

## Lust



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Lust or lechery is generally defined as the intense psychological impulse that instinctively leads the human will to acquire a desired person, object (e.g., money), office (e.g., positions of authority), or anything else. Alternatively, the sense of lust is treated as a case of the heightened sexual instinct/an energy with which mental processes and structures are invested and which generates erotic attachments (*libido* inside the view of Sigmund Freud) (Rycroft 1995), or sometimes as a degraded emotional type of pure sexual energy (Fisher et al. 2006). However, it is usually thought of as intense or unbridled sexual desire, which is inextricably linked to the impetuous thinking and oppressed fantasy (Long 2006), often leading to an unexpected and widely unacceptable by most socio-religion contexts situation (e.g., fornication, adultery, rape, bestiality) (Lazarus and Lazarus 1994). The feeling of lust may occur at any time in the everyday life of a heterosexual or homosexual social subject (person), regardless of the social, economic, political, and cultural background of the same and/or its environment in which it is developed.

According to the *Old Catholic Encyclopedia* or *Original Catholic Encyclopedia* (full name: *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*) (1907–1912), a Christian's heart is in reality lustful when “venereal satisfaction is sought for either outside wedlock or, at any rate, in a manner which is contrary to the laws that govern marital intercourse.” Widely, the Christian tradition, and especially the philosophical teaching of the Catholic Church, supports that lust is a serious moral annex and considered to be a disordered desire for highest sexual pleasure, where this kind of pleasure characterized as “sought for itself”, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes. However, the Church does not stigmatize the pure sense of sexual desire, and consequently, is not excluded from God's plan (*Divine Providence*) for saving the humanity. Nevertheless, when sexual desire is separated from God's love, it becomes disordered and self-seeking, turning into lust (Jordan 1997). Lust is on the list of the *Seven Deadly Sins* (*pride/superbia, envy/invidia, gluttony/gula, lust/luxuria, wrath/ira, greed/avaritia, sloth/acedia*). Sins, introduced for first time by Pope Gregory I during the period 590–604 AD, are called “deadly,” because it is believed that they can deprive the divine grace, leading finally to the eternal condemnation of the soul of man; unless they are forgiven by confession. Every Sin is represented by a demon figure. The demon of

lust, Asmodeus, a semi-biblical figure in Christian (Demon), Jewish (Shedim), and Islamic (Jinn) tradition/mysticism, is known mainly thanks to the *Bible* (2 Kings 17:30), the *Book of Tobit* (Tobit 3:8; 3:17; 6:13 and 8:3), some *Talmudic Legends* (*The Story of King Solomon and Ashmedai*) and the pseudepigraphical text of King Solomon (1st–3rd century) titled *Testament of Solomon*, (Testament of Solomon 5.21–25). As a demon of lust, he is alleged to be responsible for overthrowing the sexual desires of human kind.

Similarly, the tradition of the Orthodox Church, although it states that as lust may be generally received any fiery desire for excessive acquisition into a legal and religious society (1 John: 16–17), also points out that lust is closely linked to the irresistible desire to conquer a sexual subject, reading gingerly the Bible (Matthew 13:17; Luke 15:14–16 and 22:15–16; Acts 20:33).

In the culture of Judaism, all the vicious tendencies of humanity, including lust, especially with its fleshly version, are characterized by the demonic concept of *Yetzer Hara* (means “the imagination of the heart of man [is] evil”, Genesis 6:5 and 8:21), which leads man to the misuse of the material and spiritual goods of society needs himself to survive-evolve within social reality. Alongside, the same concept is identified with the figure of the highest diabolical existence, Satan (Šāṭān), who knows the hidden – and as well as oppressed – aspirations of each one and leads man to the wrong choice (sin), and finally in the loss of Divine Grace (Divine of Yahve) (e.g., the erotic story of King David and Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 12:1–6). The deep knowledge of the Torah shields effectively the believer by providing religious and legal lessons about a better and not far from the divine favor quality of life (Reeg 2013).

In the Islamic tradition, the lust is represented as serious sin, which leads generally to an astray life, far away from the morality reflecting on the messages of Allāh. It is basically equivalent to fleshly desire and uncontrollable sexual activity (e.g., pornography, masturbation, adultery, rape, promiscuity). It is easily expressed through the body language among the adults, scandalizing many times the thought of men (Qu’ran 3:14; Collection of Ḥadīth: Al-Bukhārī no.5096;

