

DECEMBER 6, 2020

WHERE SPREADING AWARENESS MATTERS

सुलारसु

WHAT IS LGBTQ+?

Present situation and
problems faced by
the community

LGBTQ+ REFORMERS

Menaka Guruswamy and
Arundhati Katju

PRISM LOVE

PRIDE
MONTH
PARADES
Pride month - June



INITIATIVE
ASTITVA



enactus
Dr. Akhilesh Das Gupta Institute
of Technology & Management

IT'S NOT JUST A PHASE

phase

a distinct period or stage in
a series of events or a
process of change or
development

noun [feɪz]



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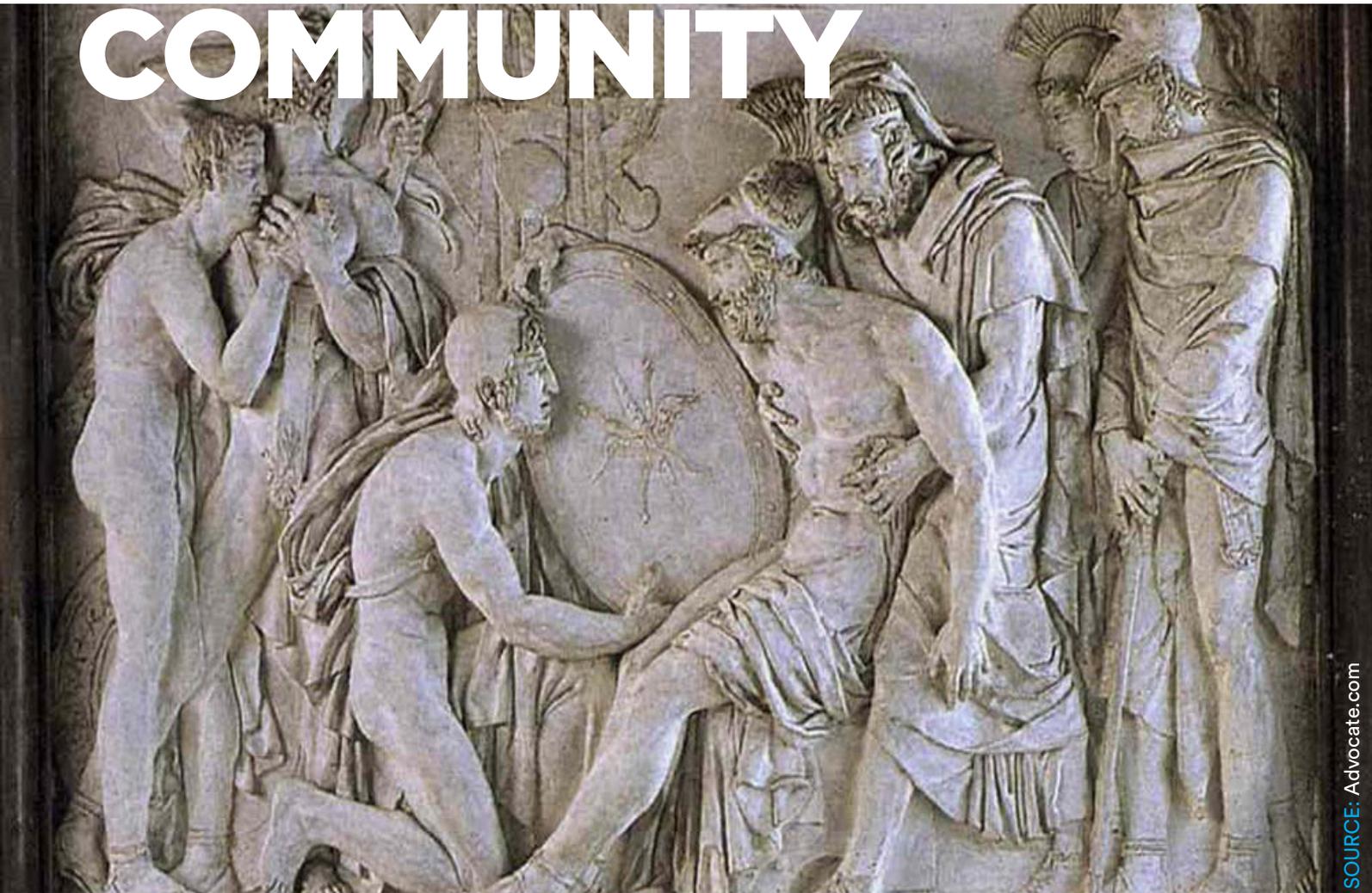
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WHAT IS LGBTQ+?

