

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
KAMALA NEHRU COLLEGE  
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# INTERFACE

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## TRAJECTORY OF LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY IN MODERN TIMES

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## Understanding the LGBTQIA+ Community: In A Nutshell

*Diya Srivastava & Vanshika Singh, 2nd year*

*“ Sometimes, I felt so unrelated to this world, many times, I felt why am I like this. People laughed when they couldn't understand where I belong, they would call me names, bully, but after the eradication of article 377A which had criminalized who I was, now I am living my way and I am proud of my identity, but still, I see no inclusion”*

When people talk about the LGBTQIA+ community, their understanding varies from person to person. Many of them are unaware of the full forms of the acronym. At least, we are now talking to understand the acronym. Instead, it took a lot of years for identifying the community in our societies. Many societies still do not consider or accept the community as a part; it has still been considered as ‘Other’. The acronym *LGBTQIA+* technically stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, (questioning), intersex, asexual, and agender. When thinking about all these different identities, they all fall within several buckets: gender expression, gender identity, sex assigned at birth, and sexual and romantic orientation. The terminology used for these identities is extensive and that is a good thing as it gives added ability for labeling (here labeling is used for definite, not discriminating).

The words queer and homosexuals are umbrella terms to address the LGBTQIA+ community. People of all sexualities and gender identities come under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella term which may also be identified as queer. They may use the term “queer” to reclaim it as historically many have used the term as a slur. When it comes to the terms used so casually like ‘sex’ or ‘gender’, we overlook many things like in what ways we are using it, how do we use it, etc. Let us define these terms-

sex, sexuality, gender identity.

The ‘sex’ comprises male and female. Sex is determined by the chromosomes and it is the binary to the understanding of society. Hence, it mostly emphasizes the reproduction and the acceptance of the two sexes. But many are unaware of the different identities we tend to associate ourselves with. Gender is a more socially accepted term and is mostly used to allocate our identities to what we are born with.

Everyone has a different way of experiencing gender, one cannot deter a person of this right. Overall, the article covers what we understand about LGBTQIA, it gives us a glimpse of what this acronym states, and what we understand. We are not using what we should? but we are moreover, to what ought to be?



## Ardhanarishvara: A Non-binary Figure?

*Nimisha Dutta, 2nd year*

Indian mythology is a great method to bring gender into family discussions. Gender diversity and homosexuality have been depicted in Hindu mythology through developed heroes and incidents. Changes in sex, homoerotic encounters, and intersex or third gender figures are frequently seen in epics, Puranas, and regional folklore, but more discreetly than directly. Throughout history, Hinduism has embraced homosexuality and gender diversity as natural and also part of life.

The Ashramas, which set out the correct path for men, including taking a wife and becoming a father and householder, and the duties of women, explicitly as wives and child-bearers, demonstrate the importance of men and women's relationships in Hinduism. While the need to complete each of these stages may regulate the lives of men and women, this does not rule out the existence of other genders, albeit they may be reduced to a lower social status.

Unlike most Western religions, Hinduism has always regarded homosexuality as natural behavior and indicated in both folklore and religious texts. In Hindu mythology, various androgynous figures are referred to in current times to affirm certain aspects of the LGBTQIA community's identity and behavior. Many gods and goddesses in Hinduism and Indian mythology are shown as both male and female at different times and in diverse incarnations or may appear with attributes of both sexes at the same time.

Agni, the deity of fire, is married to both the goddess Svaha and the male Moon-god Soma. Mitra and Varuna, as depicted in the ancient Rigveda, are gods of intimacy who represent intimate male friendship.

Lord Vishnu frequently assumed the female form of Mohini and even gave birth to Ayyappa, a famous figure who is still revered by millions. Erotic carvings, including portrayals of same-sex activities, are mixed in with depictions of daily life in the temples of Khajuraho. Scholars have interpreted this as an acknowledgment that people engaged in homosexual acts and that sexuality was not seen as extreme.

Lord Shiva is typically seen as the pinnacle of masculinity, although his Ardhanarishvara form is an androgynous hybrid of Shiva and his wife, goddess Parvati. Ardhanarishvara, the perfect blend of Purusha and Prakriti, signifies that masculine and feminine principles are interdependent. Shiva is claimed to have given Parvati the left half of his body to display his devotion to her, or as other traditions claim to illustrate to the other gods that balance was required for creation. The resulting Shiva-Parvati combination is known as Ardhanarishvara. Ardhanarishvara is a combination of three words "Ardha,"

"Nari," and "Ishwara," which respectively mean "half," "woman," and "lord". "The Lord whose half is a woman". He is a half-man and half-woman.

Ardhanarishvara is a figure who can be considered either dual-gendered, symbolizing the perfection gained via the union of male and female, or third-gendered/non-binary in their own right. Ardhanarishvara becomes a positive example for the LGBTQIA community. The merger of Shiva and Shakti, who embody the male and female parts, transcends the male-female divide and its limitations.

Hindu scholar Sadhguru says, "This is a sign to suggest that if you evolve in your



ultimate context, you will be half a man and half a woman, a full-fledged man and a full-fledged woman. That's when you've matured into a full-fledged human being". Masculinity and femininity do not refer to male and female genders, but rather to traits. It is believed that only when these two attributes are in balance within a person, the individual can live a fulfilled life. Ardhanarishvara is the god who rules over the Ajna, or third eye chakra, which is associated with spiritual awakening. This is where we find the right balance between our male and female sides, regardless of gender.

The numerous references to homosexuality in ancient Indian literature, folklores, inscriptions, and paintings on temple walls may not explicitly approve of homosexuality, but they do acknowledge its existence at the time. Hijras have been sought after for centuries to administer blessings and rites at weddings and births.

They were midwives and traditional medicine practitioners. They rose to positions of tremendous prominence in the royal courts. They were said to be capable of granting wishes and casting spells. Because of their legendary origin stories,

transgender people in India are not simply intersex individuals, but also play an essential role in Indian cultural events.

Even though homosexuality has a long and varied history in Hindu mythology, people within the community are nonetheless exposed to various forms of ostracism. They have only recently been provided with the essential social security and ability to integrate into society. Furthermore, they are subjected to stigma and biases, ultimately making them vulnerable to medical and mental health problems.

To some, gender as a spectrum may appear to be a recent discovery, yet Hindu literature and mythology have long told stories of heroes who defied the binary gender paradigm. There are several stories in Indian mythology and epics about gender identity, gender expression, gender fluidity, and sexuality, indicating that homosexuality was viewed as a natural activity by Hindus. India and its culture were far more tolerant before the British colonized us. It is high time we realize our roots from our past and create a more inclusive and just world.

## Seeing the World through LGBTQIA+ Lens

*Apoorva Bhardwaj, 2nd year*

Mother nature loves everyone.  
The winds flow without making distinctions.  
The sun blesses people daily with its charm.  
Water never differentiates.  
Following that, who are we to say they are not normal?  
They are not like us.  
Who is this society to stop, bully and discourage them?  
The whole universe is beautiful. Every creature created by God is unique and special, so why is it that a particular section of people is challenged? Yes, you heard it right. I am talking about LGBTQIA+, an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer,

intersex, asexual, pansexual, and cis. There is a history of discrimination and dehumanization that the community has faced and is still facing. This is not because they are harming anyone or causing danger to any individual. It is just because they want to live their life as they like. They are not built wrong or malfunctioned, but they are like us; they have emotions too, and it is so disheartening to even think about the atrocities and inequalities they face.

There is no harm, no fear in saying that all of this is the result of our toxic mentality and the dominance of social constructs. Yes, we are solely responsible for harming

the souls, minds, and bodies of the people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, and yes, this society is evil, but who are we to tell someone whether they are male or female and if they do not fall into this category, they are not equal to humans, they are not normal? Quite recently, I was watching some interviews in which Baba Ramdev stated that he would cure the "disease" of homosexuality in his camp and turn them into normal human beings. Is it not funny how many politicians in our country and those Dharam gurus have also made similar kinds of statements? It is shocking to hear such statements from popular public figures as they tend to influence a lot of people, leading them on an incorrect path. It is traumatic to come out as a queer to one's family and friends. Recently, I came across the fact that often family members try and force them to go through brutal conversion therapy at the hands of various babas, thereby impacting them severely. Among the many challenges faced by the LGBTQ community, the worst is social alienation as families and friends often completely disown all their ties with their 'queer' counterparts. They often face discrimination at school, workspace, and public places, forcing them into isolation.

Next, the queer community faces considerable economic challenges. Most employers do not offer employment opportunities to members of the LGBTQ community. Lack of support from peers leads them into depression. According to one study, LGBTQ youth accounted for 24% of all young adolescent suicide deaths between 2013 and 2014. According to the national youth risk behavior survey [YRBS], it was assessed that 40% of high school students who identify as gay, bisexual or lesbian have seriously considered suicide. There can be many reasons, such as bullying in schools, threats of injury, and sexual violence. They also become the subjects of homophobic victimization, cyber bullying, and harassment. Many religions believe that homosexuality goes against their holy texts and people under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella

can't be deemed religious. This sounds absurd. One's faith and belief in God are a part of one's personal life. Moreover, some other baseless stereotypes suggest that members of the LGBTQIA+ community are trying to convert others. Queer people not only face hatred and disgust from society but also become the victims of their internalized homophobia and "gender dysphoria" or "gender identity disorder" (Feeling of being imprisoned in the wrong body). It is the most difficult obstacle as they experience discomfort from a very young age. Now the question arises, whether any medical treatments can assist the gender queer community?

The answer is yes. Procedures that assist patients in transitioning to their self-identified gender are referred to as "sex reassignment surgeries." Transgender or non-binary people may choose gender affirmation medical therapy or surgery. It is entirely up to the individual whether or not to undergo the procedure.

Other options include hormone treatment, puberty blockers, voice therapy, etc. Some people may also socially transition by adopting a new name, dressing, and styling as they want, and choosing different pronouns. Nowadays, it is very common and surveys report that about 1 in 4 transgender and nonbinary people choose gender affirmation surgery. It is important to work with a mental health provider before and after surgery, as much research has shown that individuals may experience long-term mental health benefits after the said surgeries. There are certain health-related risks too. That is why it is very important to have awareness and knowledge of the surgeries. Sex reassignment surgeries have many physical, emotional, psychological implications.

Therefore it is an Individual's sole responsibility to make such crucial decisions. Such decisions cannot be imposed. It is high time that we should understand this issue. This world is for everyone, and all of us deserve equality, love, and respect.

## Realities Beyond the Lavender Ceiling: Survival, Sex Work and Violence

*Komal Sati, 3rd year*

‘Debate harmful expression that seeks to dehumanize transgender and non-binary people, and educate those who are not informed of the many barriers, transgender and non-binary people experience’ (HRC FOUNDATION REPORT, 2021), is the call for Dismantling the culture of violence, as described in the report.

The moment each one of us dismantles the weight of Dehumanization to which LGBTQ+ are subjected, shall we owe respect and Pride to our existence as Humans. Be it homelessness, poverty, lack of educational and employment opportunities, legal and civil rights, health care availability, LGBTQ+ face not only discrimination but also violence in the majority of scenarios due to their Sexual orientation and Gender identity.

