteful about it."

### **COMING OF AGE**

In many surveys, men typically report engaging in sex at an earlier age, more often, and with more sexual partners than women. Earlier, women were pressurised to adhere to expectations that indicate them to be more relationship-oriented and avoid being seen as promiscuous. However, new results reflect the shifting gender roles in which women don't feel as strong a need to meet certain expectations about their sexual behaviour.

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