LGBTQ+ is an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The initialism of LGBTQ+ is intended to emphasize a diversity of sexuality and gender identity-based cultures and is sometimes used to refer to anyone who is non-heterosexual or non-cisgender instead of exclusively to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. To recognize this inclusion, a popular variant adds the letter Q for those who identify as queer and/or are questioning their sexual identity as LGBTQ+, recorded since 1996.

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY



SOURCE: Advocate.com

“Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history.”

LGBTQ+ history dates back to the first recorded instances of same-sex love and sexuality of ancient civilizations, involving the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ+) peoples and cultures around the world.

Before the late-nineteenth century, the concept of having a distinct sexual identity did not exist, though people in the past lived lives similar to our modern understanding of what it means to be LGBTQ+. Gay identity, as both a personal and political category, did not fully emerge until the mid-twentieth century.

Most historians agree that there are shreds of evidence of homosexual activity and same-sex love, whether such relationships were accepted or persecuted, in every documented culture. What survives after many centuries of persecution, resulting in shame, suppression, and secrecy, has only in more recent decades been pursued and interwoven into more mainstream historical narratives.

ANCIENT INDIA



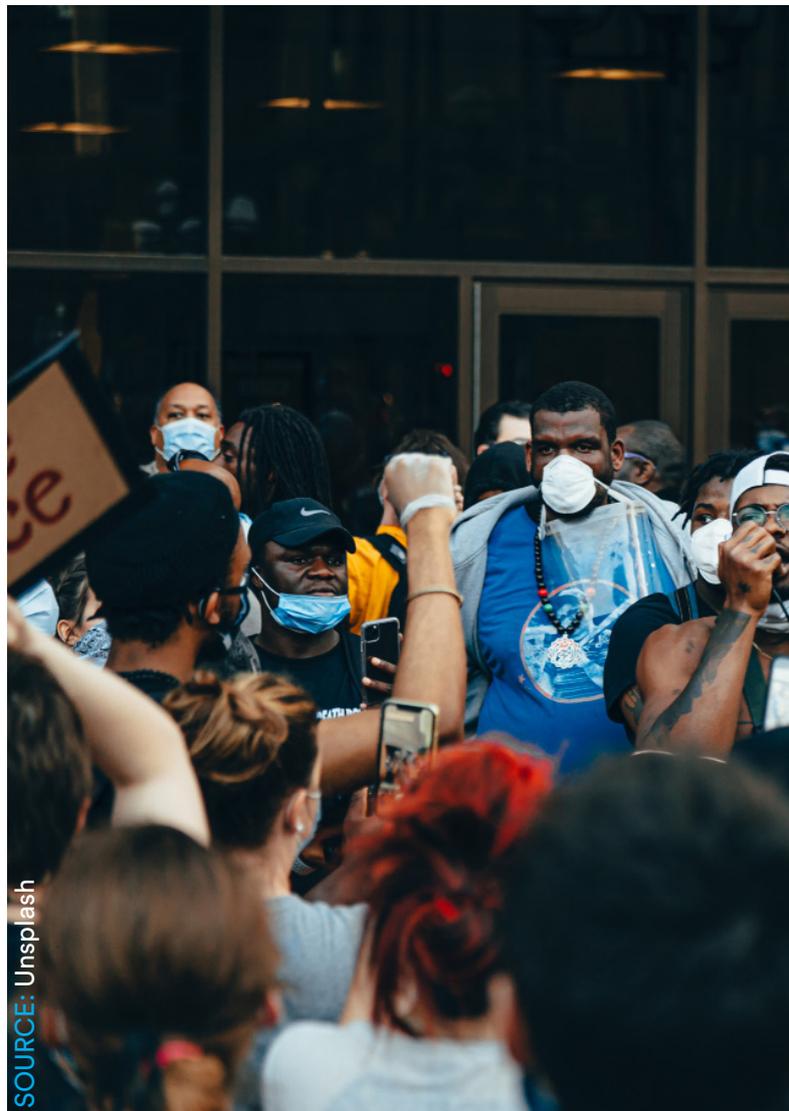
Ancient Indian texts are relevant to modern LGBTQ+ causes. Religion has played a role in shaping Indian customs and traditions. While injunctions on homosexuality's morality are not explicitly mentioned in the religious texts central to Hinduism, Rigveda, one of the four canonical sacred texts of Hinduism contains the phrase *Vikriti Evam Prakriti* (meaning what seems unnatural is also natural), which some scholars believe recognizes homosexual/transsexual dimensions of human life, like all forms of universal diversities.

