



CONQUEER

Allyship. Representation. Collective Change

Report
2019



Equality

History owes an apology to the members of this community and their families

Bengal boat capsizes

SC Bench says history owes an apology to the members of this community and their families

Love at first right

dissolves
Bengal House
List of 105 candidates

INDEPENDENCE DAY-II

SC Bench says history owes an apology to the members of this community and their families



7 MINUTE GUIDE TO 495-PAGE RULING

Now, time to give LGBTQs marriage & parenting rights

Bengal boat capsizes

Finalises homosexuality

SC Bench says history owes an apology to the members of this community and their families

Bench says history owes the LGBTQ community an apology

Choice of a partner is part of the fundamental right to privacy

#Press4change

समलैंगिक संबंध अब अपराध नहीं

कानून में बदलाव से निर्यात करने पर रा...

कानून की संशोधन का एकमात्र ही फैसला



SC Bench

Finalises

KCR dissolves
Telangana

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TG: Transgender

OTT: Over the Top

RTE: Right to Education

RTI: Right to Information

ART: Anti-Retroviral Therapy

STD: Sexual Transmitted Disease

SRS: Sex Reassignment Surgery

MSM: Men having Sex with Men

STI: Sexually Transmitted Infection

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency
Syndrome

NACO: National AIDS Control Organization

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and
Queer

SOGI: Sexual Orientation and Gender
Identity

SOGIESC: Sexual Orientation; Gender
Identity, Expression and Sex Characteris-
tics

Section 377: Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code criminalizes sexual activities "against the order of nature" illegal. In September 2018, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the application of Section 377 to consensual homosexual sex between adults was unconstitutional, but that Section 377 remains in force relating to sex with minors, non-consensual sexual acts, and bestiality.

NALSA Judgment: National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India is a landmark decision by the Supreme Court of India, which declared transgender people to be a 'third gender', affirmed that the fundamental rights granted under the Constitution of India will be equally applicable to transgender people, and gave them the right to self-identification of their gender as male, female or third-gender.



Introduction

Love Matters India in partnership with the Keshav Suri Foundation organized 'Conquer', a national conclave to bring together different stakeholders from diverse domains, with the goal to increase media representation of the LGBTQ community. Reading down of Section 377 was only the beginning of another long and arduous journey towards ensuring full rights for members of the LGBTQ community. And one of the most

important components of ensuring full rights and acceptance is changing the minds and attitudes of people in the country. Media has a very important role to play in this and hence, Love Matters conceptualized Conquer. This event was the first edition for an initiative that aims to foster and continue conversations about existing gaps, opportunities and solutions to attain equity for the LGBTQ community in the Post 377 India.

The event was divided into three phases:

Issue Mapping

Decriminalization of homosexuality was one of the biggest victories for the LGBTQ community in India, given that it came after decades of dedicated advocacy by the community and its allies. However, even though the legal victory is indicative of shifting attitudes towards the LGBTQ community in India, the judgment on its own would not result in ensuring equality and acceptance.

Representatives from each group came forward to present problem statements worked out by their group.



Law & Policy

Participants from the group on law and policy presented two problems statements on legal change of gender markers and laws around anti-discrimination.

Ideal

There should be explicit legal provisions, guided by the principle of self-identification, that lay out uniform criteria for change of gender markers in all identity documents. A distinction needs to be made between government issued identity documents such as Passport/Aadhar/Voter ID etc. which must be based on self-identified gender markers, and a separate identity card or certificate for entitlement to welfare schemes where we do not object to a certification body.

Reality

Despite the rights-based framework of the NALSA judgment, there are several gaps in the implementation of its directives. The judgment clearly upheld the right to self-identification and stated that SRS is not mandatory for a legal gender change. However, the current Trans Bill 2018 requires district level screening committees that distinguish between pre-and post-op transgender, and the committee is expected to issue certificates recognizing an individual as transgender/male/female. This is in clear violation

of NALSA and the transgender community has highlighted the numerous flaws in the Bill. According to RTI data gathered between 2016-17, most States have undertaken no efforts to streamline the process of providing identity documents to transgender persons.[1] Some states such as Chhattisgarh provide 'third gender' ID cards but require medical certificates issued by screening committees. Delhi has also set up a screening committee to issue certificates.

Impact

Transgender persons are forced to navigate a realm of bureaucratic tangles, alongside a heavy reliance on the judiciary and executive, which are called upon to pass orders for individuals to be able to access basic documents. The medical profession continues to have an undue sphere of influence on identity as well. This acts as a barrier to the self-determination of gender identity. Where screening committees/welfare boards do exist, individuals have reported being subject to violations of their personal dignity.

Ideal

The availability and accessibility of a comprehensive redressal mechanism for intersectional discrimination on the basis of real or purported Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression or Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC).