One of the principles of YOGYAKARTA states, ‘Everyone has the right to decent and productive work, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment, without discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristic.’ The least heeded, LGBTQ+ people, are still absent from the more traditional and mainstream sectors of the economy, discounting, if any, Token Representation. Underworld economy and particularly ‘survival sex work’ are the only spaces many Trans women and transgender are structurally forced to take up (absorb). It all starts with the social stigma and from a very tender age. Facing no acceptance within the peer circle at school, early drop-out, low participation due to complex and rust-ridden systemic barriers, destitute poverty in youth, all yield into the discrimination, violence, and invisibility of LGBTQ+ within the society and from the workforce. Now, the work under which many trans people enter, i.e., sex work, is already criminalized,

debates over its decriminalization are still alive. Being homosexual on the one hand, and indulging in sex work on the other, end up exacerbating the stark condition of such people. Out of sheer poverty, necessity and survival, many youth LGBTQ+ transpires into engaging, in what researchers call ‘survival sex work’. Fulfilling their basic needs becomes more significant, instead of the exploitation they had to endure as a trans sex worker. A federal-funded study in the U.S. reported that many youths face frustrating experiences with social service systems and to protect themselves when trading sex, knives and mace are the preferred accessories. (Al Jazeera, ‘youth engaging in survival sex’). Police harassment and constant policing are the other two areas of mistreatment across the world. In the case of prostitution, particularly in the US, it is a regular occurrence, for police to classify a person as a ‘known prostitute’ or ‘walking while trans’, more prominent in the case of transgender women of color. (Injustice at every turn, 2011). Police confiscation of condoms is a usual sight. In 4 U.S. cities; New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, police stop, search, and arrest sex workers using condoms as evidence to support prostitution (HR Watch; sex workers at risk: condoms as evidence of prostitution in 4 U.S. cities). Fearing incarceration and arrest, many transgender sex workers live unprotected, leading to intensifying worries of the risk of HIV infections. One also needs to account for the intersectionality hidden within the LGBTQ+ sex workers. 39.9% of black trans people account for the highest rate of sex trade participation (Meaningful work, 2015 survey). Not to go far, economic and financial hardships faced by LGBTQ sex workers during the Covid pandemic added a new dimension to their already sapped



survival conditions, lack of employment opportunities being the primary culprit. Recently OnlyFans, a social media website based on payments and subscriptions, used for adult entertainment purposes, announced a ban, accordingly the creators on the platform are no more allowed to post sexually explicit content for their subscribers. Transgender sex workers are in general more affected by the move, which for many has jeopardized their primary source of income during Covid 19 (NBC news, LGBTQ Sex workers in Limbo).

For many, decriminalization of sex work is the way forward to protect the legal rights of sex workers and LGBTQ+ sex workers in particular. Facing the above-mentioned Double status disadvantage and acknowledging the very fact of LGBTQ+ intersectionality, it is envisaged that the decriminalization of sex work may lead to a decrease in the sexual assaults and violence these people face from police and the society at large. According to Trans Day of Remembrance data 2021, 96% of those murdered globally were trans women, 58% of trans murdered were sex workers. Hate crimes and sexual assault towards many trans sex workers have witnessed a spike during the pandemic. It is intimidating and disheartening to learn that in parts of the

world, LGBTQ+ is the one being scapegoated, as religious leaders are fueling rumors of Covid 19 as the divine retribution for their immoral behavior (Global health card on LGBTQ+, HR Watch). LGBTQ+ sex workers were also an essential part of the Stonewall riots back in 1969, prominent being Sylvia Rivera.

What is more saddening is their exclusion from the narrative of this significant historical moment, which is now questioned (Scott W Stern, Times). As Human Rights Foundation Report states more succinctly, 'Engagement in sex work and the current criminal status of sex work are intricately tied to the epidemic of violence that impacts transgender and non-binary people. Exclusion from the traditional workplaces due to their sexual orientation and gender identity, and inherent homophobia, often leaves them with only one survival strategy, 'Survival sex work'. What LGBTQ+ as a PROUD community requires is the end to their Invisibility; their invisibility from employment, education and health care services, lack of privacy, inefficient availability of legal and political rights, and more prominently, availability of legal and political rights, and more prominently, availability of basic human rights.

## **Economy and Homophobia: *The Cost We Pay***

*Diya Srivastava & Apoorva Khare, 2nd year*

*"I was not ladylike, nor was I manly. I was something else altogether. There were so many different ways to be beautiful" - Michael Cunningham*

We must have seen that transgenders were begging at the red light. Looking at this site, one wonders why do they beg? What compels them to do so? Above all, does biology and sexual orientation define the cerebral ability of transgenders? What cost

is the economy paying for this exclusion? Is the LGBTQIA community a lost opportunity for our economy which still prefers to work on sexual binaries? A 2019 report by Open for Business found that Kenya was losing an estimated \$1.3bn a year due to LGBTQIA discrimination.

We have failed to understand transgenders as human beings. Why do we see no significant LGBTQIA community contribution? It is

because we have always divided human beings based on gender and excluded their potential aside in a corner. Hence our economies fail. The point is that one should give at least equal opportunities to all people irrespective of their sexual orientation. Unfortunately, the reality is just the opposite. We have somewhere looked down on or mocked the LGBTQIA community at least once in our lives, whether it was done knowingly or unknowingly.

When we talk of the economy and the contribution of the LGBTQIA community, we arrive at a gloomy conclusion because the opportunities for this community around the world are meager. Many countries and societies still do not accept the LGBTQIA community as a part of society or even as fellow human beings. In the past, the community has suffered police prosecution. In many sectors, they were not even welcomed. Due to the various social stigmas attached to the community, they face harassment in the workspace and abuse in the public. The transgender community in India is often stereotyped and the people who are part of the community are often painted to pre-conceive as beggars or people who ask for money at weddings. A Hong Kong-based LGBT Foundation released a report which stated that if the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community were a country, it would be the world's fourth-largest economy with a GDP of \$4.6 trillion. In just one country, the US, LGBT business owners contribute over \$1.7 trillion to the GDP.

There are about 2.5 million gay people in India. The eradication of 377A made the country proud of this progressive and inclusive decision. This enhanced the country's economy, as more investors, tourists and so on contribute now freely to the economy. According to MV Lee Badgett, a professor of Economics, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, "Even with conservative assumptions that make costs low, the estimated losses to the Indian economy range from 0.1-1.4% of

national output, a meaningful loss that no country rich or poor would want to bear. The bottom line: India could be throwing away more than \$26 billion a year by stigmatizing LGBT people". The pink economy, for India, can prove to be fruitful for economic enhancement as many economists claim that the indiscrimination will prove to enhance the economy. However, the pandemic has proved to be quite hard for the LGBTQIA community. The economies were failing to provide jobs to the public and in many countries, gender-based violence increased and the community got more marginalized than ever before. Hence, by providing adequate resources and an opportunity to enhance the jobs one could improve our economies. Also, at a micro-level, one could strive to make our society more inclusive by breaking the stereotypes existing around these communities, educating others about them, and equipping them with education. Ultimately, giving equal opportunities to everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation is the key to a more economically as well as socially progressive world.



*Jannat Niyaz,  
2nd year*

## Intersectionality within LGBTQIA+ Community

*Dhruvita Verma, 1st year*

Intersectionality signifies the idea and provides the mechanism for understanding different modes of discrimination and privilege within the same community. Despite the fact, that one should be fairly accepted by the people of their community, there is always a certain level of discrimination that one encounters. The LGBTQIA+ community is a defined grouping of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, LGBT organizations, and subcultures united by a common culture and social movements. But the unity within this community is many times challenged due to intersectionality. For instance, a black queer woman encounters much more difficulties in her day-to-day life than a white queer woman, compounded with the discrimination based on color and topping it off with her queer identity. This is similar to how the participation of Dalit women is neither appreciated nor accepted in the Feminist Movements carried out by the upper-class women, although, they are supposed to be united under the one umbrella of the community called 'WOMEN'.

We often ponder upon the bad and vulnerable conditions of LGBTQIA+ people but we have failed to analyze the matter of intersectionality within this community. In this community, some people have relatively better economic conditions than those who struggle day and night to get two square meals a day. Intersectionality indicates the overlapping social problems like racism and sexism, creating a heap of social injustice. There are different experiences for the same kind of people, nonetheless, we hardly bother ourselves to see how a social problem affects all the members of the LGBT community differently. Isn't it obvious for a society to show sympathy and accept gay celebrities? But the same society refuses to

accept a person who is gay and poor at the same time.

One might wonder when the word 'Intersectionality' came into being? Technically, it was coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberle Crenshaw to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics intersect and overlap each other. But one can experience the existence of this concept since a long time ago. Before 1989, the realization of multiple minorities remained implicit. Here the question arises on how to encounter discrimination faced by the people with multiple minorities within the LGBTQ community. Firstly, intersectionality is the cluster and intersection of various social injustices so, there is a need to understand the root cause of all the social evils and injustice existing in the society, and recognize all individual identities that may intersect to prevent the aftermath in the future. Secondly, actively learn about all the aspects within this community. For this one must have an explicit and comprehensive approach, having an implicit idea of intersectionality is just not enough to tackle the situation. Third, conduct surveys, ask questions on different experiences of all the people within this community. This will be a very helpful step because capturing data through an empirical inquiry provides useful insight into their struggle and differences as well. Fourth, we are required to develop a culture of acknowledgment and embedded understanding of how various factors of minorities overlap. Fifth, the first person who needs to understand Intersectionality is the representative or the leader of the LGBTQIA+ community. For this purpose, the must-have component is 'inclusive leadership'. Leaders are the ones who leave their footprints behind for others to follow, so if the leader can maintain



equality and eliminate discrimination within the community then the problem of multiple minorities can be solved at a grass-root level. They can transform the term 'multiple minorities' into 'multiple strength'. This is exactly similar to how disabled people gain confidence to take their stand in society by the virtue of moral support provided by their families and friends.

Bringing up the rear, 'Unity in Diversity' fits best in this context. There are always two approaches, positive and negative, one with a positive approach can make others understand that LGBTQ people with

multiple minorities do not indicate minority communities instead indicate the diversity of experiences. And these diverse experiences can help this community to reach out to society to a larger extent. The blacks or economically backward LGBTQ youth have an 83% higher risk of experiencing homelessness than the youth of other races. In this context, there is an urgent need for the government and society to come up with some resolutions. We must not only analyze the diverse overall situations but also its variable distinct aspects.

## **Are LGBTQIA Laws Still Functional Despite their Existence?**

*Tejasvi Joshi, 2nd year*

Gender fluidity and same-sex relationships are significant in ancient Indian art and literature. British colonial authorities enacted legislation that stigmatised "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" in 1861. Even though the Supreme Court of India overturned the legislation in 2018, many LGBTQ Indians still struggle to come out and find acceptance in their conventional families. Many LGBTQ people face prejudice and threats to their safety from family members and landlords, leading them to escape. According to the Indian Constitution, "there should be no discrimination on the basis of a person's sex," which is a fundamental right of citizens. Although the term "sex" refers to a person's biological sex as male or female, it is broad enough to cover sexual orientation in the current context. Provision 292 of the IPC refers to obscenity, and there is a considerable possibility to include homosexuality within this section.

### ***Pronouncement by the Court***

Even though homosexuality is no longer a crime, homosexuals continue to face

stereotypes and prejudices towards their group, making them feel uncertain about their identity. There are judicial rulings that recognize the LGBTQ community's existence and rights, emphasising that gays have human rights and demand equal representation in all spheres of society, but the legislation has lagged in implementing fundamental measures to keep up. They have equal rights to cohabit and pursue their relationship, but they are still not married. There have been situations where this has occurred for the LGBTQ+ community to obtain fundamental rights.

### ***NCT of Delhi v. Naz Foundation***

In this case, the petitioner stated in court that Section 377 of the IPC infringes on their fundamental rights to life, liberty, dignity, and privacy. It discriminates against them because of who they are.

The High Court of Delhi ruled in 2009 that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was an arbitrary limitation on two adults engaging in consensual intercourse in private. As a result, it was a blatant violation of their fundamental rights as

outlined in Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution.

### ***Suresh Kumar Kaushal vs. Naz Foundation***

In this case, the petitioner contested Section 377's legitimacy in light of Indian customs and beliefs. In 2013, the Supreme Court re-criminalized homosexuality under Section 377. A bench of Justices GS Sanghvi and SJ Mukhopadhyay found that LGBTQ people were a "minuscule minority" and hence did not require constitutional protection, and that Section 377 of the IPC did not suffer from the vice of unconstitutionality.