There are several instances in ancient Indian epic poetry of same sex depictions and unions by gods and goddesses. The ancient Indian text *Kamasutra* written by Vatsyayana dedicates a complete chapter on erotic homosexual behavior. While homosexual intercourse was not sanctioned, it was treated as a very minor offense.

PRESENT SITUATION AND PROBLEMS



SOURCE: Mario Tama



SOURCE: Unsplash

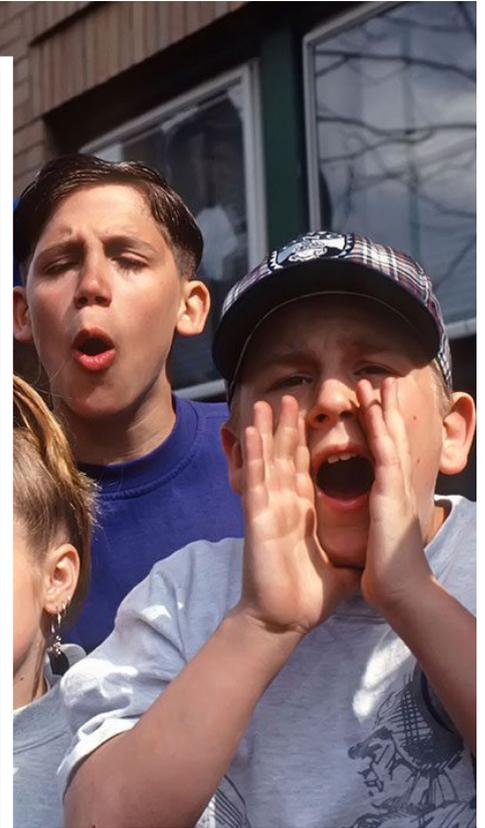
Today, homosexuality and queer identities may be accepted by the majority of the Indian youths, but within the boundaries of families, homes, and schools, acceptance remains a constant struggle for the people belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. We have seldom heard of people coming out of the closet and declaring to their families that they are not the person their family expected them to be. The community has undoubtedly faced several challenges throughout history, and continues to face the majority of them:

Heterosexuality: They are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and threat of violence due to their sexual orientation than those that identify themselves as heterosexual.

In-equality & Violence: They face inequality and violence at every place around the world. They face torture from people who mock them and make them realize that they are different from others.

Victims of Hate Crimes: They also become victims of hate crimes. In some countries, homosexuality is regarded as a crime. It is illegal and is often met by imprisonment and fines.

FACED BY THE COMMUNITY



SOURCE: Sciencemag

Tape of Addictions: These people mostly get addicted to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco to get themselves relieved of stress and rejection, and discrimination.

Conflict in the Family itself: Lack of communication between LGBTQ+ children and the parents often leads to conflict in the family. Many LGBTQ+ youths are placed in foster care or end up in juvenile detention or on the streets

Racial Discrimination: Additionally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender+ people face poverty and racism daily. They suffer from social and economic inequalities due to continuous discrimination in the workplace.

Isolation from society: They gradually develop low self-esteem and low self-confidence and become isolated from friends and family.

Deprivation of Rights: In many countries, the basic human rights enjoyed by opposite-sex couples are not equally enjoyed by same-sex couples. They face unequal treatment, medical abuses, discrimination in health & jobs and housing, domestic violence, abuses against children, and denial of family rights and recognition.

PRIDE MONTH PARADES

Pride parades are outdoor events celebrating LGBTQ social and self acceptance, achievements, legal rights, and most importantly, pride.



SOURCE: GettyImages

Pride Month - June

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) Pride Month is celebrated each year in the month of June to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan. The history of June being celebrated as the Pride month dates back to 28th June, 1969, when police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club near Manhattan NYC which resulted in more than 500 people taking to the streets to protest the discrimination against the LGBTQ+ people.

The Stonewall Inn Uprising was a tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. In the United States, the last Sunday in June was initially celebrated as “Gay Pride Day,” but the actual day was flexible. In major cities across the nation the “day” soon grew to encompass a month-long series of events. Today, celebrations include pride parades, picnics, parties, workshops, symposia and concerts, and LGBTQ Pride Month events attract millions of participants around the world.

