LGBTQIA+: Understanding The Challenges In Their Daily Lives

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Abstract: The struggles of the LGBT+ community has been a never-ending war for their peaceful existence; the fight for the welfare of the community has been on the streets of New Delhi since 1992 under the leadership of AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan. Even with sexual diversity of individuals being a remarkable feature of Indian History, today heterosexuality has been made the norm which resulted in other sexual orientations considered *wrong* and *inferior*. Any individual with a different sexual orientation has been subjected to violence, discrimination, ostracization, etc. but studying further, it has been observed the existence of the community is not made difficult by the non-LGBTQ+ people but many a times the members of the community themselves are involved in the violence, discrimination, etc. of the other members due to various reasons. This research has been based on the existing literature, articles and research papers and aims to study the unseen challenges that the community faces daily, the history of the LGBTQ+ Movements in India and the role of the general community in working for the welfare of the community.

INTRODUCTION

LGBTQ+ is an acronym that encompasses people of diverse sexual and gender identities and stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ in India account up to 31% (i.e. 125 million) of the total population out of whom 3% identify as gays/lesbians (homosexuals), 9% as bisexuals, 1% as pansexuals, 2% as asexual and 17% as 'not heterosexuals', (Ipsos, 2021); but that is only the data that has been collected and put in records, there is also a large population of the community who are still unable to 'come out' and express themselves which indicates a major problem of loss of their identity. Even with the immense population, the community, is subjected to numerous types of problems and challenges in their daily lives – ranging from discrimination, sexism to bullying, unemployment and other issues along with transphobia or homophobia that take evident toll on their well-being. The challenges mentioned are the ones that are highlighted the most externally, but there are major challenges that the members of the community must deal with internally, within their own existence – there are other issues that are less spoken about like the issue of self-acceptance and other dimensions of queerness like in the religious, cultural, civil, etc. Not only that, based on recent observations, readings, and media studies, it is seen that the discrimination and ostracization of the community is done within the community as well, among the sub-communities there have been differences based on their sexual orientations, class difference, ableism, etc. such differences have brought about clashes and disagreements between the sub-communities which in turn creates a big disparities and loops within the community where the community must stand united for their betterment.

The rationale behind this paper is to examine, understand and study the challenges that are faced by the community members in their daily lives that are not highlighted or recognised enough in the bigger scheme of things – the challenges that are more internalised in nature for the community than the ones that are already known of e.g. the challenges of Ostracization, Discrimination, Bullying, etc. but the problems like the loss/lack of identity, confusion with discovering the self and the help necessary, problems that are formed on the basis of religious taboos, problems faced by the specially-abled queer individuals within the queer spaces, lack of proper guidance to the young queer individuals, etc. are the problems that exist within the community and are as prevalent as the external challenges faced by the community – this paper aims to study and understand such challenges as well as study the ways to help the community in the possible methods. Not many studies have examined the problems in the contemporary world which are overlooked by the masses and in this sense, it would be a useful addition to the existing literature. The analysis would throw light on the problems of the community in the recent years, furthermore, the assessment of the problems that hinders and challenges the community can provide a guide to prioritise and map out the areas where extra support and guidance could be provided.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on secondary data and research and the existing literature, newspaper articles, e., as well as primary data for the evaluation and understanding of the problems. The focus will be on the entirety of LGBTQ+ Community and the study will be conducted on a limited number of individuals across Delhi NCR, West Bengal, and Sikkim for the necessary primary data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The LGBTQ+ Community in India faces numerous problems, Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan, in 1991, stated that – "ABVA views homosexuality (and heterosexuality) as a political issue." Their aim was to decriminalise consensual, adult homosexual acts and fight for the rights of the LGBTQ+ Community on different levels and their efforts have not been in vain either, in September of 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised same-sex relations between consenting adults. Not only that, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was passed in the year 2019, but despite the progress made, discrimination and marginalisation of the LGBTQ+ Community is still prevalent in India. ABVA's report in 1991, 'Less than Gay,' some notable points were made that stood as problems for the community in India where LGBTQ+ individuals face challenges in accessing, education, healthcare, and are often denied basic rights and dignity.