Reality

Absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination law in India. Therefore, there is no comprehensive legal redress for discrimination on the basis of real or purported SOGIESC.

Discrimination law in India

- 1 *Constitution of India: Article 14 [against the state], 15(2) [against other people - access to public places]*
- 2 *Issue and community specific [Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act, Prevention of Atrocities Act, HIV/AIDS Act, Mental Healthcare Act] - overlaps with LGBTQ identities, but nothing that directly addresses SOGIESC based discrimination*
- 3 *The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2018 seeks to prohibit discrimination against transgender persons. But it does not provide any mechanism for redress.*



Impact



Evidence for SOGIESC based discrimination

- 1** *Education: The Right to Education (RTE) Act and education policy – does not take into account needs of transgender persons who may face bullying by other students, and exclusion and harassment for non-normative gender expression from teachers.*
- 2** *At work: In the absence of an anti-discrimination law LGBTQ people will continue to face bias in hiring practices and refusal for employee benefits given to their heterosexual counterparts. They are also prone to harassment, bullying and wrongful termination.*



Education

The group on education presented the overall problems faced by LGBTQ students in education institutions in India.

Ideal

1. LGBTQ History, and gender studies be taught as part of the regular curriculum which would help all students realize diversity in society and make them accept it from a young age. It would also help queer students develop a stronger sense of self-esteem knowing that they need not necessarily have to fit into narrow societal norms. This will help them become more secure individuals, make them feel like they belong, and eventually help them focus on skill building and feel included irrespective of their caste, gender, tribe, financial status, and upbringing.

2. The presence of an accessible safe space, anti-discrimination cell, and LGBTQ friendly accommodation would help the LGBTQ individuals feel safe in educational institutions.

Reality

Same-sex desire in educational institutions is invisibilized and gender non-conforming students face discrimination.

Here are some of the reported incidents of discrimination/ harassment faced by queer students in India. In Kolkata, a school forced two female students to 'confess' in writing about their desires.

This shows the amount of policing and homophobia that exists in the school system in India.

These quotes from a study on LGBTQ students' experience in schools in India shows how LGBTQ students are bullied by their peers:

"It doesn't matter what your orientation or what your preference is. It's just who you always are. I know straight boys who can be very effeminate. I know straight women who can be very masculine--err--non-feminine. The problem here is not so much about sexual orientation but gender roles. Any boy, no matter straight or gay, if he is effeminate, will be picked up. Any girl, no matter straight or bi or gay, if she is manly, man-like, she will be picked on.

One participant notes how one of his classmates was the "wife" of the entire class and that the rest of the class boys would pretend to be his "husband" and flirt with him. However, he notes that no one took it seriously. Even if the teacher saw this, he states, she would think that the students were being indisciplined. "Being queer was so far away from everyone's imagination", he states

One participant notes how one of his classmates was the “wife” of the entire class and that the rest of the class boys would pretend to be his “husband” and flirt with him. However, he notes that no one took it seriously. Even if the teacher saw this, he states, she would think that the students were being indisciplined. “Being queer was so far away from everyone’s imagination”, he states

In April 2018, a teenage student from a reputed girls’ school in Gopalapuram Chennai typed out a long answer to a question on ‘the first crush you’ve had’ on a social media site. Just that in this case, her first crush happened to be a girl classmate. Soon, a couple of other girls from her class had taken a screenshot and started circulating it. The girls were teased, ridiculed, and labelled. Worse, several teachers of the school got to know about the post and allegedly censured and verbally abused the girl, even calling her a prostitute. The situation was aggravated when news reached the principal. Not just the student herself, but several others from the same class allege that the principal actually asked her to ‘go kill herself.’ Incidentally, that is exactly what her best friend, the other girl who had been named in the post, did. She had reportedly been severely depressed since the time that the two of them started being bullied and maligned over that one social media post, and in the most tragic turn in this entire chain of events, she committed suicide.

Consequences/ Impact

High prevalence of bullying and ridicule aimed at LGBTQ students by classmates in school and college.

Pressure from family and society to enter ‘normal’ relationships, get married.

Lack of emotional support when things go wrong in relationships.

Feeling that the relationship cannot reach its natural conclusion.

Physical and emotional violence within LGBTQ relationship.

Fear of partner bowing to family pressure and getting into a heterosexual married.

Being scared about not finding love again, given the less number of out LGBTQ people in society.

Pressure of always keeping the relationship under wraps.



Employment

The group on employment prepared a problem statement around workplace readiness and skills gap.

Ideal

- 1** People: Sensitized and aware staff with an inclusive workplace environment.
- 2** Process: An LGBTQ friendly recruitment strategy which is accommodative of trans people whose documentation may have their pre SRS name.