OVER THE RAINBOWS!

While for many it was just some casual insignia, for a few it meant everything!



SOURCE: Medium.com

SOURCE: SanFranciscoChronicles

A symbol for identification of the community was depicted in Gilbert's emblem through different colours. Teaching people about unification, his rainbow aimed to encourage awareness, humanity, and acceptance for all. Back in 1978, when Gilbert Baker, a gay rights activist was offered to build a flag for a gay pride parade, he had no clue that the flag he would create would become the international symbol, endlessly cementing his prominence in helping to define the contemporary LGBTQ+ movement.

His flag was an impeccable depiction of diversity in terms of race, gender, and age where the hot pink color stood for sexuality, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, turquoise for art, indigo for harmony, and violet symbolized spirit.

His efforts left an impression of hope and inclusion for oppressed minorities, exhibiting people that we are the same, one in our blood, and must be treated equally.



SOURCE: OutlookIndia

***“One two three four, Open up the closet doors.
Five six seven eight, don’t pretend your kids are straight.”***

As the people screamed these slogans in the pride parade, they screamed to celebrate their LGBTQ+ identity. The word ‘Pride’ was decisively chosen to honor the struggle, beauty, and dignity of belonging to the queer community. Carrying these rainbow flags and balloons, and dancing to the beat of drums, these people symbolize acceptance for all. Although, there’s no denying that supporting the LGBTQ+ community is astounding but we need to understand that they are not only cultural events but deeply political ones.

Pride rattles the very base of our patriarchal and heteronormative societies. Unlike any other generation in history, we know how to construct our mindset. There’s room to dream about building the world we want, instead of the one we’re turning into. Let’s expand our minds and bring a revolution together.

HISTORY OF PRIDE PARADE IN INDIA

There has been a visibility of LGBTQIA+ since the last decade fighting against the stigma and battling for their rights and recognition. The battle against the recognition staggeringly started in the pre-independence era.

During British rule in 1860, homosexual intercourse was considered unnatural and was declared a criminal offense. After independence, the right to equality was implemented under Article 14 however homosexuality remained a criminal offense.

Decades later, the first known protest for gay rights was conducted. That happened in 1999 that Kolkata hosted India's first Gay Pride Parade. This was the small step towards the upcoming change that might bring a huge impact. It was that on Sept. 6, 2018, when Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Section 377 was unconstitutional "in so far as it criminalizes consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same sex".

However, the activists, individuals fighting for their community did not call it a day and kept working for their community however many saw it as a snowball's chance in hell. The battle for equality, recognition, and citizenship has been long and still ongoing but these events mark an important step towards the fight for the rights of the community.



SOURCE: IndiaToday



SOURCE: TheCitizen

DAYS FOR LGBTQ+

There are some important days acknowledged internationally where identities that make up our diverse community deserve to be recognized, respected and supported.

International Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV), March 31, is a day to show support for the community. Keeping in mind the importance of accomplishments of people around the globe while fighting transphobia by spreading knowledge of the community.

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, May 17, represents an annual landmark to draw the attention of the media, the public to the situation faced by lesbian, gay, bisexuals, and transgender and those who do not conform to sexual and gender norms.

National Coming Out Day, October 11, On this day the community celebrates lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people's coming out experiences and journeys.

Asexual Awareness Week, October 22-28, is an international campaign that seeks to educate about asexual and grey-asexual experiences to create materials that are accessible to the asexual community around the world.

International Transgender Day of Remembrance, November 20, memorializes those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.

Spirit Day, October 20, a day millions wear purple in a stand against bullying and to show their support. Purple symbolizes 'spirit' on the rainbow flag.

LGBTQ+ REFORMERS ALL OVER THE WORLD

“At the end of hardships... comes happiness”

It is quite rightly said, ‘For every dark night there is a bright day’. In many countries today, people are free to join pride marches, marry whomever they choose, and openly show their love. Without these incredible activists, the LGBTQ+ rights movement would not have been where it is today. While certainly not an exhaustive list by any means, here are 5 LGBTQ+ activists you should know about:



SOURCE: Netflix

“We want to see all gay people have a chance at equal rights, as straight people in America. We believe in picking up a gun, and starting a revolutionary if necessary.”

Marsha P. Johnson

She is sometimes referred to as the “Rosa Parks of the LGBT movement”. “As long as gay people don’t have their rights all across America, there’s no reason for celebration.” she once said. She was black, queer, and trans — and fearlessly advocated for her rights and the rights of the LGBTQ community at a time when doing so put her safety in jeopardy.