In the current case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, the 2013 judgment was challenged. In this case, the Supreme Court declares that Section 377 is unconstitutional because it infringes on the fundamental rights of intimacy, identification, and the decriminalisation of homosexuality. The court emphasized over the meaning of "natural" and "unnatural," emphasising how it restricts an individual's choice of sexual preferences. The court also ruled that sexual orientation is a personal decision and that no one may discriminate against someone based on their sexual orientation. The Supreme Court also ordered the government to raise public awareness about LGBT rights and to remove the stigma associated with LGBT individuals. The judges went on to discuss concerns such as mental health, dignity, privacy, the right to self-determination, and transgender people.

### ***Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019***

This measure was created with the primary goal of protecting the rights of transgender people by prohibiting discrimination against them in the fields of employment, education, and healthcare access through private or public organizations. However, the trans-community rejected this law claiming that it violates their fundamental rights and does not comply with the NALSA decision since it takes away the ability to select one's sexual orientation or identity.

### ***The Right to Marriage***

The Supreme Court constructed it as a component of Article 21 of the Indian constitution in the landmark case of Lata Singh V. State of Uttar Pradesh. In this case of inter-caste marriage, the Supreme Court ruled that once a person attains the status of a major, he or she is free to marry whomever he or she wishes. The court also stated that the parent's only option is to break all contact with the children but not to threaten or murder them. Furthermore, this landmark decision might be read in a specific way to benefit the LGBTQ community.

### ***Discrimination Protection in the Workplace***

According to a 2016 LGBT workplace poll, more than 40% of LGBT people in India have experienced workplace harassment due to their gender or sexual identity. Many LGBT people are forced to conceal their sexual orientation for fear of being discriminated against or losing their employment. As a result, the LGBTQIA community continues to face barriers to employment and workplace discrimination.

In the cases of Jacqueline Mary v. Superintendent of Police and G. Nagalakshmi v. Director General of Police, petitioners identified as females were removed from their positions on the grounds when medical examination revealed that they had intersex variations and thus could not hold the post reserved for females.

Even though the court found in favour of the petitioners in all the examples stated above, these instances of discrimination indicate excessive disparity and do not comply with the NALSA judgment. As a result, it is expected that this will continue until employment regulations are changed to include those who do not fit within the gender binary.

The current law, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013, recognises only women as sexual harassment

victims and fails to recognise that harassment can occur regardless of gender. That is, the offended individual may be a man, a transgender person, or any member of the LGBTQIA community.

### Conclusion

As a result, we need gender-neutral workplace harassment regulations. Given the prevalence of transphobia and homophobia, it is critical that gender-neutral harassment legislation be complemented by robust anti-discriminatory regulations to prevent such laws from being used against the LGBTQIA community.



*Hiya Kumar, 3rd year*

## Are LGBTQIA+ Community Not Humans?

*Monishka Khandelwal, 3rd year*

LGBTQIA+, a very inclusive and evolving acronym has grown up to include all genders and sexualities. It stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and allies. The plus (+) in the end allows the term to cover all different subjects like allies, pansexual, androgynous, and polyamorous.

If we talk about the protection provided in the laws to the LGBTQIA+ community, the Indian constitution does not give any specific legal safeguard for the lives of the community. However, some rights provided by the Indian constitution are universal to all minority communities in India. These are- 'THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY', which is included under Right to life (Article 21) of the Indian constitution. Though the constitution does not directly mention this right for the LGBTQIA+ community, the Supreme Court, in its many judgments, has held that this right cannot be abridged under any circumstances as it is a fundamental right. The second right is RIGHT TO EQUALITY (Article 14) of the Indian constitution, where

the state shall not deny any person equality before the law and equal protection of the law. The third right is PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION (Article 15); the state shall not discriminate against any citizen based on religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them.

In its many judgments, the Supreme Court of India has maintained the basic structure doctrine of the constitution and has tried that the above-mentioned Fundamental Rights are not violated. The historic judgment of decriminalization of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was not achieved in one day.

In the case of Naz Foundation Vs. the Government of NCT of New Delhi and others in 2009, a landmark verdict was passed by the Delhi High Court. The court held Section 377 as unconstitutional. But in 2013, the Supreme Court overruled the Delhi High Court judgment in Suresh Koushal Vs. Union of India. The Supreme Court held that Section 377 could not be read down, and it was the Parliament that would decide on decriminalization of homosexuality. Despite the Supreme



Court's judgment, the movement against Section 377 expanded on a large scale. In *National Legal Service Authority Vs Union of India*, a bench of two judges of Supreme Court passed a verdict in April 2014, holding that the rights to life, dignity, and autonomy would include the right to one's gender identity and sexual orientation and they have a right to express their chosen gender and sexual identity. Subsequently, in 2017, the Supreme Court in a landmark verdict in the case of *Puttaswamy vs. Union of India*, held that the right to privacy cannot be refused "even if a minute fraction of the population is affected".

The right to privacy distinctively incorporates the right to have intimate relations of one's choice and includes the right to sexual orientation and gender identity declared by the Supreme Court. In 2016 a petition was filed challenging the verdict of the *Suresh Koushal* case of 2013. The petitioner contended that Section 377 violates articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. Hence on 6th September 2018, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court led by the Chief Justice unanimously held in *Navtej Johar Singh* Case that Section 377 was unconstitutional to the extent that it criminalizes consensual relationships of any kind between adults. This proved to be a historical judgment and a win for the LGBTQIA+ community, but still, the community faces various kinds of discrimination even for getting their basic rights.

If we compare India with other countries in providing rights to the LGBTQIA+ community, we will get to know where India exactly stands. According to a report by Reuters, only five countries around the world give the community equal constitutional rights while most governments fail to protect their people from discrimination and abuses. According to a report by global research group *WORLD Policy Analysis Center (WORLD)* and the University of California, Los Angeles

(UCLA), Britain, Bolivia, Ecuador, Fiji, Malta are the only countries that give constitutional rights to people regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The researchers said that despite 22 countries introducing same-sex marriage laws, the lack of equal constitutional rights means LGBTQIA+ people are at risk of rights violations and discrimination.

Other countries that provide rights to the LGBTQIA+ community based on housing and serving in the military are the United States of America, Greenland, and Canada. In India, the story is a bit different. In the context of housing facilities, transgender and same-sex couple often face discrimination while buying or renting an accommodation. The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA) introduced an anti-discriminatory clause in matters of allotment, which bars sellers from discriminating against a prospective buyer based on religion, caste, gender, or sexual orientation. In *Sudama Singh Vs. Government of Delhi* case, the Delhi High Court recognized that the forced eviction has the effect of violating "the right to livelihood, to shelter, to health, to education, to access to civic amenities and public transport and above all, the right to live with dignity." The Supreme Court in *Olga Tellis Vs. Bombay Municipal Corporation* has also elaborated on the requirement of providing prior notice before evictions as the State's prerogative. But still, the rental agreement tilts towards the landlords which cause forceful eviction of people.

For serving in the military, India has a very different opinion. Though in Australia, the ban on gay persons to join the military was lifted in 1992; in South Africa, a policy was introduced on equal protection and affirmative action in 1998 which eliminated discrimination against gays and lesbians; the UK lifted the ban from gay people joining the military in 2000. These countries set the best example for providing equal rights and protection to

the community in areas where people cannot even imagine how the community can be discriminated against. But in India, the scenario is a bit different. Under the Army Act in India, homosexuality is a punishable offense with a jail term of up to 10 years.

Despite the historic verdict of 2018, India is still far behind in recognizing and

providing fundamental rights to the LGBTQIA+ community leading to their discrimination and feeling of being left out and unable to perform certain basic rights. India should learn from the countries around the world and leave behind its age-old assumptions and values that still violate some fundamental rights of other communities.

## **Global State of LGBTQ+ Community**

*Kalyani, 3rd year*

Over the last two decades, significant progress has been made in the legal landscape as well as in the evolution of social opinions and attitudes regarding a person's sexuality and gender identity. Nonetheless, members of the LGBTQ community still suffer blatant bias in all areas of public and private life. With many countries around the world legalizing same-sex marriage and supporting the LGBTQ+ community, there are still places where being gay, lesbian, bi, or transsexual is illegal, sometimes even punishable by death. None of the countries has LGBTQ+ protection laws in place.

Various reports and surveys indicate the prevalence of global division over the laws related to rights and protection concerning the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, those in Western Europe and the Americas are generally more accepting of homosexuality than are those in Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa.

Although LGBTQ+ related laws have made significant progress in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years, however, only a minority of countries recognize same-sex unions. Homosexuality remains illegal in some countries and same-sex intercourse can land you in prison. LGBTQ+ rights and same-sex marriage in Taiwan and Australia are beacons of

progress for the region's LGBTQ community. After the landmark judgment of 2018 (Repeal of Section 377 of IPC by Supreme Court of India), there was a huge leap in the advancement of LGBT+ rights movements in India. However, after the judgment, the LGBT community in India is still facing discrimination and harassment. People are continuously being abused through arbitrary arrests and unfair trials. These communities are still facing challenges in marrying and adoption. One can note not much progress has been made in Hong Kong while Indonesia and Malaysia are going backward.

The countries in the Middle East region view the subject very differently. A survey by Pew Research Centre found that most people in the region believe homosexuality should be rejected. In Iran today, lava (sodomy) is a capital offense and people are frequently executed for it. In Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, and Mauritania, sodomy is also punishable by death – though no executions have been reported for at least a decade. Among other Arab countries, the penalty in Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, and Syria is imprisonment. In those countries that have no specific law against homosexuality, gay people may still be prosecuted under other laws.

Same-sex relations remain illegal in 32 of 54 African countries and are still punishable by death in three countries: Mauritania, Somalia, and Nigeria, though the death penalty has not been applied to date. There has been some progress in southern Africa: Mozambique, Botswana, and Angola overturned colonial-era laws criminalizing same-sex relations. But overall, legislation has evolved more slowly than in other regions. Africa now accounts for half of all countries where homosexuality is illegal. South Africa remains an exception in the region for allowing same-sex marriage.

People in Western and Eastern Europe differ in attitudes to the LGBT community. On the same continent that served as the cradle of same-sex marriage, the divide is becoming an existential issue. Same-sex marriage is now legal across the vast majority of Western Europe. One prominent exception is Italy, which has historical ties to the Roman Catholic Church. By contrast, people in Central and Eastern Europe are broadly opposed to the practice.

Over the past decade, Latin America has stood out for recognizing LGBTQ+ rights. Outside of the Caribbean, the majority of the countries in the region have decriminalized same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults. Since 2010, eight countries have approved laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, several obstacles stand in the way of further progress.

LGBTQ+ activists face backlash from social and religious conservatives, and some leaders are openly hostile to LGBTQ+ rights. In the Eastern Caribbean, Human Rights Watch has condemned “discriminatory legislation” that leaves LGBTQ+ populations “ready victims of discrimination, violence, and abuse.”

In the series of these discriminatory practices towards LGBTQ+, the USA is last but not the least. As the survey finds, many LGBTQ people continue to face discrimination in their personal lives, workplace, and in their access to critical health care. This experience of discrimination leads to many adverse consequences for their financial, mental, and physical well-being. Many LGBTQ people report altering their lives to avoid this discrimination and the trauma associated with unequal treatment.

All these surveys and reports just included some areas where they have to face blatant discrimination. These reports didn't include other areas like discrimination at workplaces, healthcare centers, police stations, and other public and private spaces, otherwise, the situation would have been worse. We are living in the 21st century and still, discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation persists. It's high time for both political and civil society to fix these lacunas and work on prevalent orthodox and conventional thinking to make society more equal, fair, and accommodative.