Policy

- 1** Gender neutral policies
- 2** Existing policies & benefits to be made inclusive of LGBTQ people
- 3** Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) coverage
- 4** Housing benefits to same-Sex couples
- 5** Supplier diversity to include LGBTQ owned businesses

Skill gap



Education



Entrepreneurship -
Promoting entrepreneurship
& enabling funding
opportunities through
Venture Capitalists.



skilling by non-traditional
methods

Cost of Homophobia

1.7%

of India's GDP:

30.8

billion USD

Only

4%

covered by
Same-sex partner
benefits-2016

According to a

2016

study by Hewlett
and Yoshino,

72%

of allies say they
are more likely to
accept a job at a
company that's
supportive of
LGBTQ employees.

40%

face harassment
at work.

2/3

hear homophobic
jokes,

1/5TH

harassed by
manager/HR

13%

has access to ERG

According to a

2009

study by Forbes
India and Out Now
Consulting,

6% of the
Indian
population is
queer (closeted
or out) which
constitutes \$200
billion spending
power

The Delhi-based youth-run YP Foundation released a policy brief earlier this year which shows that in Kerala,

89%

of trans people are mistreated at the workplace and 96% do not raise their voice against violence. Shockingly,

100%

of the respondents had had at least one experience of being denied a job due to their gender identity (Kerala happens to be one of India's most progressive states. Imagine the figures elsewhere). Out of India's trans population of 490,000 (as per 2011 census data), very few make it to gainful employment.

It's important to remember that due to the systemic discrimination against trans people, **58%** of transgender students drop out of school before class X. It is vital that employers of trans people offer longer ramp-up time periods for their trans employees to fit in to the organizational culture.

According to the National Human Rights Commission Report on living conditions of transgender people, **92%** of India's trans people are unable to participate in any economic activity. Less than half of them have access to education, and 62% of those that do, face abuse and discrimination.

Cost of Homophobia

Most Organizations in India do not have a conducive environment to support some of their strategies with respect to Employees (employment/HR). For example, organizations with all-inclusive policies do not necessarily have a high number of out LGBTQ Employees.

Work culture is not given its due consideration by the Leadership & HR while formulating/implementing strategies with respect to employees which often leads to complicating issues more than before. Organizations with all-inclusive policies receive appreciation and recognition for their inclusivity but still may have issues which go unnoticed and leads to a larger dissatisfaction among LGBTQ employees. It is a well known fact that most employees do not report harassment-bullying related issues at work as they understand reporting such issues may create a tougher time for them with no certainty of a satisfactory solution.

2016

Report by Kellogg Insight shows that diverse groups in the workplace tend to perform better.

study by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation found that 72 percent of people are more likely to accept a job at a company that is more supportive of LGBTQ employees. Millennials are one of the key segments that companies are targeting, and this segment is keen to work with LGBTQ-friendly brands (MINGLE, 2016).



Media & Entertainment

Problem Statement:

Indian Cinema and its misguided portrayal of the Queer Community

Negative portrayal of LGBTQ characters and reinforcement of gender norms in mainstream cinema has led to false perceptions about the LGBTQ community.

Ideal

Media should prefer to showcase people in a manner they actually are rather than exaggerating.

Representation of community should also on payroll of organization.

Representation of community should actually be represented by queer individual rather than by somebody who cannot relate to the issue.

Reality

Hindi films have tried in their own way to reconcile to the gay theme. But unfortunately the characterizations, even after all these years remain a spoof of a serious subject matter. Bollywood celebrities are known to deflect questions about their sexual orientation. The Hindi

film Industry, is one of the few forces with the power to bring Indian together and foster a new public opinion. Yet, the world's largest film industry is often seen lacking a sense of responsibility towards the LGBTQ issues. Despite its power to impact millions of people all at once, Hindi cinema has chosen to fulfil its entertainment responsibility by ridiculing gay culture.

LGBTQ characters are often shown in negative or comic roles in films which adds on to existing hatred and unacceptance attitudes towards community. A few examples from Bollywood include helper of Karisma Kapoor in Raja Hindutani; Maa the ladla bigad gaya song from Dostana and portrayal of queer lives in Madhu Bhandarkar's film Fashion.

There is a gross exaggeration and representation of queer lives and individuals on social media.

Impact

Many people in India are afraid of talking openly about their sexual orientation and gender identity because of the fear of discrimination by the mainstream society.

A lot more representation is needed in terms of cinema which can provide the much-needed platform for interaction between people who are still in the closet.



Health

The group working on health came up with six different problem statements:

Ideal

To reach to youth and adolescent (below 18years) MSM and transwomen to raise awareness on safer sex practices and behavior, along with understanding sexuality and gender issues.