“It takes no compromising to give people their rights. It takes no money to respect the individual. It takes no survey to remove repressions.”

Harvey Milk

SOURCE: Daniel Nicoletta

The subject of the Oscar-winning film *Milk*, was the first openly gay politician to be elected in California. Milk was assassinated in 1978, but during his short tenure in office, he pushed legislation to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations.



SOURCE: IMBD

“Hijras are a sexual minority that is visible, and yet we are treated as the invisibles. I believe I was never invisible. I thought, ‘I’m the face in the crowd, not the crowd.’”

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi

A transgender rights activist, Hindi film actress, and a Bharatanatyam dancer, Laxmi recognizes herself as a part of the hijra community. For being effeminate, she was taunted at school and was sexually abused by a relative. Breaking all conventional notions surrounding beauty pageants pertaining to gender, she launched the Indian Super Queen beauty pageant in 2010, which is going strong!

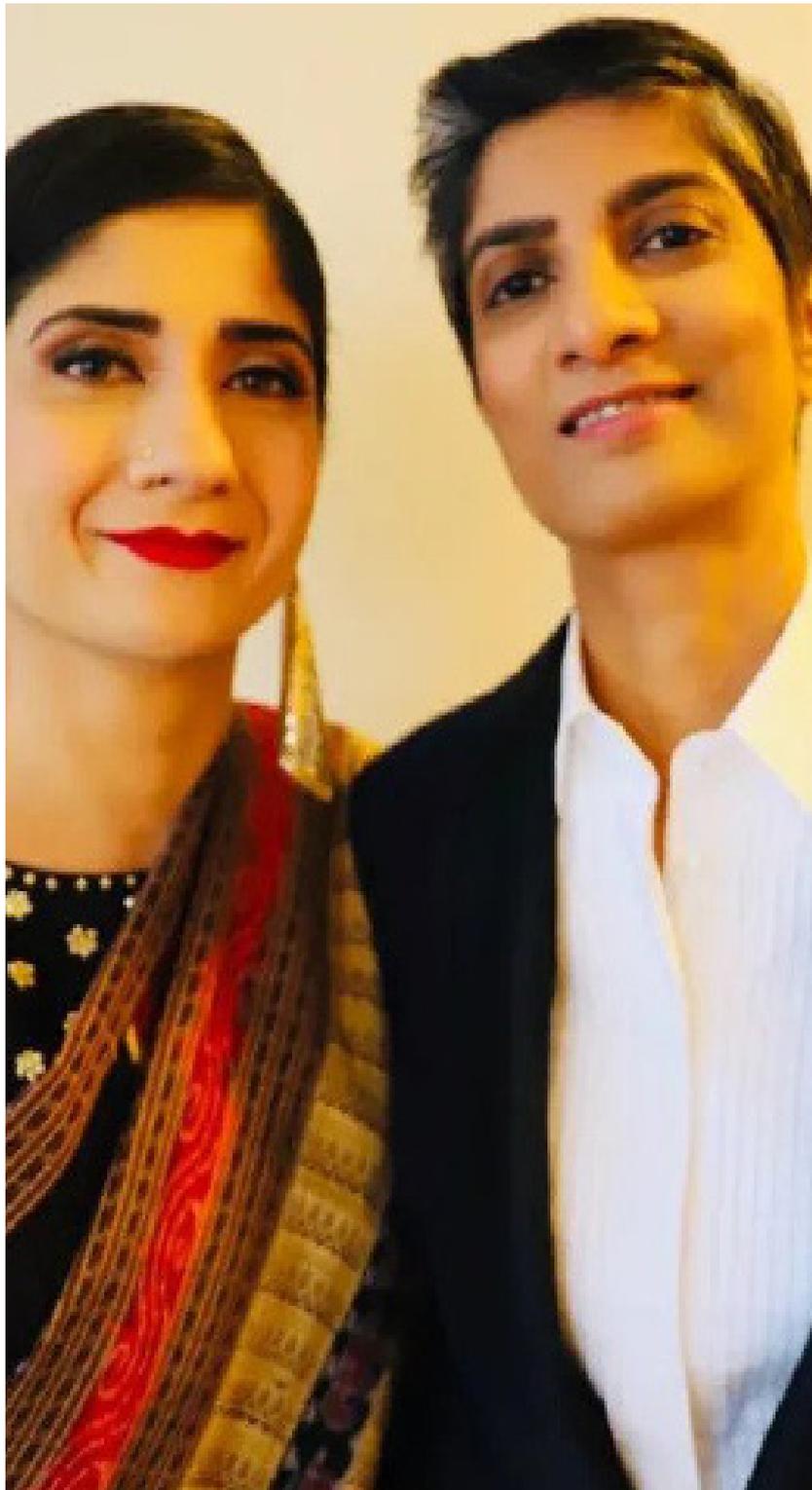


SOURCE: Black Opinion

“If the world conference on women is to address the concerns of all women, it must similarly recognize that discrimination based on sexual orientation is a violation of basic human rights.”