## **Marriage: A Union Demarcated by Gender**

*Ananya Singh, 2nd year*

The American political journalist Hendrik Hertzberg says, "Marriage should be between a spouse and a spouse, not a gender and a gender." Marriage is a form of committed relationship that bestows

economic and social support, as well as better physical and mental health. When a heterosexual couple tries to solidify their relationship in the form of holy matrimony, the world celebrates their love.



However, the same is not the case with homosexual couples. People belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are denied the contentment to turn their relationship into a marriage. This phenomenon is prevalent in modern Indian society as well.

Indian society considers same-sex marriage a taboo, denying its origin in ancient Indian history. Same-sex marriage can be defined as the practice of holy matrimony between two biological males or females. It has been a part of Indian historical discourse since time immemorial. Same-sex relationships and gender fluidity were striking features of ancient texts and scriptures. The 2nd-century Indian text, the Kama Sutra, mentions homosexual relationships among women who would get married and raise children together. Moreover, the text describes eight forms of marriage where homosexual marriage between two males or females was categorized as "Gandharva," i.e., a union of love and cohabitation without the need for parental approval. Even though Indian culture depicts a rich history of homosexuality and homosexual relationships, society forbids same-sex marriage. Furthermore, Indian law does not legitimize it. The legislation that criminalized "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" was introduced by the colonial government in 1861. As a result, the stigmatization of same-sex marriage took hold and is still prevalent across the country.

However, it would be an oversight to not consider the measures taken by the judiciary to overcome this stigmatization. The Supreme Court of India on September 6, 2018, changed the historical course of discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community by striking down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, decriminalizing sexual intercourse between homosexual people. But the question that arises is whether the decriminalization of section 377 is enough to legalize same-sex marriage. That is certainly not the case. The decriminalization of Section 377 does not

automatically translate into the legalization of same-sex marriage. The more intriguing question is why the legalization of marriage is significant, especially when most individuals are against the institution of marriage. The answer lies in the fact that marriage is a sacrosanct institution that provides economic and social support to a couple who can solidify their relationship. Legally married heterosexual couples face major challenges in the course of their marriage. Considering this, the challenges faced by homosexual couples are unfathomable. They face economic problems where they cannot open a joint account; the tax system is discriminatory against them, which leads to a financial burden. They are socially discriminated against, leading to mental health problems and social unacceptability. Moreover, they can't adopt children and transfer property rights. Therefore, the legalization of same-sex marriage has become a necessity not just for them but for the individuals who are the future of our country.

Currently, the marital laws in India do not legally recognize same-sex marriages. Denying the LGBTQIA+ community the right to get married exclusively based on sexual orientation and gender identity is discrimination considering that the constitution of India, under Articles 16 and 21, promotes the ideas of equality and liberty. Moreover, the Human Rights Charter recognizes the right to marry as a universal right irrespective of gender. The legalisation of same-sex marriage would instil family values and discourage unsafe lifestyles. It would provide them access to governmental services that are inaccessible to them currently.

Furthermore, the legalization of same-sex marriages would mean better mental health for individuals. Society puts homosexuality in a box of mental disorders, passing derogatory and insensitive comments. Also, just as mental health is considered a taboo subject to discuss in public, so is homosexuality. As a result, the social

stigmatization of homosexuality gets a hold on people's minds. Many people in the LGBTQ community seek stable, long-lasting relationships. Research shows that the majority of them are in committed relationships of ten or more years. They form deep emotional attachments and commitments, as well as face challenges relating to love, loyalty, and intimacy and adopt the same processes to overcome them. However, being denied the right to marry reinforces the stigma associated with a minority sexual identity that is still prevalent in India. Psychologists are particularly concerned that such a stigma undermines the healthy development of adolescents and young adults. Researchers have found that living in a state where same-sex marriages are outlawed can lead to chronic social stress and mental health problems in some. The American Psychological Association has pointed out that members of the LGBTQIA+ community report feeling not just alienated from mainstream society but fearful of anti-gay violence.

Another pertinent point regarding the refusal of the right to marry is the refusal of the right to adopt children. Society's

norms have conditioned us to think that the LGBTQ community would not be fit as parents. Moreover, it is a common misconception that their children would not be psychologically healthy and well adjusted. Not being able to adopt children strips them away from the joys of parenthood, posing a great deal of danger to their mental health.

The widespread homophobia in India due to the implementation of European law leads to social discrimination. However, the media representation of the LGBTQIA+ community has shown striking improvements in recent years.

Condemning their declaration of love for selfish reasons ignores the feelings of same-sex couples. They should be considered individuals who must have the same rights to lead a meaningful and dignified life irrespective of their sexual orientation. And legalization of same-sex marriage would assist in achieving this goal. And as Hendrik Hertzberg states, marriage is the coming together of people who love each other and should not be measured by gender identity.

## **LGBTQIA+ community and their Mental health**

*Saumya Srivastava, 1st year*

*"When all Americans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free." - Barack Obama*

Love sets us free, love requires us to be free and always remains free. But this is not the case for everyone. In a world that limits everything to black and white, one needs to accept that there always remains a gray shade as well. It needs to be taken into account that everyone has an identity of her own. Gender and sexuality are not limited to being a boy or a girl. There is a need to recognize the multitude of sexual orientations and gender identities that

constitute the experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community.

It is really important to understand that being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community is not a mental disorder or illness. Although being a queer is not a mental illness, yet, queer people experience mental harassment. They find it hard and risky to reveal their gender identities and sexual orientation.

**Now the question is why do they experience poor mental conditions?**

According to research conducted by

Richard Branstorm, (Karolinska Institute, Sweden); “factors affecting the mental health of people of this community can be categorized broadly in three ways: structural level problems, interpersonal level, and factors (that) work at the individual level.”

Structural level factors include discriminatory legislation, denial of rights of queer people, stereotypical cultural norms which make them afraid of potential rejection from peers, colleagues, and society. Interpersonal stresses include victimization, discrimination, and threats. This negative attitude of society impacts the mental, physical as well as social stability of queer people. Response to mental harassment at the individual level includes internalization of negative societal attitudes, substantive abuse, social- isolation, etc. Fear of discrimination leads some people to choose concealment of their sexual orientation and gender expression as well.

Because of the stigma imposed on the queer community, they often struggle to maintain stable mental conditions. Mental, physical, social, psychological oppression faced by people of the community results in depression, stress, anxiety, social isolation, increment in suicide attempts, unemployment, homelessness, and many more problems. According to a study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, around 40% of homeless youth belong to the LGBTQIA+ community. Young people from the queer community are highly vulnerable to mental health issues compared to any cis-gendered, heterosexual youth. They are more prone to suicide attempts because of barriers to social integration, lack of societal trust, inherent lack of acceptance and adoption, and the threat of being unemployed. Studies show that people who face parental rejection are six times more likely to suffer from depression and eight times more likely to suffer from suicidal attempts.

Queer people are more likely to report

discrimination, oppression, family insecurity, and lack of access to politics and proper health care. They face mental harassment at every public place including schools. They become victims of bullying, teasing, and physical assault by their classmates.

As a result of constant mental torture caused to the “stigmatized community”, queer people are more likely to feel lonely and self-isolated. They end up being alcoholic, deadly drug addicts, ruminated, sad and dark. It makes them harder to be open about their sexuality and gender identity, adding to poor coping skills and risky sexual behaviors. Deteriorated mental health inextricably affects their social, political, and psychological life as well. Discriminatory legislation added with negative population attitude make them more vulnerable to social negligence. Most societies and even family members do not accept queer people. Due to stigma in society, they face execution, imposed arranged marriage, restricted gender expression, and neglected gender identity.

The problem of unstable mental health of queer people increased during the lockdown. They are highly vulnerable in our society and sticking behind closed doors further deteriorates their situation. The World Economic Forum mentioned that lockdown limited the autonomy and future prospect of the LGBTQIA+ community. The current pandemic further worsened the situation of unemployment, family insecurity, and homelessness.

Acceptance and inclusion by family members would significantly curb the mental harassment faced by the community. Lockdown provided people with more time to introspect across the world, unlearn myths and create an inclusionary future following the change in time and conditions. We must understand the importance of reducing structural stigma to reduce the increased risk of health problems. Acceptance by society, recognition of their rights, societal action,



knowledge dissemination, and counseling are some major ways to deal with this problem on a large scale.

"They can be a healthy and joyous version of themselves only when they will be accepted as who they are."

## Pride And Protest

*Bhargavi Singh, 2nd year*

*"We have to do it because we can no longer stay invisible. We have to be visible. We should not be ashamed of who we are"- Sylvia Rivera.*

In every phase of human history, the LGBT communities have been struggling against oppression. They are victims of centuries-old persecutions by the state, church, and medical authorities. Their deviance from established gender roles received severe condemnation in the form of sensational public trials, exile, and medical warnings. This path of persecution deeply entrenched homophobia. The LGBTQIA+ has been resisting the oppression. They channeled their resistance through rigorous activism. Gradually, the LGBT organizations and activists' defiant resilience in advancing the rights of sexual and gender minorities brought the issue of sexuality to the fore. So, the conventional view of heterosexual behavior has come to a negotiation to provide a space to multiple sexual orientations and gender identities. It has given birth to the LGBT and IQ (Intersex and Queer) discourse which is sometimes referred to as "queer politics". It signifies the reframing of rules of engagement regarding family, marriage, and kinship which constitute the three cornerstones of human society.

### How Did It All Start?

The saga of pursuing political liberation and legal equality began with the most momentous turning point in the history of LGBT activism: the 1969 Stonewall Uprising which was sparked by a police raid at a gay bar in New York City's

Greenwich Village neighborhood. This is the milestone to which Pride Month is tied, and it offers an opportunity to celebrate the hard-earned victories of LGBT people and movements since the Stonewall uprising in 1969. In 1920, efforts were made to achieve LGBT equality with the foundation of the Society of Human Rights in Chicago by Henry Gerber. Besides, the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis were a few of the LGBTQ+ advocacy groups that were pushing the case for the recognition of "homosexual rights".

### Before Stonewall, the Homophobic Movement

The "homophile movement" refers to the organizations and political strategies employed by homosexuals before confrontational activism began in the late 1960s. Its philosophical seeds germinated in the writings of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs who argued for the decriminalization of homosexuality which stimulated later thinking. The oppressive political climate of the 1950s, when gay men and lesbians faced the wrath of police harassment, spawned the beginnings of a gay and lesbian political movement. Later that year, transgender and gender-nonconforming people rioted in San Francisco.

### The Intertwining of the Black Lives Matter Movement with LGBTQ+ Activism

Eric Cervini, an LGBTQ historian, expounded that "every single element of what we know of as Pride and gay rights and, especially, the pre-Stonewall homophile movement, was borrowed from the Black Freedom Movement". Thus, besides sharing

a history of struggle for equality, both movements focus on bringing about change through activism. The earliest gay rights organizations, like the Gay Liberation Front, also fought for the end of racism and equal treatment. Some leading activists of the civil rights movement, like James Baldwin and Angela Davis, were also gay. Many gay rights activists have also been involved in the anti-war movement, feminist movement, and the New Left Black Power movement.

### **Stonewall Uprising, 1969**

In June 1969, New York lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender individuals, “drag queens, dykes, and bar boys” launched a series of violent demonstrations after a police raid and violence at Stonewall Inn. The Stonewall riots have since become symbolic of the birth of the modern LGBT rights movement.

### **The aftermath of the Stonewall Uprising**

Following the Stonewall riots, there was a subsequent shift away from assimilationist politics focused on litigation towards a more liberationist agenda. In ‘A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory’, Sullivan argues that liberationists were concerned with four key concerns that included “Pride, Choice, Coming Out, and Liberation”.