Reality

India has the largest youth population in the world, and aligning with world wide data on STIs (especially the new HIV cases), young people in the age group of 14-21 years are most affected. At present the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), the national agency working on prevention and control of HIV/AIDS has a limitation in reaching out to key population under age of 18 years due to legal barriers. This leads to absence of awareness and lack of proper knowledge about STIs. There is hence a need to engage adolescents around the issue of sex education, sexuality & gender issues.

Consequences/ Impact

School is the foundation stone of a person's life. If this information is not provided it leads to continuation of stigma and discrimination. The data from NACO clearly indicates that around 35% new cases of HIV are among the youth population of age group of 15-24 years. Hence, this needs to become a priority as India has a high burden of HIV & AIDS.

Dearth of information on suicide rates in the LGBTQ population in India despite proven positive correlation between LGBTQ and suicide rates.

References:

- *Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour among Transgender Persons.*
- *Suicidality and Sexual Orientation: Differences Between Men and Women in a General Population-Based Sample From The Netherlands. Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol. 35, No. 3, June 2006.*

3. *Self medication in transgender population during transition process due to lack of awareness, resources and unfriendly behavior of service providers.*

A study of nine countries in the Asia Pacific region showed that 75% of trans people showed that 75% of the trans population went for transition process. Though there is no specific data in Indian context.

If this problem is not addressed, it will lead to a high risk of cancer and other health related side effects among the population.

4. *Challenges faced by queer women in accessing mental health services.*

Due to stigma, societal pressure and layers of discrimination against women in the Indian society queer women face lots of challenges in coming out. Staying in the closet and inability to seek help leads to several mental health issues. There is a dearth of mental health professionals in India and most of the existing ones are not queer friendly. Queer friendly mental health support services are hence not accessible or affordable for the queer people in general.

Reference:

Challenges in coming out among queer women: implications for counseling. Kalita, P (2018) (Thesis)

5. Provision of Hepatitis B diagnostic and preventive services for MSM and transgender population in India

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic disease. Diagnostic and preventive services for Hepatitis B are often neglected in India, as most of the focus is given to HIV related services. Hepatitis B virus is 50–100 times more infectious than HIV and is easily transmitted during sexual activity. Hepatitis B also can be spread through sharing needles, syringes, etc. It is a well-known fact that sexual exposure carries a risk of 1-3 % per encounter with a sero-positive person of HIV transmission while the same risk is as high as 30 % in the case of Hepatitis B. Though we don't have a vaccine for HIV but we have a vaccine for Hepatitis B prevention, whose efficacy is 100 % on successful immunization.

Though the Government of India has included Hepatitis B Vaccination in its National Immunization schedule for infants and children under 5 years of age, it is silent about immunizing high risk population including MSM and transgender. y.

There is no provision for Hepatitis B awareness, diagnosis and vaccination in national programs, including the targeted intervention programs. Hepatitis B vaccination is a three-dose regimen and is quite affordable with a dose as low as INR 100 in India. The government supply can bring down the cost to INR 30 per dose and hence it should be included in awareness and diagnostic services to MSM, transgender and other High-Risk population.

6Anti-LGBTQ content in medical curriculum

The medical curriculum in India has a lot of queerphobic content. For example, the Textbook of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, 5th edition, authored by Dr. Krishnan Vij, on page 306 classifies homosexuality/sodomy and lesbianism/triabadism as unnatural sexual offences. Page 320 of the same book say that people from the Hijra community in India kidnap pre-pubescent children & castrate them to increase their tribe. The book also generalizes transgender persons by saying that they use passive sodomy as a means of income and are hence referred to as male prostitutes.

The Shaw's textbook of gynecology also contains a lot of queerphobic content in their chapter on 'Intersex States.' There is no mention of the basic concepts of sex, gender, sexual orientation or sexuality in any textbook of the medical curriculum.

There is hence a need for all organisations working on LGBTQ issues to come to a common platform and speak with the Medical Council of India to remove this misinformation from the medical syllabus. Once the theoretical part has been improved, other practices like eliciting history from patients and clinical examinations will have to be made more LGBTQ friendly. Doctors need to be taught to be empathetic & non-judgmental while dealing with queer patients. Most of them have biases and assume that patients from the queer community have high chances of living with HIV. The association of HIV with LGBTQ community has been over-hyped in medical textbooks. This results in not enough attention being paid to other health concerns like anal cancer amongst gay and bisexual men, breast, cervical & ovarian cancer in lesbian women, prostate cancer in transgender women and other infections like Hepatitis B & C, Giardiasis, Amoebiasis & E. Coli.

There is hence an urgent need to get into a conversation with healthcare policy makers to create awareness about these conditions and take appropriate steps to tackle them according!





