

# The Sunday Guardian

<http://www.sunday-guardian.com>

<http://www.sunday-guardian.com/artbeat/kink-and-consent-in-the-bedroom>

WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 08, 2014



Images from the exhibition Bound to be Free at Abadi Art Space-New Delhi

## Kink and consent in the bedroom

NIDHI GUPTA 9th Nov 2013

Every time I see someone reading E.L. James' Fifty Shades of Grey on the metro, I cringe. Not only because it is a trashy piece of literature, but also because it makes me wonder how one can read paragraph after paragraph describing explicit sexual acts without feeling at least a little squeamish in place as public as a commuter train.

The book also discomfited Jaya Sharma, a proponent of the Kinky Collective, an underground collective of BDSM (Bondage & Discipline Dominance & Submission Sado-Masochism) enthusiasts in the country — but for a different, more serious, reason. “James has drawn Christian's (the male lead) character as perverted and roots this in an abusive relationship during his childhood. This automatically endorses the idea that BDSM is deviant sexual behavior. We have no desire to be represented by the likes of E.L. James,” she says.

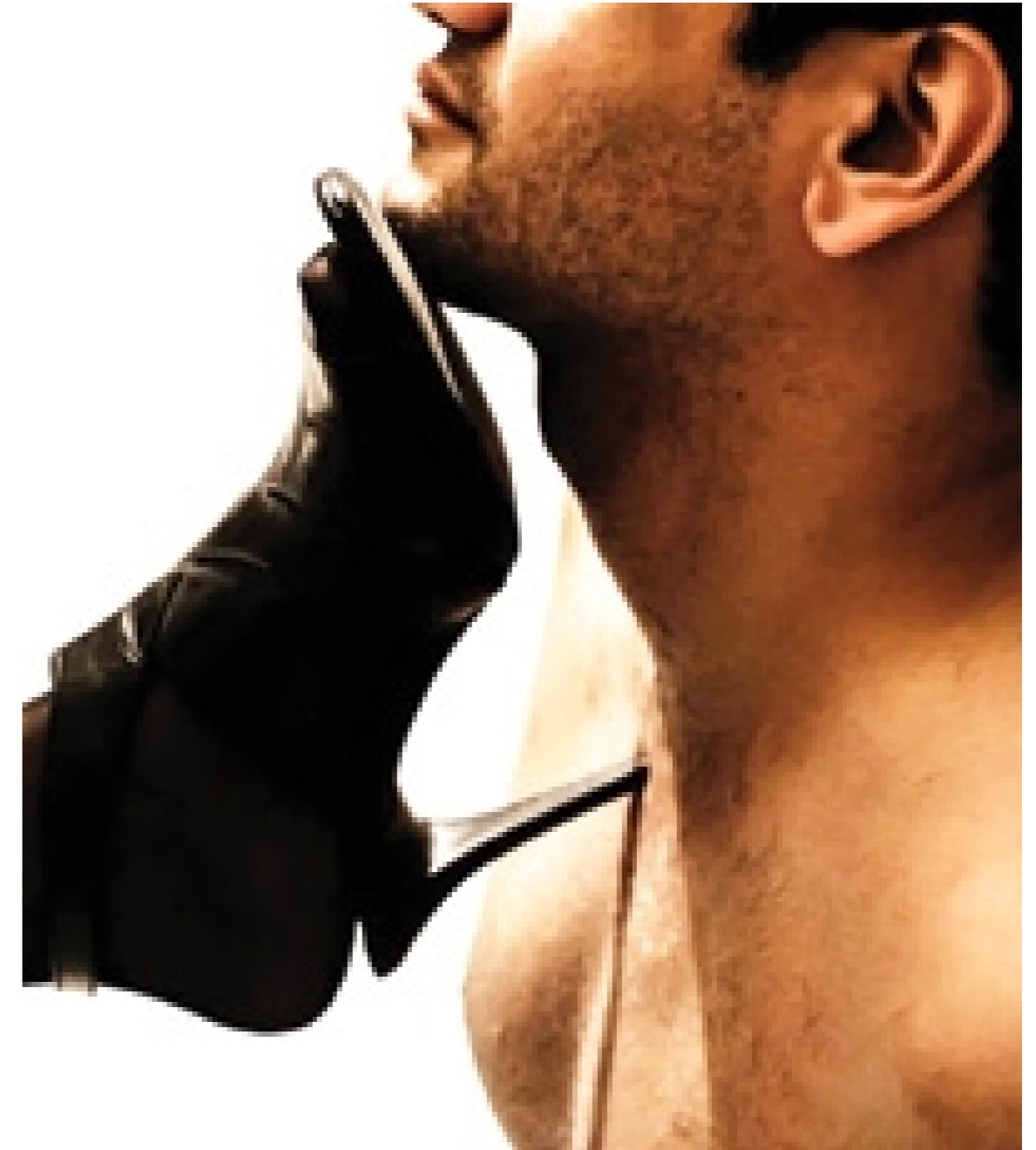
The portrayal of BDSM in popular and mainstream media is decidedly negative — it is alternately seen as extreme, cultish and sick. It isn't considered so much a sexual preference as a compulsion, a perversion that arises out of some twisted psychology. This is regardless of scientific studies that have shown that BDSM practitioners exhibit better mental health than 'vanilla' people. The Kinky Collective has been getting more vocal with every passing year, trying to dispel the myths surrounding BDSM. Their latest attempt to do so involves a photo exhibition.