However, it was only in the late 1980s that the “human rights” lexicon entered the focus of LGBT organizations when the AIDS epidemic brought devastating consequences for the community. In response to the health crisis, gay and lesbian movements contributed greatly resulting in the emergence of transnational LGBT movements which worked in conjunction with AIDS activist groups. The AIDS epidemic thus fostered the emergence of queer activism which was set to reorient and reject mainstream lesbian and gay politics.

### **Contemporary Developments**

The 1990s were characterized by a turn towards advocating for positive rights as

well as a reorientation away from “sexual liberation” and towards “social integration”. To be politically queer at the beginning of the 1990s was to challenge the binary conceptions of sexuality and gender. This was called the “third wave” of LGBT activism by Professor Omar G. Encarnacion.

In 2000, the movement witnessed major developments in terms of global campaigning as internet activism burgeoned. The year 2013, in particular, was dubbed the “gayest year in history”. In parts of Western Europe and North America, LGBT activism successfully politicized issues such as same-sex marriage, adoption rights for same-sex couples, or the rights of transgender and intersex people. But in most parts of Eastern Europe and the African continent, sexual minorities are still stigmatized or, at worst, brutally repressed, criminalized, and forced into underground activism.

As per Human Rights Campaign data of December 2021, 31 countries across the globe have legalized same-sex. Despite continued prohibition in Asian and African states, there is hope that the tides will turn in countries such as the Philippines where candidates supporting same-sex marriages and civil unions are increasingly present in elections. Nonetheless, these events demonstrate a global divide and unevenness in the “global” spread of LGBT rights.

### **Challenges Faced**

The stigma, discrimination, and homophobic attacks associated with LGBTQIA+ protests have not ended. Places such as Poland and Hungary have seen a reversal of hard-won progress, with conservative governments stoking anti-LGBTQ sentiment in the name of family values. In many countries, LGBTQ communities have been disproportionately affected by a global backsliding on democracy and human rights and by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Such persisting homophobia has also provided fertile ground for exploitation by opportunistic political movements. This

strategy is referred to as political homophobia, a 21st-century curse, which succeeds by portraying LGBT people as merely “cultural” or “religious” issues. Politicians targeting LGBTQ people often propagate narratives promoted by the so-called “anti-gender movements”.

A similar challenge comes from the religious right and nationalist groups. In such an environment with hostile public opinion towards LGBTQ interest groups, a form of “morality politics” takes root, with confrontational protest and public rallies as its organizational strategy with limited scope for institutional transformation.

### **Ray of Hope**

Despite setbacks and abuses, several parts of the world have rekindled hope. Several countries have offered glimmers of hope in advancing LGBTQ rights from accepting a transgender mayor in Bangladesh to restoring gay rights in the United States to decriminalizing homosexuality in Botswana. The LGBT movement also helped to create a political environment that expanded the scope of using the law as an instrument of social change.

The recent protests in Lebanon are a case in point where the economic crisis and social inequality have been most devastating for the LGBT community. Rasha Younes, an LGBT rights researcher

at Human Rights Watch, says that “LGBT people are using the power of voice and presence in protests to demand their rights in Lebanon”.

Holzhacker, in his work, “National and Transnational Strategies of LGBT Civil Society Organizations in Different Political Environments”, asserts that cross-country comparisons of LGBT movements indicate that wherever there was LGBT activism, there was improved bonding among various factions within the community and relations with the broader public.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To conclude, it should be noted that the agenda of the LGBT movement overlaps with the agendas of other causes such as anti-abortion and anti-feminist campaigns. Therefore, it becomes crucial for the LGBT movement to give an emphasis on intersectionality and work towards greater cohesion and diversity within the community. Lastly, there is a need to underline the fact that despite the strides made for LGBT rights, LGBT people will continue to live on the margins unless governments actively protect them and uphold their fundamental rights to dignity, bodily autonomy, socio-economic mobility, and freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

## **The Fetishization of the Queer Community and Biphobia in Heteronormative Society**

*R. Dhanushya, 2nd year*

*“Omg, you are a bisexual, how cool is that!”*

Excuse me? People need to understand fetishization is not equal to acceptance. One of my very close friends who identifies herself as bisexual went on a date with a guy and as she states “as soon as he gets to know I am bisexual, he’s fascinated”.

Fetishization is the process of reducing a person to physical features, identity, or relationship structure. A person's attractiveness is based simply on these attributes, and they may be swapped with anybody else who has the same characteristics. Fetishization pervades the queer community, both within and outside of it. This has several consequences, all of



which are damaging to some extent. Because we've grown up in a heteronormative environment, the moment two females have a moment of intimacy or express affection for one another, it's immediately fetishized, and everyone wants to look or participate.

To explain bisexuality in layman's language, it can be said that someone who identifies themselves as bisexual is attracted to more than one gender. One of the popular misconceptions is that it is only for attention, 'well if it's for attention when why does it feel like I have been punched in my stomach whenever someone makes a homophobic joke around me' says one of my queer friends. No, it's not just a phase; no, bisexuals are not confused or closeted lesbians who are scared of coming out nor are they slutty for being attracted to more than one gender or a sex addict. People need to stop unicorning them. Their sexuality is continually called into doubt. What's worse is straight males fetishize them and consider them as sexual objects of intrigue. It has been seen that queer women are more accepted than queer men, well technically hyper sexualizing is not acceptance and this entire concept revolves around how patriarchy and societal conditioning creates this stigma and makes people question their masculinity for being with other men furthermore queer women are viewed as a source of entertainment, porn category or a unicorn by cishet men.

Given the dearth of representation in our culture and media, coming to grips with bisexuality may be difficult. Bisexual males are seen as anomalies, whereas bisexual women are seen as sexual animals.

Bisexual women's fetishization is a byproduct of a broader problem: bierasure. Many people deny that bisexuality exists, blaming it on sexual insecurity or experimentation. It's easy to fetishize bisexuality since people don't take queer partnerships seriously. Most fetishes are intriguing because they are founded on the allure of the unknown. People will

continue to impose their fantasies on queer women until bisexuality is more commonly recognized. A Penn University student who identifies herself as bisexual noted that straight guys with whom she has had relationships have mostly erased her identity. She was advised by one of her ex-boyfriends that if she cheated on him with a woman, he wouldn't be as unhappy as if she cheated on him with a male. "I think the first step is taking queer relationships seriously and not thinking that every sexuality is for men," she explained.

The fetishization of queer people is heavily influenced by the media. Heterosexual men enjoy erotic material that depicts lesbian partnerships. This media not only contributes to an incorrect image of gay relationships in these men's minds, in which lesbians and bisexual women exist just for their entertainment and pleasure, but it also has extensive tangible ramifications and consequences. Many lesbians have had the experience of being flirted with by men who believe they can "convert them". This is most likely due to the belief that queer women must exist in some manner that permits them to give straight men pleasure. The popularity of sexual media starring lesbians for straight men has made it more difficult for women who love women to locate information that is authentic and entertaining to them.

Males who grew up being told that the world belonged to them may be surprised to learn that women are permitted to build connections with each other without the involvement of men. It's past time for males to accept the inherent advantages they've been given and hold each other accountable for harassment of women. Fetishization has reduced queer women to objects that are only desired by a privileged few. Male consumption is not the goal of female relationships. Queer partnerships should be treated the same as any other heterosexual couple, as it should be a right rather than a perk.

These are complex concerns with profound societal roots. Mitigations and solutions are difficult to envision. Promoting more positive, intersectional, realistic images of LGBTQ people and queer relationships

would be a good place to start. Choosing to consume media with queer representation created by queer people whenever possible is an important step towards achieving this aim.

## **The Menace of Conversion Therapy**

*Khushi Agarwal, 3rd year*

Court judgments in recent years have laid the groundwork for better protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Indian government's stance on LGBTQ rights has evolved considerably. However, the conduct towards the LGBTQ community in India has not been very progressive even after homosexuality was decriminalized by the Supreme Court of India in the Navtej Singh Johar case on 6th May 2018. The court, in the historic judgment, interpreted the definition of mental illness, relied upon International norms, and accepted medical standards to remove homosexuality from the ambit of mental illness. The court also directed the government to give wide publicity to the judgment to remove the social stigma associated with homosexuality and obligated the sensitization of the government and the police to the atrocities of the LGBTQ community.

Despite all these efforts, the LGBTQ community is still met with bullying, harassment, and misgendering with their jobs being discriminatorily terminated. They are abused physically and verbally in public spaces. Furthermore, acceptability for their sexual and gender choices within the boundaries of family, home, and school, and the freedom to openly express themselves, remains a constant struggle, restricting them from living a dignified life. These prejudices against the LGBTQ community are not just psychological but coupled with socio-cultural aspects, which include a combination of people's prejudices

and the heteronormative structure of the society, making homosexuality abnormal and breeding stigmatization.

Consequently, immoral and hazardous practices like 'conversion therapy' are being carried out under the guise of curing 'queer sexuality'. When such thought processes are backed by medical practitioners practicing conversion therapy, it takes the form of a firm mindset, evidently defeating the purpose of decriminalization of homosexuality.

### **What is Conversion Therapy?**

Conversion or reparative or gay cure therapy is the pseudoscientific practice of changing an individual's sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual to heterosexual or their gender identity from transgender to cisgender using psychological, physical, and spiritual interventions. Conversion therapy involves many practices and methods including counseling, visualization, social skill training, psychoanalytic therapy, spiritual intervention through institutions, hormonal or electroconvulsive therapy, with more severe approaches like exorcisms, physical assault, 'corrective rape', and food suppression. Conversion therapy happens in many countries all across the world with perpetrators ranging from private and public mental healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, traditional healers to state agents and promoters including family and community members, political authorities, and other agents.

Conversion therapy perpetuates outdated views of gender roles and identities as well

as the negative stereotype that being a sexual or gender minority or identifying as LGBTQ is an abnormal aspect of human development, putting young people at the risk of serious harm. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, etc. together representing more than 477,000 health and mental health professionals, argues that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and thus there is no need for 'cure'. In 2015, the American Psychological Association and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration collaborated on a report stating "conversion therapy is not supported by credible evidence and has been disavowed by behavioral health experts and associations as highly dangerous.

A recent incident highlights the seriousness of the issue when a 21-year old student, Anjana Hareesh, committed suicide, allegedly because she was forced into conversion therapy by her family for months after coming out as bisexual. This is not a standalone incident, even after decriminalizing homosexuality, instances of violence and discrimination continued, highlighting that decriminalization alone will not suffice, and criminalizing inhumane practices like conversion therapy is required, along with a due emphasis on gender and sexuality-based education to bring a desired socio-cultural change in favor of the LGBTQ community. Recently, Canada and Albania criminalized conversion therapy. Nine countries have drawn bills concerning the same, and Brazil, Ecuador, and Malta already have a nationwide ban in place against it.

A report by the Independent Expert indicates that the practice of conversion therapy is inherently degrading and discriminatory, rooted in the belief that LGBTQ persons are inferior and hence, constitutes an egregious violation of rights to bodily autonomy, health, and free

expression of one's sexual orientation and gender identity. When conducted forcibly, they also represent a breach of the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment. Practices of conversion therapy inflict severe pain and suffering, resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage. Minors are especially vulnerable, and conversion therapy can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide. According to a recent report by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, an estimated 20,000 LGBTQ minors in states without protections will be subjected to conversion therapy by a licensed healthcare professional if state officials fail to act. BBC News reported that about 5% of the 108,000 people who responded to a 2018 LGBT government survey in the UK said they had been offered some form of conversion therapy, while 2% had undergone it, those from an ethnic minority

backgrounds were twice as likely to be affected. The figure is higher among transgender respondents.

Therefore, we need to call for a global ban on conversion therapy. A possible ramification of such criminalization is the backlash from religious communities, based on stigmatized social and cultural grounds which includes family honor, reputation, etc. often fed with notions of patriarchy. The State can, however, make use of the Supreme Court's orders of decriminalizing homosexuality and recognizing freedom of sexual orientation as a fundamental right of an individual to defend the action of criminalizing conversion therapy.