Press Interaction : #Press4change



The event was then opened up to the media. Representatives from each group came on stage to present problem statements prepared by their groups, in order to inform the media how they can help them in highlighting those. At least 20 journalists from various national and local media outlets like IANS, Quint, Youth Ki Awaaz, Live Hindustan, Amar Bharti, Rubaroo News, Humara Maqсад, etc covered the event and published stories on it.





Law & Policy

1. There should be explicit legal provisions, guided by the principle of self-identification, that lay out uniform criteria for change of gender markers in all identity documents. A distinction needs to be made between government issued identity documents such as Passport/Aadhar/Voter ID etc. which must be based on self-identified gender markers, and a separate identity card or certificate for entitlement to welfare schemes where we do not object to a certification body.

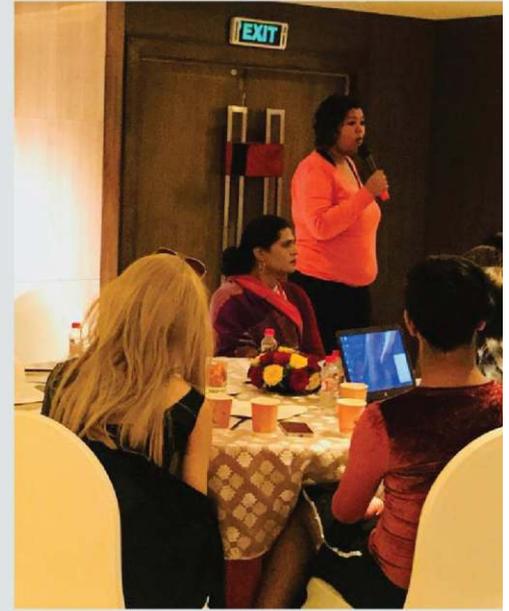
2. The availability and accessibility of a comprehensive redressal mechanism for intersectional discrimination on the basis of real or purported Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression or Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC).

3. Need to change existing laws around marriage, inheritance, sexual harassment, sexual violence, etc to make them inclusive of LGBTQ persons.



Education

1. LGBTQ History, and gender studies should be a part of the regular curriculum. This will not only help students become more aware about diversity in culture and society, but also help queer students develop a stronger sense of self-esteem knowing that they don't have to fit into narrow societal norms. This will help them become more secure individuals and make them feel like they belong.
2. The presence of an accessible safe space, anti-discrimination cells, and inclusive accommodation in educational institutions would help the LGBTQ individuals feel safer.



Employment

1. All companies and organizations should make their workplace policies inclusive of LGBTQ individuals.
2. Employers should give a stipulated leave and cover the cost of Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).
3. The recruitment strategy and documentation process while hiring should be inclusive of LGBTQ individuals.

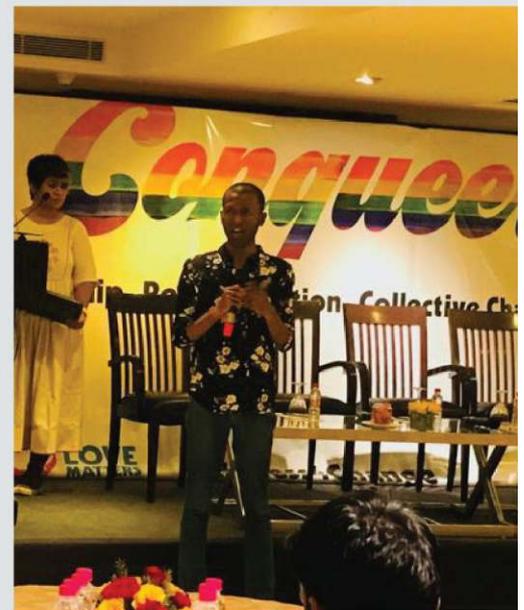
Health



1. Sensitize health care providers about LGBTQ community and their specific needs.
2. In order to reach out to younger MSM and trans population for sexual health awareness, it is needed that we advocate for lowering the legal age of consent back to 16 years.
3. Provision of Hepatitis B diagnostic and preventive services for MSM and transgender population as part of sexual health interventions.
4. Revise the medical curriculum to remove all unscientific biases against LGBTQ people and make it more inclusive and diverse.

Media & Entertainment

1. Sensitize media professionals, especially journalism students about LGBTQ community and their issues.
2. Hindi cinema should start portraying LGBTQ characters more sensitively and improve the visibility of the community.
3. Media needs to cover more aspects of LGBTQ community's lives and not focus only on violence and sex.