Bound to be Free is a set of explicit photographs taken of and by members of the collective, selected and curated by established artists like Jose Abad and Chitra Ganesh, among others. These include images of men and women tied-up, gagged, handcuffed, caged, being poured hot wax on or spanked — constructions of the dominant and the dominated that may be staged for the camera but are an everyday reality for this community. There are also images of the Fifty Shades of Grey being pulled apart, the pages of the book strewn about among shredded roses — quite a literal expression of their collective dismissal of James.

“We think people outside the community have much to learn from us about consent — as opposed to the myth that we are a violent bunch of people, here consent is actively sought and given. There is a high degree of articulation, and chains of communication are far more refined than in other relationships. As a feminist and a person who works in the rural development sector, I know for a fact that women find it very difficult to negotiate consent with their partners,” she explains.

**“As opposed to the myth that we are a violent bunch of people, here consent is actively sought and given. — Jaya Sharma”**

The other big myth about BDSM is that it is essentially about inflicting pain. This too, says Sharma, is incorrect: “The pain aspect is extremely fulfilling for some people, while for others, it is the power play that BDSM entails, the ‘dominate and surrender’ factor, which takes precedent. The experience of power in the erotic is pervasive — anyone who's received a love bite would know that too — and that pain and pleasure can become two sides of the same coin,” she laughs.



Images from the exhibition Bound to be Free at Abadi Art Space-New Delhi

As playful and benign this may sound, the fact is the BDSM community the world over is still a stigmatized group. While the LGBT community may finally be gaining acceptability, at both legal and societal levels, BDSM is far more difficult to deal with, more so because it is seen as an extension of a male-dominated society.

“Male submissives (men who like to be dominated) also exist, and due to the rigid codes of masculinity that pervade our society, they too become a victim of fear and silence. Consequently, there is also the fear of marriage and blackmail. Even for this exhibition, the members of the collective are quite scared about coming out so publicly. But it is essential to break the silence and talk about the strengths of the community,” says Sharma.

BDSM, for its practitioners, is often also a way to reach new spiritual depths. “The act of surrendering can take you to very raw, primal places deep inside you, it centers and heals you in a way that not much else can,” she opines. None of this is meant to convert non-believers into followers — it is all only an argument for acceptance, like every other alternative sexuality in the world, as it is an attempt to disrupt existing hierarchies and the question established definitions of ‘normal’.

## Bound to be Free

A National Travelling Kinky Photo Exhibition

Selection Panel: CHITRA GANESH, Visual Artist | JOSE ABAD LORENTE, Artist/Curator  
& MEMBERS OF THE KINKY COLLECTIVE

The Kinky Collective Invites You

India's first Photo Exhibition on Bondage Domination Sado Masochism  
Exhibition Opening 8th November 2013 | 7 pm - 9pm



Photograph by Vaad / Carmina Warr

Abadi Art Space, 1st Floor F 213A/1  
Old M. B. Road Lado Sarai, New Delhi  
Phone: 011 41078186  
E-mail: [abadiartspace@gmail.com](mailto:abadiartspace@gmail.com)  
[www.abadiartspace.com](http://www.abadiartspace.com)

Venue Sponsored by



Exhibition till 10th Nov 2013

Open 10:00am - 9:00pm

Members Kinky Collective

E-mail: [thekinkygroup@gmail.com](mailto:thekinkygroup@gmail.com)

Queries: 011 41078186 / 9971987709