Although criminalization is needed, ensuring that steps are taken to avoid the misuse of the same is also necessary. The Madras High Court in its June 2021 judgment banned the practice of 'conversion therapy' in India, bringing protective measures for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the country, and recommended guidelines, ensuring LGBTQIA+ individuals' privacy and constitutional rights are protected. Despite the High Court ruling,



there is presently no legislation in India that expressly prohibits the practice of conversion therapy. Although the Mental Health Care Act can be invoked to provide limited protective measures to the LGBTQIA+ community, a separate law is essential to entirely eradicate this abhorrent practice would constitute a positive right in support of the community and provide equal opportunities to live a life with dignity.

The Supreme Court's decriminalization of

homosexuality was virtually the very first step toward socializing homosexuality in Indian society, but enacting laws is a long and drawn-out process. The requisite to introduce anti-conversion therapy legislation, decriminalize the practice, and protect the privacy and dignity of the queer community is fundamental to give the voice to the judgment and cease prejudices against the LGBTQ+ community.

## **Debunking Myths on LGBTQIA+**

*Adreeja Gupta, 3rd year*

'LGBTQIA+ people are not normal and are unnatural!'. The only thing that is not normal in the world is the patriarchal mindset. Patriarchy favors what it considers is normative or natural in the existing world. Heterosexual relationships are favored because it leads to the procreation of children. Therefore, sexualities and gender identities, different from the mainstream binaries, are discarded by patriarchy. 'Heteronormativity' stands as the belief that heterosexuality is the only acceptable norm to the patriarchal society and the identities that don't fall into the same category are discriminated against and exploited. Homosexuality is still considered a taboo, a blot on family reputation even in the 21st century, and people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are considered to be mentally ill. Hence, what is required is to do away with the stereotypes and eliminate the myths.

Myth- LGBT culture and homosexuality is a Western notion and not an Indian concept, hence it must not be supported here. This is not true since people from the LGBTQIA+ community exist in all societies and places. Traces of it have been found in Indian society as well like same-sex relationships are featured in the Kama Sutra and can be found in architectural structures like Khajuraho temples. In 2018,

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was repealed, therefore, decriminalizing consensual homosexual intercourse. What should be noted here is that Section 377 was included by the British during the colonial period in India and only recently that it was repealed.

Myth- LGBT culture is a recent trend that wasn't there before. It is not a trend that has come into place. Rather, there are traces of these identities being available everywhere for a very long time. People were much less aware before. Quite recently a gay couple in India from Hyderabad, Abhay Dange, and Supriyo Chakraborty got married in the presence of their family and friends. Therefore, for many, it's not just a 'going with the trend' idea!

Myth- Homosexuality or identifying as a gay, lesbian, bisexual and so on is just a phase for young people identifying as such. Young people might question their sexuality while growing up. However, it is also true that many people have declared themselves to be bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, and so on after questioning their sexualities. It is not just 'a phase' as non-LGBT people tag it. Often, when a person comes out as queer, they are advised to get over it, however, it must be kept in mind that it is only they who have

the right to question, figure out and decide their sexuality and gender identities.

Myth- Men behaving femininely are gays and women exhibiting masculine traits are lesbians. These are stereotypes since one's sexual orientation and gender identity cannot be determined by how one chooses to behave. Homosexual men can behave in a masculine manner and homosexual women can also behave in a feminine way. One can be determined as a gay or lesbian only when they declare it.

Myth- If there are people from LGBT around your classroom, friend circle, workplace, and so on, then you might also turn LGBT. This again is a way of discriminating against the people belonging to the LGBT. It is not a transmissible disease like COVID-19, that'll spread from person to person. People must be more accepting of LGBTQIA+ than discriminate against them. Associating and spending time with them is like spending time with any other person.

Myth- Children brought up by homosexual parents might develop gender confusion and psychological issues or the children might also turn homosexual. This is not true because a child's upbringing depends on the environment around at home and if a child is brought up in a proper and happy atmosphere, then they are bound to have a happy childhood. The fact is that queer families receive very little recognition and representation in media because the mainstream patriarchal institute of the family involves one man, one woman, and children under the so-called 'normal' framework.

Myth- Homosexuality is a mental illness that might be cured by psychological intervention and treatments.

Homosexuality, as stated above, is not unnatural since patriarchy creates the idea that sexual relations should lead to the procreation of children, and those not fitting into the frame are tagged unnatural. Homosexuality was once considered a mental illness by both The World Health

Organization and the American Psychiatric Association, but was later removed, declaring homosexuality as healthy and natural as heterosexuality.

Myth- Being transgender and intersex is the same thing. This is again a misunderstanding across several societies because it is not true. Being Transgender is one's internal understanding of one's gender identity. It suggests that when a child is born, it is assigned either a male or female identity according to its genitalia and accordingly is expected to behave as a man or woman, respectively. However, when they don't conform to their assigned gender identity at birth, they can opt for correcting it either socially by trans dressing or surgically by making them transsexual. Intersex people are born with genitals considered 'ambiguous', not conforming to either male or female. Therefore, both are not the same.

Myth- Lesbians hate men and gays hate women. That is not true. Both have friends, workmates, etc. from all gender and sexual identities. Just because they might be attracted to people of their sex and/or gender doesn't mean they hate the other.

Despite so much awareness being circulated, LGBTQIA+ people are still considered mentally ill, are mocked in public, and considered harmful to society. Every individual has a right to live with dignity and respect in society regardless of one's sexual orientation. As humans, if we are not able to respect other human beings because their sexual orientation and preferences don't match the 'normative framework' then we have failed as the most intelligent species discovered so far.



*Mahi Jain, 3rd year*

## How to be A Good and Supportive LGBTQIA+ Ally?

*Mahek Sharma, 1st year*

*"There's nothing wrong with you. There's a lot wrong with the world you live in"-  
Chris Colfer*

LGBTQIA+ is an ever-growing and evolving acronym. It is an inclusive term covering people of all gender identities and sexual orientations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and pansexual. While this covers some of the different initials in LGBTQIA+, it is not even close to an all-inclusive list. New terms can be added to the acronym under the 'umbrella' of the plus at the end.

Biphobia (hatred towards those who are bisexual, pansexual, or omnisexual), homophobia (irrational hatred and fear of LGBTQIA+ people), transphobia (fear/hatred of transgender people or people who don't meet society's gender role expectations) - all are terms that portray a wide range of negative attitudes and feelings towards the queer community. Recently I came across literature on 'Internalized Homophobia', which refers to the fear and self-hate of one's own queer identity. Such feelings become common to several individuals who have learned negative ideas about the LGBTQIA+ community throughout their childhood. Acceptance of myths and stereotypes about the oppressed group is one kind of internalized oppression. However absurd this might sound, the fear and hatred for the queer community continues to be prevalent and firmly embedded in our society.

Most LGBTQIA+ individuals experience discrimination and harassment that directly and negatively impacts their psychological state, making them over twice as likely to experience mental health conditions and placing them at higher risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Homophobic and queerphobic slurs are the most common

contributor to the harassment of these people at work and in general. Regardless of the intent of these slurs, these words do cause significant harm.

A good 'ally' to the LGBTQIA+ community is someone who works in solidarity and partnership with the people belonging to the community to help take down the systems that challenge their rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society. A good ally needs to know the difference between appropriation and appreciation.

People in the queer community are fighting for equal rights and acceptance. They are looked down upon all the time. The pervading discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community makes it a significant issue. In our country, homosexuality and queer identities may be acceptable to more young people than ever before, however acceptance within the confines of families, homes, and schools remains a constant struggle. Some people revealed their identities and were accepted by others, while others lived dual lives, waiting to be identified just the way they are.

The most important thing you can do for your loved ones who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community is to let them know you are there to listen if they want to talk about their issues. Knowing that they have someone to talk can be very helpful. Standing up for someone being picked on or bullied because of their gender identity or sexual orientation is another significant way you may be an ally. If they are standing up for themselves, having an ally as support on their side may be beneficial. We may try to create a safe space to discuss their issues without feeling uncomfortable. The number one place to start on the journey to allyship is educating oneself about the community and self-reflection. It enables one to be a



good ally at all levels.

If you are an ally and you are looking for "what can I do to make myself a better ally?" Honestly, take that step into your research. Take that step to learn on your own. Do not rely on a member of the queer community to explain the happenings or the terminology. Always be supportive, even when the person is not around. We are all learning this together. It is a new era of expression. These are things we have always felt and now we have a way of verbally expressing them. We need to do a lot more. Pride must transcend the month of June and not just confine to pride parades and Instagram posts. Be the voice for those who are scared to voice their opinions. 'Ally' is not an identity. It is a set of behaviors and a process. And the most important allies a member of the queer community can have, are their parents. However, getting support from parents is the biggest problem for a majority of the people from the LGBTQIA+ community. "Coming Out" may be a lifetime journey of understanding. Something as simple as "I will love and

support you, no matter what" from the parents can mean the world to their child. Our priority should be to make sure that they are getting the support they need. Use their preferred pronouns. It is not going to hurt anybody. It is going to help them feel better about themselves.

Consider the word 'ally' to be an activity rather than a label. Oppression does not take breaks. It takes all members of society to make true acceptance and respect happen. Your open and consistent support will hopefully lead an example to others. There is no right and wrong way of expressing your love and showing that you care. Just be present and be open. There will not be a magical day when we wake up, and suddenly the people of the LGBTQIA+ community are being treated equally and accepted publicly. We have got to keep working together to make this dream come true. So go out there and flaunt the 'rainbow'.

*"Openness may not completely disarm prejudice, but it's a good place to start"-  
Jason Collins*

## LGBTQIA+ Activists and Unsung Heroes

*Smriti, 1st year*

*"Change will not come if we wait for some other person we have or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek"* Barack Obama

Every 'CHANGE' brings with it 'PROGRESS' and the people who are not willing to change their mindset cannot change anything. Every social revolution plants a hope of change and a better life to the enslaved and exploited masses and every great social revolution has its warriors. But whenever it comes to 'QUEER' history, we do not remember the names of the warriors or acknowledge their efforts. The majority of people are

not taught about LGBTQIA+ history. The general mindset with regard to the community is negative, biased, and stereotyped.

However, despite the stigma surrounding the queer community, some people toiled to ensure that no one in their community should feel uncomfortable or alienated. It is because of their brave efforts, consideration, and awareness that has led to innumerable events, voicing the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Remember Marsha P. Johnson, a transgender activist, and a prime figure of the Stonewall riots in 1969 where he

fearlessly fought back against the policemen who were harassing customers at a Gay Stonewall Inn bar or Barbara Gittings who inspired by Johnson, agitated for gay rights as early as the late 1950s. A socialist and an advocator of non-violence, Bayard Rustin opined with gay rights and expressed that "Gay people are the new barometer for social change." Many similar victories have been achieved by

*Harvey Milk, Peter Tatchell, Alan Turing, Ellen Degeneres, Oscar Wilde, Mark Ashton, Hans Scholl, and others.*

Likewise in India, life was never a bed of roses for the LGBTQ community. Though things like societal acceptance, awareness for the community and its requirements, have begun to gain importance, it was not always the case. Breaking out of the norms and taboos created by society, some valiant people came forward to show the world their identity and the perspectives with which they observe the world and its communities. Some renowned artists and activists have contributed their best in encouraging and providing a platform to all those who felt segregated or alienated in the community.