Beverly Palesa Ditsie

South African lesbian activist Beverly Palesa Ditsie, spoke about the importance of LGBT rights in the context of human rights at the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Not only was she the first openly woman, who was a lesbian, to address the UN, but it was also the first time that the United Nations was openly addressed about LGBT issues.



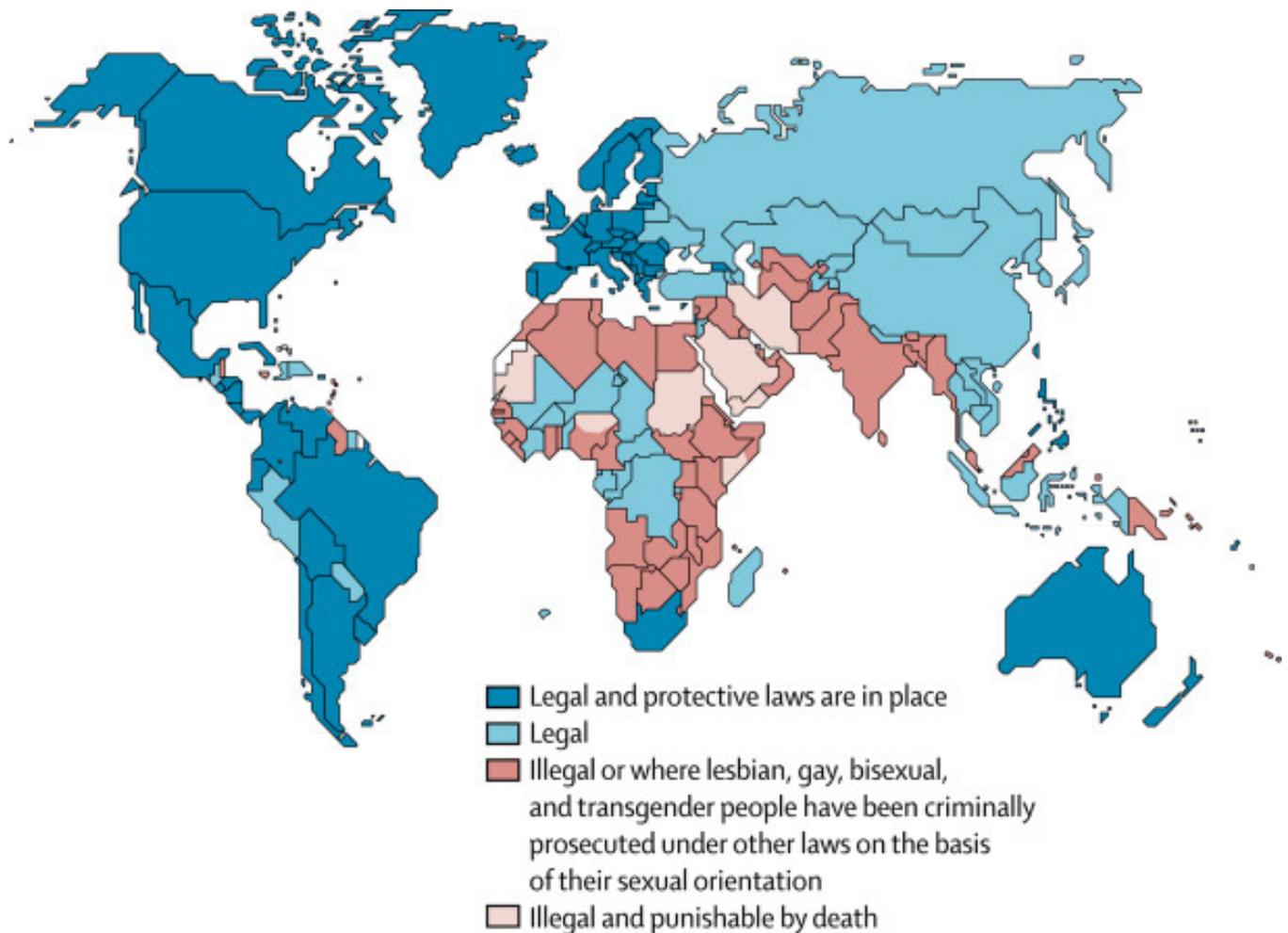
SOURCE: Instagram

“Arundhati and Menaka have helped take a giant step for LGBTQ rights in the world’s largest democracy. In their committed fight for justice, they have shown us that we as a society must continue to make progress, even after laws are changed, and that we must make an effort to understand, accept and love.”

Menaka Guruswamy and Arundhati Katju

Lawyers Menaka Guruswamy & Arundhati Katju argued for the decriminalization of homosexuality in India, resulting in the unanimous Supreme Court decision to repeal Section 377 in 2018. The couple was honored in Time’s 100 most influential people in 2019, with Priyanka Chopra

RAINBOWS REIGN



SOURCE: TheLancet

Over the past decade, LGBTQ+ people have gained more and more tolerance and acceptance in India. Today, homosexuality and queer identities are embraced more by the Indian youth. But within the boundaries of families, homes, and schools, acquiring acceptance and equal rights remains a constant struggle.

People's prejudices lead them to think that LGBTQ+ people are odd and very different. They do not realize that being L, G, B, T or Q is merely about exercising your liberty of choosing your sexual partner and lifestyle. It is important to consider that just because a person's choices vary with the designated societal norms, it doesn't make them abnormal or a target.

PRIDE LEGAL



SOURCE: ThePrint

It is paramount to be conscious of the fact that 2018 land marked the overcoming of a mammoth hurdle and witnessed the legalization of same-sex sexual activity. The Supreme Court of India decriminalized consensual homosexual intercourse by reading down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

Article 15 of our constitution clearly states “Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth”. It further elaborates that no state or person can show any restriction or disability against another being on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity. However, it won't be infrequent for us to come across scenarios where people of different opinions and different choices are maltreated amongst their peers and close ones.

STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION



SOURCE: Unsplash