Next Steps

1. Work further on the problem statements with the participants and other experts to fine tune them and use them as evidence and material for advocacy.
2. Release the charter with the final problem statements and share a copy with all stakeholders including media, political leaders, civil society organizations, judiciary and donors.
3. Prepare for the next edition of Conquer. Start creating an agenda for the same and prepare a baseline to describe what has changed for the LGBTQ community one year after reading down of Section 377 and what is needed going forward.
4. Prioritize issues in the charter statement and think of broad solutions for the same. Prepare a list of organizations which are already working in that domain, map out their interest and capabilities, and form partnerships with them to create an advocacy plan. This plan could then be used as a road map to engage with various government bodies, corporates, media houses, judiciary and other stakeholders.



dissolves
Angana House
as list of 105 candidates

INDEPENDENCE DAY-II

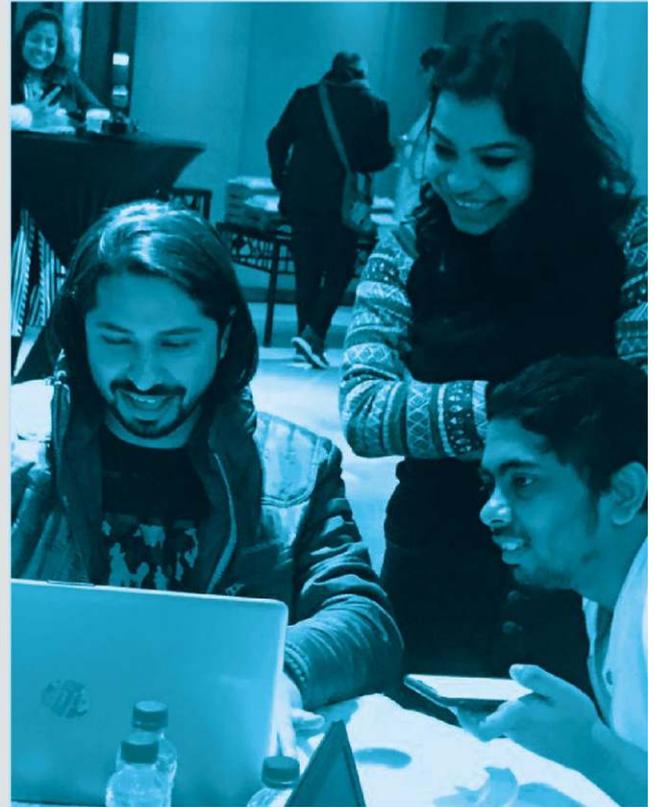
SC decriminalises
Sec 377, Calls 2013
Ruling Arbitrary
And Outdated

1 MINUTE GUIDE TO LAW'S PAGE RULING

Now, time to give
LGBTs marriage &
parenting rights

Panel Discussions

The last part of the event featured two panel discussions with experts to discuss gaps, scope of work in these domains, and the way forward.



समलैंगिक संबंध अब अपराध नहीं

decriminalises homosexuality

Section 377 has been a reason
for much mockery and snafu

Bench says history owes the
LGBTQ community an apology

Choice of a partner is part of
the fundamental right to privacy





Panel I on media, entertainment & communications

The first panel focused on media, entertainment and communications and featured three veteran journalists - Namrata Joshi, Film Critic with the Hindu; Jayanta Roy Chowdhury, Senior Editor with the Telegraph and Murali Krishnan, former Journalist and Media Production Specialist. The panel was

moderated by Sharif D Rangnekar, former Journalist, Author and LGBTQ rights advocate. The panel discussion started with Sharif highlighting some of the issues with media's representation of LGBTQ issues. He talked about the overt focus on sexual violence and not enough on pleasure and desire. And that even when desire is written about, it is mostly in a heterosexual context. He said that mostly reporters working on health and crime pick up stories around sexuality and that there is a need to have journalists covering issues like business and politics to also write about LGBTQ rights. He also talked about the most common mistake made by the media, which is to pick up a few well known LGBTQ celebrities and portraying their opinion or beliefs as that of the whole community.

Murali Krishnan spoke about the largely polarized media environment and the lack of space to cover and report LGBTQ stories. He said there has been a lot of coverage of pride marches but most of the reporting consists of a heteronormative gaze on the community's issues. Many editors believe LGBTQ issues don't need to be portrayed and there is a lack of understanding about LGBTQ identities amongst editors. He said there is a long battle ahead of decriminalization of homosexuality, in terms of dealing with exclusions within the system.

Jayanta spoke about the lack interest from people in the corporate sector in India on LGBTQ issues. He said that the issue has somewhere been blindsided by the press and it is not necessarily homophobia that prevents them from reporting. He added that often reporters are afraid to be associated with the community if they cover their issues. However, he also believes that a lot has changed in the country in the last 25 years in terms of reporting on the issue. When the Supreme Court verdict on section 377 came, it became the biggest story of the year. However, a lot needs to be done in terms of covering LGBTQ issues and highlight issues in areas like housing and employment, where the community still faces discrimination. He highlighted the need for more sensitization of media and business professionals, preferably when they are studying in universities.