Well known for his novel 'A Suitable Boy' Vikram Seth is one of the prominent writers who expressed his views through poetry, novels, and stories and is considered to be one of the most influential writers of his era. Being an open gay personality in India, he wrote down a very sensitizing poem expressing his agony over the recent case of prohibiting gay sex titled 'Through love's great power'. We have also witnessed the brave efforts of

Gauri Sawant, a transgender activist who took birth as Ganesh but became victorious against the non-sensitized society. After adopting a young girl who lost her mother, Gauri became an example for all the people especially in the LGBTQIA+ community, and ventured to live life according to her wishes and aspirations. In addition to them, there have been Manvendra Singh Gohil, Sonal Giani, Lakshmi Tripathi who amongst others were the founding members of the Dai Welfare Society, an organization that labors for the LGBTQIA community. Gauri Sawant also represented Asia Pacific in the UNITED NATIONS in 2008, where she expressed her views on the plight of sexual minorities in the society and voiced what kind of behavior and support they expect from the society.

Moreover, increasing awareness for the concerns of the LGBTQIA+ community through social media platforms and allyship by celebrities is creating a good impact on everyone's lives. People are learning to empathize with and accept the community, though at a slow pace. In this new emerging India, we all must strive to accept every person. We must remember that everyone contributes to a country's development and it would be an injustice to discriminate against people based on their gender and sexual identities. We must remember that:

'A Change in the attitude and behavior towards others begins with a change of heart and we must try to bring in the change we wish to see in this beautiful world.'



*Chaitanya Bhardwaj, 1st year*

## Into The Lives!

*Student Interviewers (Department of Political Science)- Nishtha Singh, Padmaja, Mrinalini Vashisht, Nandika Sharma, Dhanushya, Ishita Khandelwal, and Pooja Yadav.*

The Department of Political Science, Kamala Nehru College is pleased to bring forth a series of accounts from the lives of the people of the LGBTQIA+ community to inspire courage and strength because not all heroes wear capes.

### **In Conversation with Prarthana (Social Media Influencer)**

Popularly known as the Short Haired Brown Queer, Prathana, a 23-year-old queer content creator, has gained wide accolades for her peculiar sense of comedy and persistent efforts to serve representation to the LGBTQIA+ community through Instagram. Prathana staunchly supports the fact that it's the society's problem when it decides to consider anything beyond the heteronormative and cisgender narrative as invalid. It's not something that the LGBTQIA+ community has to fight to prove. She advises any individual who's struggling to accept their gender and sexual identity, to "take care of yourself, always ensure your safety and know that you are never alone". Prathana suggests that to be a better ally, or be an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community at all; you should acknowledge the hardships that a lot of people go through and offer your support towards them. Prarthana believes that people need to understand is that it's not the responsibility of the queer community to answer your questions about queer people. Asking questions is okay as long as you're respectful but you should accept their decision if they do not want to answer your questions for whatever reasons. She firmly holds that no matter whom you come across in life, you should always treat them with a little bit of love, respect, and understanding.

### **In Conversation with Anwesh Sahoo (Social Media Influencer)**

As his remarkable professional trajectory reads - 'Sr. Tech Artist @aristocratgaming, Spotlight NFT Artist @WazirXNFT, Winner of Mr. Gay World India 2016, and Art Creator of 'The Effeminate', it is safe to assume that Mr. Sahoo is a man reckoned for his multipotentiality. He professes to be a passionate spokesperson for queer rights in India and plays a pertinent role in educating about the same. Anwesh firmly believes in the fact that the more you grow up, the more you start understanding yourself. When he first understood that he was attracted to men, he was devastated because we all grow up in a very heteronormative and patriarchal system, where the idea of masculinity is quite rigid and difficult to shatter. Sahoo suggests that journaling his thoughts helped him self-introspect his feelings, eventually giving him the courage to accept his identity. Further, he believes that financial independence made him more comfortable in talking about what he wanted and putting forth his views and ideas. Anwesh holds that to be a good ally, you need to be a good listener. He suggests that it's high time we all learn more about the community and follow the right people on the internet, understand what they stand for, their writings, and their lifestyle, so they don't seem foreign anymore. Another important thing is to not perform performative allyship, if you want to believe in someone – believe wholeheartedly and to do that with utmost integrity and honesty, you have to understand their struggles, the queer rights movement, and the queer history that has existed in both the context of the world as well as India. Keep educating yourself, keep putting yourself out there, know more about the community and make more friends from the community.

### **In Conversation with Alex Mathew (Maya, The Drag Queen) (Social Media Influencer)**

Alex Mathew is a well-known name in the content creation fraternity, a name synonymous with empowerment, resilience, rectitude, and fortitude. Addressed as Maya - The Drag

Queen, Alex identifies as a cis queer man, earning the repute of being a spectacular drag queen/performer, awoke LGBTQIA+ influencer, an actor of credibility, and a prolific emcee and host. Alex feels that to accept one's gender identity and sexuality, especially for people who refuse to conform to societal standards of gender and sexuality, is a journey in itself. Mathew holds that one should stay true to what one feels about oneself, be bold, and listen to one's gut or intuition no matter what people say. Alex suggests that, as an ally one should be ready to support queer people, understand their voice, share their stories, empower them and fight for them. Mathew advises everyone out there to be kind, be bold and on top of all, try to love each other.

### **What has been implied by our students?**

- ✓ It's imperative to understand that labels are fluid & changeable. People who are still grappling with their identity shouldn't be afraid of them. Being queer is about breaking free of the conventional boxes set by society. Enjoy new experiences and see where it takes you!
- ✓ I have always associated love with fear. Growing up, I hated certain concepts that have been mechanised into society in a way that promotes a streamlined way of living. Sexuality and love are far too fluid for labels. I encourage everyone to be open to questioning their identity and sexuality, for me all that matters is to love - I love to love.
- ✓ Misgendering is uncomfortable and feels dysphoric. We can start by not making presumptions about someone's pronoun by their gender, using trans-friendly language, and leaving the section of gender open-ended in any form. All these can go a long way to make any person from the community feel comfortable. To begin with, access your friend circle, having queer/trans-friendly people around does help a lot. Following the right people on social media and consuming queer media makes you feel valid. Feeling Validated is a big step towards accepting yourself.
- ✓ I had an internalised homophobia due to all the what-ifs I've fabricated in my mind if I come out. However, the support of my friends and siblings gave me the much-needed courage to face the critical remarks.
- ✓ I never had the courage until June 2020 to accept myself. Right from childhood, I used to repress my feelings as this was the only way that seemed normal to me. One day when I finally sat down to introspect about my feelings, it turned out to be the best moment of my life.
- ✓ Being a Queer woman, I don't feel ashamed of my sexual orientation. Instead, it makes me feel more confident. Moreover, I truly feel that self-acceptance holds utmost imperativeness in one's journey of embracing their sexuality.



*Chaitanya Bhardawaj, 1st year*



## Movie Review: Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui

*Khushjit & Utkarshini Mishra, 1st year*

**Director:** Abhishek Kapoor

**Starring:** Ayushmann Khurrana and Vaani Kapoor

**Producers:** Pragya Kapoor, Abhishek Nayyar, Bhushan Kumar, and Krishan Kumar

**Synopsis:** Manu Munjal, a bodybuilder, wants to enter the contest of G.O.A.T (Gabru Of All Time). Living in Chandigarh, he comes across a woman, Maanvi Brar, who joins the gym as a Zumba instructor. Manu is captivated by Maanvi's charisma, and her affection for Manu makes their feelings for each other more intense. Ultimately, their relationship is beleaguered when Maanvi vigorously reveals herself to be a transwoman.

**Review:** The movie revolves around the LGBTQIA+ community and other social issues often considered taboo and not worthy of discussion. The film was a hit for its drama and romantic-comedy content. Abhishek Kapoor has been an audacious director with his movie projects. He leaves no stone unturned to impress the audience. In this movie, Abhishek Kapoor took up the contentious matter to film the experience of those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. With a dash of entertainment, he depicted the great exertion faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. Every earthling wants to make some profit which is akin to directors and producers in the film industry. They come up with plots and stories with the intention of money-making. Unlike other directors, Kapoor's task was quite challenging. It is, indeed, disheartening to know that in the twenty-first century, we have to fight for the human rights of a particular community. Ayushmann Khurrana, in his stirring Gabru character, Manu, imprints infallibly. Like Abhishek Kapoor, he flamboyantly puts himself into the character making him flawless and undistinguished. Astonishingly, Vaani Kapoor was gentle and smooth in her demeanour with a thorough commitment to her role. She has set forth exemplary performance and was fearless in every bit.

As far as the rating is concerned, I would be elated to give 4.5/5 stars because I took great delight contemplating the piece. More than bingeing on, I learned about the plight of this community, their bravery, lack of recognition, and support from their own family. I became aware of the vulgarity meted out in the society, often called by the generalised term 'eunuch.'



(Image via [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org))

inhibits feminine attributes, this does not mean it is unnatural or unusual. Each individual is the creation of the Almighty, and hence should be respected and loved. The flaw is in the people because some people miss out on believing in the maxim, "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder." Maanvi, as depicted in the film, was forced to leave her previous residence due to a lack of acceptance and inclusivity and relocate to a new city, Chandigarh. I believe Chandigarh is a metaphor for Maanvi as it symbolises a fresh and rejuvenating start from all the hardships she had encountered in her erstwhile residence.

In my estimation, we live in a country where we still follow the 'purdah system' and cherish it immensely. Most people have not come across words like transgender, queer, lesbian, gay, and so forth. Unknowingly, they think of the people of the LGBTQIA+

community as impure without grasping proper knowledge and find these explanations and expressions as taboo which leaves me in agony. Some people curse foreigners for

'influencing' them and undermining and hampering our rich culture and heritage. Few people frequently label it a "disease" with regular medication as its cure. Such a thought makes me laugh while also making me upset at the same time. We have made the hardships faced by the LGBTQIA+ community a delicate issue by judging them and relating them with some irrational perceptions.

It was very distressing to Manu's reaction when he is acquainted with the reality that Maanvi is a transwoman. Such is the case with many people who do not accept and familiarise themselves with such changes. It was gratifying to observe that Maanvi's father was by her side through thick and thin even when her mother could not recognize and accept her the way she was. She also showcased her strengths upon the hospitalisation of her father.

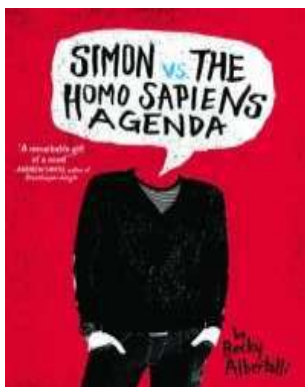
I would now put a period to this not-so-debatable topic by making a mass appeal that we should not hurl conjectures on a particular subject. There are still many unheard voices, but some have attained wings. Beyond everything, we aspire to dwell in a peaceful and prosperous country, liberal from menaces. It is high time we come together to make a difference because we can and will!

## **Book Review: Simon Vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli**

*Neelanjana Ghosh, 2nd year*

This book is about a sixteen-year-old, Simon Spier who is not-so-openly gay. He has been emailing the mysterious boy Blue who is also a gay teen inside the closet and Simon's pen-pal. Simon has no idea who Blue is but they are going to the same school. But one day Simon forgot to log out of his email ID, opened on one of the school computers and it fell into the wrong hands and his secret was in danger of being in the limelight. Simon was blackmailed by the wingman of the class clown Martin Addison. Now, Simon has to find a way to step out of his comfort zone without alienating his friends, compromising himself, or fumbling an attempt at happiness with the most adorable guy he has ever met.

I adore this book. The very fact that Simon was being blackmailed initially led me to assume that the story would be serious in tone but it is not. The book is light-hearted and fun. The story sounds natural and believable. The plot is set in an American set up and the author has nailed the sarcasm and angst of being an adolescent. It is a funny yet angsty story about Simon as he's lying to his friends, staying in the closet, and looking for Blue's real identity. It gives a real insight into what it's like being a teen and I found myself relating to it. The way the characters acted jogged my memory of myself and my friends. There were a lot of swear words used in the story but I didn't mind them because that's how real teenagers talk.