Nonetheless, most LGBTQ+ people remain closeted, fearing discrimination from families and friends. Moreover, the constant calling out of names, violence, and never-ending pressure from families drive such people towards major depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, substance abuse, and suicidal ideations and attempts.

Research has shown that feeling positive about one's sexual orientation and integrating it into one's life fosters greater well-being and mental health. Additionally, in numerous instances 'coming out' embarks a valuable step in the psychological development of LGBTQ+ people

ALL ARE WELCOME



SOURCE: Twitter

“Not all roses have thorns”

Gautam Bhan, an LGBTQ+ rights activist, and a writer has reiterated the fact that queer politics is not just about equal rights but about the larger fight against patterns of entrenched hierarchy, prejudice, and intolerance that persists to bedevil Indian society.

It is imperative for us, as the future of our country to empower others and to keep introspecting our ideologies. Rather than questioning and making someone feel uncomfortable in their skin, we should be more accepting and respectful of their likings. Furthermore, instead of calling LGBTQ+ people out, we should call them in.

Hardships of Coming Out

1. How would you describe your sexuality?

I would describe myself as bisexual or pansexual. Ofcourse both concepts are a little foreign for people to understand, so whatever is easily understood. I don't mind being identified as either.

2. Numerous researches have shown that the process of 'coming out' holds a dominant place in people's lives. So, what was coming out like for you?

To be completely honest, I don't recall it that well. I was in 9th grade when I came out to my best friend during our lunch period. I told her that, I might not be straight and that I do have some feelings for the girls in my life. I remember that she was really supportive and did acknowledge my confession. I recollect crying a lot but it was quite liberating. Since then, I've tried to come out to as many people as possible and that is mostly my friends. Sadly, I haven't been able to come out to my parents because I fear they won't really understand and I don't intend to ruin my relationship with them. Though my sister knows and she's extremely supportive.

3. So since your coming out, did you ever experience social, emotional or physical abuse?

Thankfully and I find myself extremely lucky for this, that I haven't been abused as such for my sexuality. Although yes, I have been a recipient of some homophobic taunts from my ex and other random people. I don't really let them affect me because they are speaking from a place of ignorance.

4. What contributed to helping you understand your gender identity and how acknowledging your true self has brought a change in your life?