Muslim no.2742 and nos.3740–41), even if there is a strict regulation about women’s dress code (*‘awrah*), imposing most of the feminine body parts are covered with a variety of garments (e.g., Qu’ran 24:30–31; 30:21 and 33:32). Accordingly, it is consolidated gradually a series of respective practices in order to avoid possibly unethical relationships between the sexual subjects (sexes). However, the sexual desire is not at all forbidden in Islam, so long as it remains within the boundaries of a committed relationship between two consenting adults. Lascivious behaviors are done under the influence of Devil (Shayṭān). For example, the Quran states, “Satan threatens you with want, and orders you to commit shameful acts, but Allah promises His pardon and Grace, for Allah is bounteous and all-knowing” (Qu’ran 2:268). If Muslims desire to reduce the lustful level in their private and public life, especially according to the teaching of Sufism, they must temper their *nafs* (means “lower self/soul/ego”), which consist this aspect of soul that thrives on a variety of appetites (e.g., lust, ira, sloth). Otherwise, the believers easily led astray by the power of Satan (Frager 1999). It is, also, believed that through the transient and systematic feeding (fasting, *siyām*) – including the libation (wine drinking) – Muslims acquire the ability to control corporal appetites and distorted mental processes that have as background the acquisition of pleasure, leading to the sin of lust (e.g. Qu’ran 2:183–185).

Reference to the concept of lust-irrepressible desire for the acquisition of material and/or spiritual benefits is also observed in the teaching of Buddhism. It is mentioned as *taṇhā* in the *Four Noble Truths* (1. *Suffering is inherent in all life*, 2. *Suffering is caused by lust*, 3. *There is a natural way to eliminate all suffering from one’s life*, 4. *The Noble Eightfold Path is that way*) of the present doctrine (Harvey 2013). Indeed, *taṇhā* is one of the main causes –but non the first one according, mainly, to the teaching of Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Walpola Sri Rahula – of pain-dissatisfaction (*dukkha*) and the cycle of repeated birth, becoming and death (*Samsāra*) (Williams et al. 2012; Walpola Sri Rahula 2014). The philosophy of Buddhism distinguishes three different types of lust: (a) *kama-taṇhā*, referred to the

longing for sensual/sexual pleasures, (b) *bhava-taṇhā*, reflected in the longing for existence and conquering eternity, and (c) *vibhava-taṇhā*, characterized by the longing for the ultimate non-existence, even if the desire to conquer this situation can be achieved through suicide or some other extreme individual act (Harvey 2013; Walpola Rahula 2014). The *Third Noble Truth* teaches that the cessation of *taṇhā* is possible, after personalized and systematic effort. More specifically, the Buddhist text *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra* states clearly advising a monk as follows: “*Bhikkhus (monk), there is a noble truth about the cessation of suffering. It is the complete fading away and cessation of this craving: its abandonment and relinquishment; getting free from and being independent of it.*” (Pāli Canon: *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*, Saṃyutta Nikaya 56.11; Thera 1999). Practically, the *Fourth Noble Truth* of Buddhism leads human being to the mode of controlling the sensation of lust, as it asserts that the cessation of longing is achieved through the gaining of the *insight meditation*, which shapes the right conditions to overcome the three perceptible marks of terrestrial existence (*dukkha*/suffering, *anicca*/impermanence, *anatta*/non-self) (Walpola Sri Rahula 2014).

Generally, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the most important sacred texts of Hinduism, Krishna, an *Avatar* of Vishnu, report clearly in the verse twenty-one (21) that lust, one of the most serious sins, is born after man’s systematic and distorted contact with the ideals of the material world, as he fills the human being with vanity and turns it into a downy of passion and inmost forbidden thoughts (Bhagavad-Gita 3.36-43; Davis 2014). Furthermore, the spiritual organization based on Hindu philosophical tradition, *Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU)*, supports that the longing, and indeed the lust for the inadmissible and impure sexual activity, leads the human species directly to the gates to the Kingdom of Underworld (*Naraka*), the abode of Yama, the god of Death. For this reason, the supporters of the movement avoided the systematic consumption of onions, garlic, eggs, or, broadly, non-vegetarian provisions,

which is thought to eventually awaken/increases rapidly and uncontrollable the sexual masculine and feminine impulses levels (Whaling 2012).

In the tradition of Sikhism, it seems that the sin of erotic lust is considered as detrimental to the benevolent development of the human soul, and therefore, it is included to the *Five Cardinal Sins/ Five Thieves (Panj Dosh or Panj Vikar)* among the rage/krodh, greed/lobh, attachment/moh, and ahamkara conceit/ahankar (Izzo 2017).

## See Also

- [Buddhism and Sexuality](#)
- [Christianity and Sexuality](#)
- [Hinduism and Sexuality](#)
- [Islam and Sexuality](#)
- [Judaism and Sexuality](#)
- [Pleasure](#)
- [Sex and Religion](#)
- [Sikhism and Sexuality](#)

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