Sharif added to Jayanta's point about change in media's attitude towards the community by highlighting some of the salacious stories in the early 2000s on cruising in Delhi's Nehru Park and murder of a gay man. The media has certainly come a long way from that kind of crude reporting on LGBTQ issues in India.

Film critic Namrata Joshi talked about the representation of LGBTQ people in the media. She

said that there is still a lot of stereotyping and lewd jokes about the community in the media.

She highlighted the changes in mainstream Hindi cinema on highlighting LGBTQ issues and stories. There was a time when mainstream actors did not want to play LGBTQ characters, and now we have Sonam Kapoor who has played a lesbian character in a mainstream Bollywood film. She mentioned an incident about when she asked a gay film-maker about making a gay love story and he asked her back if she ever asks a straight film-maker about making a straight love story. This highlighted the need for all kinds of film-makers to make films with LGBTQ themes and not leave it up to queer film-makers to do that. There is also a need to push the envelope and make films about romance and not just about violence and victimization.

Questions from the audience ranged from issues on representation, to those concerning business and employment and media's expectations from the LGBTQ community. The panel responded by saying that change does not happen overnight and representation in Bollywood films cannot match with those in Hollywood. They added that sensitization and awareness is the key and there is a need for more diversity and inclusion within media houses. They urged the community to assert their presence positively on social media.

Panel II on Law, Health & Workplace

The second panel focused on law, health and workplace and featured Ms. Apsara Reddy, National General Secretary of the All India Mahila Congress, Ms. Aparna Mittal, Lawyer, Founder Samana Centre for Gender, Policy and Law and Ms. Kaveree Bamzai, Independent Journalist,

Former Editor, India Today. It was moderated by Mr. Shivraj Parshad, former Journalist and a Communications and Development Expert. Kaveri reflected upon her journey as a journalist since 1987 and how far the media has come on reporting issues related to gender and sexuality. There was a time when journalists were not able to call out sexual harassment or even write about LGBTQ issues. However, things have changed now. Recent homophobic comments made by the chief of Indian Army were called out by the media for being discriminatory. She also talked about pressures on people working in the media industry to sell their stories and magazine. She recalled the time when she did a cover story in India Today magazine on LGBTQ rights with a picture of author



Vikram Seth holding a placard saying 'I am not a criminal.' That edition of the magazine did not sell very well and she had to argue about it with her colleagues later.



Vikram Seth holding a placard saying 'I am not a criminal.' That edition of the magazine did not sell very well and she had to argue about it with her colleagues later.

Apsara Reddy spoke about her experience of facing discrimination at workplace in the media industry as well as political parties. She had to work harder to prove herself and show that she had something more to her personality than her gender identity and glamour. When she decided to join mainstream politics, she was asked by people why she does not write about sexuality or join the transgender welfare board. She wanted to make a point that members of the LGBTQ community need to become part of the mainstream, if we want to be treated as such.

Aparna Mittal spoke about the need to see the law as a tool for social change but also understand its limitation, as laws are often made in good spirit but not always implemented. Hence, she highlighted the need for implementing diversity and inclusion policies, as they often remain only on paper. She spoke about the need for corporates to fill the vacuum in the law by implementing progressive policies, for example, corporates do

not necessarily need to wait for India to legalize same-sex marriage in order to give benefits to employees in same-sex relationships. She urged participants to start talking to their companies about equal policies.

Questions from the audience were mostly around the transgender rights bill, laws related to LGBTQ persons and workplace policies.

Apsara criticized the transgender rights bill passed by the lower house of Indian parliament recently for its lack of understanding trans peoples' issues. She also criticized the current government for their lack of support on LGBTQ rights and not taking a stand in favor of the community even after the Supreme Court decriminalized same-sex activities. She promised to work towards LGBTQ inclusion within the Congress party, India's oldest political party.

Kaveree spoke about the need for LGBTQ community and their allies to come together and sensitize their workplaces and families and take conversations on diversity and inclusion outside conference rooms.

Aparna spoke about the need to amend existing laws to make them LGBTQ friendly, instead of asking for new ones. This includes amending laws around marriage, inheritance, gratuity, etc.



Key Takeaways

Media representation of LGBTQ community and their issues has improved significantly in the last two decades.

There is a need to sensitize media professionals about LGBTQ community and their issues, as misconceptions and confusions are still prevalent. A good place to start is journalism school students.