So, I've always been kind of really gay. I always wanted to be with girls and while growing up, I used to tell my mom that I want to marry a girl. I've always been quite thorough on how I wanted to present myself and I literally experimented with a lot of styles. In middle school, where everyone used to have crushes on guys, I thought my girl crushes were not valid. I never really had any exposure about what I was feeling and so I thought I wasn't any different from other people. I did had guy crushes and it confuses me till this day. To be honest, it's still a struggle. And sometimes I wish I was at one end of the spectrum, either gay or straight.

5. Personally, has the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the IPC made an impact on the way society perceives you as an individual?

I haven't been completely out to everyone so I haven't faced any discrimination towards my identity. I feel it's also because I'm predominantly straight passing. Everyone just assumes that I'm straight when they first look at me. I sometimes suffer from imposter syndrome because I feel as if I'm more privileged than others in this realm. But I think things might change for me if I come out publically.

6. In a country like India, where even the slightest remark on this topic is met with harsh response, how do you deal with the homophobic behaviour of people?

Honestly, I just try to avoid conversations with people who have been making homophobic remarks towards me. If it's a loved one, then I try to explain them about the effects of saying such things. Overall I try to be around people who are accepting of me as a whole and not just a part of me. That has actually affected my ability to retain friends, but in totality I think it's for the better.

7. Is there anything else you would like to add or any piece of advice you would like to share with our readers?

As a person who has been out for 5 years, I'd just like to say that you should at least try to be true to yourself. Often situations might not allow it, but it's not healthy to repress emotions and feelings. And it's totally fine to be confused. It's okay not to know your sexuality, to struggle with your gender identity because there is no rush. Take your own sweet time and be the best you can be..



“A single act of kindness can spread ripples of healing”

We would like to express our utmost gratitude towards our mentor and guardian, Dr. Preety Dhaka, who not only guided us to the right path but also led our way to the destination. Ma'am, only with your prescience and guidance, we were able to achieve success in this endeavor.

Secondly, we would like to thank our hardworking and zealous vice president Kritika Gogia for guiding us throughout the edition.

Last but not least we would like to extend our hearty gratitude to our prolific teams who worked assiduously to edit and compile Gutargu!

The business development team for supporting the project and providing the research work.

Project heads – Ishika Khurana & Paridhi Sharma for managing the project perfectly.

Content head – Arjun Narang, along with our whole content team for providing incredibly interesting content.

The marketing team for making Gutargu reach a large number of readers.

Graphics team - Shubham and Akshat for giving some really amazing graphics to the magazine.

And all members who are a part of it and worked tirelessly to make Gutargu possible!

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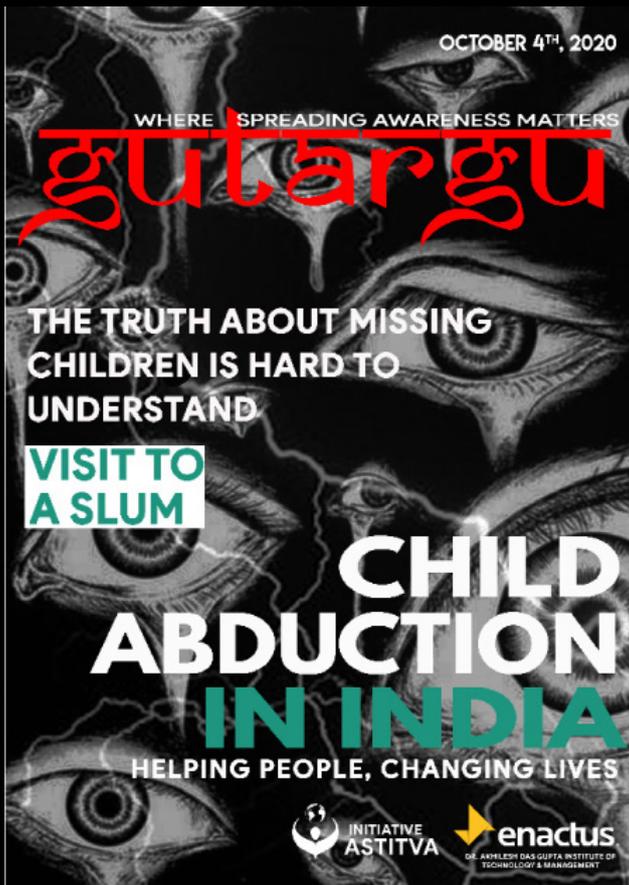


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