*(Cover page from Goodreads)*

The characters were ideal. Everything about the characters enchanted me. It was fantastic. Leah Burke, one of Simon's best friends, was angry at being ignored. Nick Eisner, another one of Simon's best friends, was obsessed with his guitar and the other girls in the class were obsessed about Nick playing the guitar—all of them were a perfect fit in the story. Simon was very easy to connect with. Most teenagers hide their crushes or things. They think it will make them a subject of bully and ridicule. It's not always something related to sexuality per se, but Simon's struggle is universal and quite common.

My favourite character was Abigail (Abbey) Suso. I could understand why Leah disliked her and that is why I feel her more real to me. She was a true friend. It was quite understandable why Martin (Simon's blackmailer and classmate) liked her and why Simon opened up to her. Abby's character as a new student in the school added a nice touch to the story. I enjoyed the dimension she added as not everyone is likable infinitely. After Abigail turned down Martin, the blackmailer, he posted on the internet, that Simon was gay. This crushed Simon's spirit. Everyone, including his family, learned about his sexuality and Blue halted his response because he was afraid of being outed. This scene completely broke my heart. Albertalli, however, makes up for it with the beautiful ending. I think Simon had all the right to be scared of opening up about his sexuality. When he did open up, he got mocked and folks said nasty things. However, his friends and family loved and supported him throughout.

I specifically loved the email conversation between Blue and Simon. The flirting was precious and I blushed while reading it. It was heartbreaking when Blue stopped responding, but he had a good reason for doing so. I also had a blast guessing who Blue was. When Blue's identity is revealed, I was pleasantly surprised, quite not shocked, I simply didn't pick up the clues and made the connection. Another fascinating element was Simon's obsession with Oreos. He once emailed Blue where he talked about how he wanted an Oreo pizza with an Oreo milkshake and his mother's Oreo truffles. For dinner, he desired deep-fried Oreos served on top of Oreo ice cream. For a drink, he desired Oreos dissolved in Oreo milk, and dessert may as well be Oreos straight up. Such a mouth-watering temptation!

The main themes covered in the book are sexuality and identity but the story addresses the issues of gender and race as well. There are numerous quotes in the book that stood out to me. People who associate themselves as LGBTQ should be in the same field as those who are straight. There is another wonderful quote that said that there should not be a default race that being white isn't the norm. What I apprehended from this book is that we've got a right to be terrified of things that may hurt us. But with the love and support of our friends and family, things will eventually turn out to be good. I liked the author's insight into teenage minds.

### **“Rainbow of Elation”**

**Chaitanya Bhardwaj, 1st year**

We have different fights, yes  
but we're on the same page, nonetheless.  
I miss my lover braiding my hair  
So I imagine myself combing hers.

There's so much joy in seeing Elio and Oliver holding hands and laughing together.

Enduring our today locked up in a cage, awaiting tomorrow's colourful visage.

Let's avenge this monochrome of separation. By hoping for a rainbow of elation.

Sooner, Together,  
Because love is love  
And hate, your time is up!

### **“When will I gain recognition?”**

**Jahanvi Bakshi, 1st year**

When will the day arrive. That I gain recognition. That I gain acceptance. Why is it abnormal?

When it seems right to me. Why should I hide it?

After all, God made me this way. Why should I be bothered

About society, about so-called “normalcy”? I wonder when will society understand. When will the  
“normal” people understand.

I wonder, When will I gain recognition?

## “Identity”

**Manika Chauhan, 1st year**

The world puts you on labels  
 labels of their convenience, determining your destiny even before your awareness  
 of words, of the world exists,  
 trying to create a perfect structure linear with historical prejudice in it,  
 conditioning you over time  
 slowly moulding, wracking your definition of yourself  
 rather than "what you are supposed to be"  
 what if someone's definition extends beyond your full stop, what if their winding structure  
 makes the eight wonder contemporary equality with it, what if their journey to themselves  
 lie beyond what society enforce them to be,  
 the world might see just the shades of black and white but some of us have a rainbow within,  
 like you, they and me with our distinctive identity  
 yet a sense of belongingness,  
 the true beauty of human beings.



*Prerna Borgohain, 1st year*

## “No More Silence”

**Jahanvi Bakshi, 1st year**



*Rashmi Verma, 1st year*

I wish I could shout out loud, And stand aloof from the crowd. I wish I could claim my  
 identity, Without any remorse.

I wish people were compassionate, And they did not act obstinate.

I wish people were cherished enough,

So they believed in love, not doubts or bluff! I wish they held pride in being themselves,  
 So that we could have pride in being ourselves! Rather than calling it ‘abnormal’ or  
 ‘unnatural’;

I wish they had more sense of the word ‘natural’!



*Tanya Trehan, 1st year*



## “Pride In Multicultural Flag”

*Vrinda Verma, 1st year*

With pride in my heart, I say that India is  
technologically developing!

But deep inside, I still mourn the narrow  
mindsets that exist!

Respect and value are what all religions  
preach! But honestly, do we actually follow  
what they teach?

The norms that society have very  
conveniently confined people to.

This is the most important reason for  
LGBTQ discrimination!

Of the sheer mockery and humiliation, they  
have been going through!

It is something that has to be sincerely  
looked into!

To unite, to love, and to respect is  
considered our philosophy.

Then why this hypocrisy?

We all are the children of the almighty.

Then why this discrepancy?

They deserve equal consideration and  
respect. We have no right to degrade or  
suspect them!

Just because they don't adhere to your  
conventions! It doesn't mean you will  
subject them to alienation.

Labelling them as "culturally unapproved"  
is sheer lag!

All we ought to do is reinforce their multi-  
colored flag!

There lies pride in being yourself.

There lies pride in accepting yourself.

There lies pride in fighting against the  
odds. No matter what you have been  
through.

In fact, the LGBTQ community is proud to  
do so!



*Bodhi Suryawanshi, 1st year*



*Archisha Madame, 2nd year*

## एक अदद पहचान

सौम्या श्रीवास्तव, प्रथम वर्ष

गर मुकम्मल होता तो  
रूबरू कराते हम तुम्हें  
कितना खौफजदा होता है  
लम्हा- दर- लम्हा  
हर्फ- दर- हर्फ  
जूझना खुद से  
औरों से  
महज़ एक अदद पहचान  
के लिए  
एक टुकड़ा आसमान  
के लिए  
गर मुकम्मल होता तो  
रूबरू कराते हम तुम्हें  
कितना गमज़दा होता है  
बेवजह बूँद- बूँद  
खाली होते जाना  
किश्तों में खुद से  
परे होते जाना

महज़ एक अदद पहचान  
के लिए  
एक टुकड़ा आसमान  
के लिए  
गर मुकम्मल होता तो  
अहसास कराते हम तुम्हें  
कितनी स्याह होती है  
बे- नियाज़ तुम्हारे हिस्से  
थोपी गई तहरीर  
बयाँ करती तुम्हारा वजूद;  
पूछते हम तुमसे रूह को  
मारना कैसा होता है?  
महज़ एक अदद पहचान  
के लिए  
एक टुकड़ा आसमान  
के लिए.....

## नज़रिया अपना अपना

स्मृति जैन, तृतीय वर्ष

क्या सही और गलत है  
ये समाज के ऊपर क्यों छोड़ा जाता है  
प्यार की परिभाषा में  
लड़का लड़की से ही प्यार करे  
ये कौन सही ठहराता है।  
लड़के के मन को लड़का भाये  
या फिर एक लड़की के मन में किसी और लड़की की  
तस्वीर ही कैद क्यों न हो जाये  
मोहब्बत है शब्द जो इनके रिश्ते को दर्शाये।  
गलत ठहराना हमारा काम नहीं  
उस प्रेम के रिश्ते को पनपने से रोकना  
समाज का कोई कर्तव्य नहीं।  
इस समाज की बेड़ियों के डर से क्यों वो अपना प्यार भूल  
जाए, वह प्यार थी उसकी,  
वह अभिमान था उसका, उससे ही सुबह  
उसी से शाम थी उसकी।

मगर न उसे अपनों ने अपनाया  
न दुनिया वालों ने कभी सही नज़रिया अपनाया  
उसके अंदर चल रहे न जाने कितनी भावनाओं को  
दबाया।  
अब उभर के आये है वो, अपनी असली पहचान के साथ  
बहुत आत्मविश्वास भी लाये है वो, एक बड़ी मुस्कान के  
साथ।  
जोश भरा है, हौसले मज़बूत है  
फिर भी अपनी पहचान पाने के लिए क्यों करना पड़ता  
उन्हें इतना संघर्ष है।  
गलत है तो वो लोग जो उन्हें देख अपना चेहरा छिपाए  
ओर उन पर यूँ कटाक्ष कर, प्यार कर कोई गलती की हो  
ऐसा दोष लगाये।  
लड़का लड़के से प्यार करे या लड़की लड़की से  
मोहब्बत का इज़हार करे, ये गलत नहीं है  
प्यार प्यार होता है, कोई गुनाह नहीं।

# GALLERY



Orientation 2021

Lecture by  
Dr. Karen Lorimer



Online Poetry  
competition

# GALLERY



Farewell 2021

Lecture by  
Dr. Rupali Khanna &  
Dr. Akanksha Mishra



Lecture by  
Dr. Aliya Khalid



# ANNUAL REPORT

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## DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

APRIL 2021 - FEBRUARY 2022

The year 2021 was no less challenging than its predecessor. The online mode of teaching-learning introduced due to the outbreak of Covid-19 in the year 2020 continued to define our way of life. In these unusual circumstances and under the new normal, the department activities and events were held online via different platforms such as Zoom and G-meet.

On 3rd April 2021, the department organized a lecture via zoom by Dr. Vikram Sampath on V.D. Savarkar. The lecture was followed by a question-and-answer session.

On 20th August 2021, the department organized the international event *Ami Kobi*, a multinational homage to the legend Rabindranath Tagore, in collaboration with Poetry across Cultures India via Zoom. The event focussed on Tagore's literary connections with Hungary and Bulgaria. The event was attended by around 200 participants from around the world, including eminent poets, writers, lecturers, faculty members, and the students of the Department of Political Science, Kamala Nehru College as well as members of Poetry across Cultures. The guests of honors for the day were Dr. Pal Bodogh Szabo, the Director and Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of Hungary, and Dr. Kamen Koutzarov, the Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria.

On 27th August 2021, the department began with a series of lectures based on the "Global Dialogues on Gender and Politics". The first lecture of the series was held on the topic: The Role of Women in Public Life: Citizenship and Cultural Violence by Dr. Sylvia Garcia. The second lecture was conducted on "Women's Agency under Constrained conditions: Minority Groups and Education" by Dr. Aliya Khalid on 10th September 2021. The final lecture of the series was held on 17th September 2021 on the topic of "Gender-based violence and Policy framework: Stories from Scotland by Dr. Karen Lorimer". All the lectures were conducted via Zoom and were followed by interactive question and answer sessions.

An online Sketches and Cartoon caricatures competition on the trajectory of the LGBTQIA+ community was organized by the department on 25th January 2022. The top three entries were awarded e-certificates.

An online short story competition and an online poetry recitation competition on the theme of "Aazadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" was organized on 30th and 31st January 2022.

A 15-day long social media campaign on the issue of "Environmental sustainability" was initiated by the department from 1st February 2022, titled 'Prayas- Only one Earth'. The campaign aimed at progressing towards a sustainable life. A series of posts consisting of information related to contemporary environmental concerns such as plastic menace, fast fashion, waste management were addressed on our Instagram handle that received high appreciation, response, and engagement. The campaign was concluded with an online webinar on the topic "Climate Change and Sustainable Living", conducted on 15th February 2022 via Zoom. Dr. Akanksha Mishra, Assistant Professor, Environmental Sciences and Dr. Rupali Khanna, Associate Professor, Economics from Kamala Nehru College were the speakers.