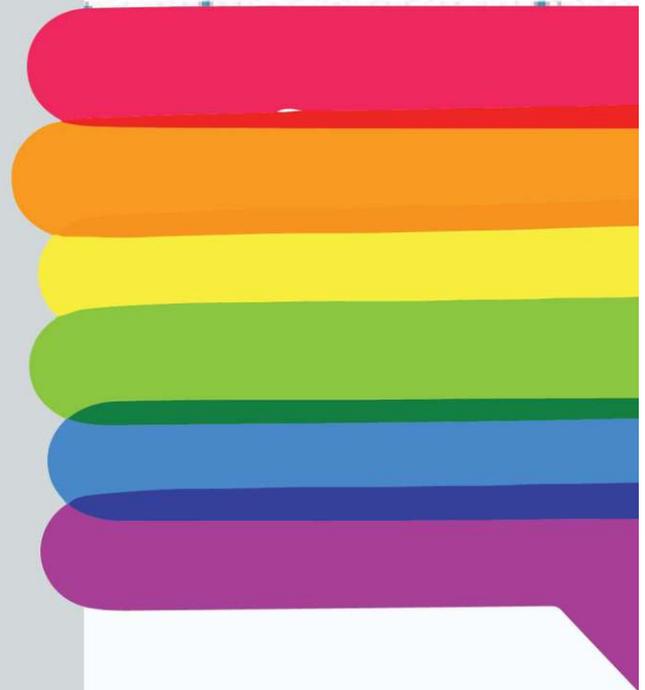
Bollywood has also come a long way in its portrayal of LGBTQ characters. From a time when queer characters were only used as comic relief, we now have a mainstream Bollywood actor like Sonam Kapoor playing a lesbian character on screen. Nonetheless, there is a lot more that needs to be done to ensure that not only diverse LGBTQ stories get represented on the big screen, but also that LGBTQ people are cast into these stories as actors and/or have opportunities to work as filmmakers, scriptwriters, etc.

Key Takeaways Panel II

There is a need to bring more LGBTQ people in the mainstream job market and workplaces, so that people become aware and accepting about their lived realities

It is not enough to have LGBTQ friendly policies on paper, organizations ought to implement them as well.

Instead of asking for new laws, the LGBTQ community should advocate for amendments in the existing ones to make them more inclusive and LGBTQ-friendly. .



Annex

Health

S.No	Name	Organization
1	Dr Abhishek Royal	Graduate, Aligarh Muslim University
2	Deepak Kumar	Clinic Manager, Samarth Clinic - India HIV/AIDS Alliance
3	Megha Sheth	Counselling Head, Humsafar Trust, Mumbai
4	Pragati Kalita	Mental Health Professional, Queer Rights Activist
5	Amrita Sarkar	Senior Program Officer, Gender and Sexuality, SAATHI
6	Dr Siddharth	Medical Graduate, LGBT Rights Advocate
7	Yashwinder Singh	Program Manager, Connect, Humsafar Trust, Delhi

Law & Policy

S.No	Name	Organization
1	Ankush Gupta	Co-Founder, Queer Collective Dehradun
2	Saumya Maheshwari	International Commission Of Jurists
3	Kavya Kartik	Research Associate, Centre for Health, Law, Ethics and Technology, Jindal University
4	Danish Sheikh	Assistant Professor and Associate Director, Centre for Health, Law, Ethics and Technology, Jindal Global Law School
5	Disha	Center for Law and Policy Research (CLPR), Bangalore

 Employment	S.No	Name	Organization
	1	Vijay Nambi	IBM
	2	Ramkrishna Sinha	Pride Circle, Co-Founder
	3	Bhuwan Khaturia	LGBTQ Rights Advocate
	4	Mohul	The LalIT

 Education	S.No	Name	Organization
	1	Dhananjay Mangalmukhi	Saksham Trust, Chandigar
	2	Ruth	Nazariya LGBT
	3	Reyansh	Artist
	4	Tish	Drag Artist
	5	Rituparna Borah	Nazariya - A Queer Feminist Resource Group
	6	Anwesh Sahoo	Mr Gay World India 2017
	7	Rajneesh	Writer, LGBTQ Rights Advocate

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S.No	Name	Organization
1	Vinay Nirmala	Mumbai Mirror
2	Rishu	Tarang, Harmless Hugs
3	Pankaj Duhan	DUREX
4	Ravi Bhatnagar	DUREX
5	Piyush Priyadarshi	Film Maker
6	Chandra Ramakrishnan	Senior Account Director, Avian WE





Media Coverage

- IANS Live - <https://bit.ly/2BZgvq7>*
- The Quint - <https://bit.ly/2Tdg9pr>*
- Youth Ki Awaaz: <https://bit.ly/2tAu8Hp>*
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Love Matters is India's first digital initiative that provides gender friendly and pleasure positive SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) information to young people and engages them to talk about love, sex and relationships in an open, honest and non-judgmental way. It is also the first project in India leveraging technology for providing rights based SRHR information to young people in India. Love Matters India has been awarded as the most innovative sexual health project in the world by the World Association of Sexual Health in year 2013. Love Matters India also uses social media and new media tools like virtual reality and augmented reality for social impact in the SRHR field.

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