In her memoir named 'The Yellow Sparrow', Santa Khurai, a Transgender Activist and writer, writes about the insults and shaming that she had to face while growing up as a transgender woman in her hometown – in her book she writes about a Sparrow born with Yellow feathers and was then hidden by it's mother and was not allowed to leave the nest to fly like other sparrows due to her difference but after it discovers its uniqueness, it embraces the difference even with the worries carried by the mother on how the world would treat it – Santa states that she *is* the so-called sparrow in her book. She writes that she has had to face violence from the public and rejections from her own community; she has faced many obstacles when it came to employment and education, simply because she wanted to live as who she was. In her own words she stated that, *"The woman in me could neither be vanquished nor hidden somewhere in order to adjust myself to a world that was replete with selfish people and their selfish criticism."* She said that her father was not fond of the way she wanted to live and opposed it but her mother was quite supportive, but not enough to understand her completely which created an unnecessary gap between the two and brought her sadness.

Bombay Dost, was the first registered magazine for the LGBTQ community in India, it was founded in the year 1990 by Ashok Row Kavi, an Indian Journalist and LGBT Rights Activist. The aim of the magazine was to mobilize the gay community and articulate the rights of the gay people. The magazine highlighted the problems and issues of the transgender community and supported the gay individuals; initially, it began with articles published on gay men and the problems faced by them in the community. The Bombay Dost is a remarkable and important milestone in the history of the queer movement in India. Unfortunately, because of funding issues and logistics the said magazine suspended publication in the year 2002 but was relaunched in the year 2009 when the society was more accepting of the LGBT community.

From the year 2009 to 2017, Pink Pages an LGBT Magazine was published online and in print issues – it was a compilation of politics, interviews with celebrities, lifestyle stories, as well as the readers' own personal accounts. The said magazine was denied the permission to print by the Registrar of Newspapers in the year 2010, which was the considered to be a homophobic action of the Government, but in the year 2016, Pink Pages eventually released the first print issue.

With the recognition of the community steadily rising, the problems that are faced by them in the different dimensions of their lives are also being identified, one by one – with the community and the allies relentlessly trying to increase the awareness and sensitize the mass regarding the problems, some other dimension of problem comes into light – 'The Queer Muslim Project', - highlights the problems faced by the Queer Muslims in their community, similarly 'Revival Disability Magazine', aims to highlight and work for the problems of the Specially Abled Queer folks, with the ever increasing problems of the community in India. The different sub-communities within the LGBTQ+ Community, face separate struggles and problems which is often not considered.

Under this backdrop the current study aims to find out more on the problems that are faced by the sub-communities in their daily lives and what could be done to overcome them.

QUEERNESS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

The LGBTQIA+ Community in India has existed since ancient times – the sculptures and art at the *Khajuraho Temples* in Madhya Pradesh and the *Konark Temple* in Orissa stand as solid evidence of the prevalence of homosexuality in ancient India and how it was seen in a positive light; not only that, even the movie *Jodhaa-Akbar*, released in 2008 (Dir. Ashutosh Gowariker), based on the 16th century story of the Mughal Emperor Akbar and his Rajput wife Jodhaa, has representations of the Transgender community – multiple movies, shows and stories based in that period have depictions and representation of such characters which also stand as evidence of the existence and acceptance of the community in the olden times – the individual's belonging to the third-gender or the *Hijra* (Eunuch) community in South Asia were considered to be Demigods with special powers and were invited to bless new born babies, marriages etc.

It was after the colonization of India by the British that homosexuality was criminalised – Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was introduced in the year 186I, based on the Buggery Act 1533, which made sexual activities that were 'against the order of nature' illegal. The commencement of this Section brought about a lot of changes and challenges for the members of the LGBT+ Community. The Section was decriminalised after 157 years in the year 2018 after a PIL filed by NAZ Foundation. The Section in paper simply criminalised consensual homosexual activities but in practicality it denied the identity of the homosexual people, named them criminals for simply being themselves.

With the long existence of the Section and heterosexuality being made the norm of the country and homosexuality and other related sexualities and matters became a topic of taboo. This resulted in the individuals belonging to the LGBTQIA+ Community hiding and denying their identities, there was prevalence of violence against those who identified openly as such, discrimination, and stigmatization of the community is still prevalent in today's scenario. Even in the contemporary world where the community has gained a lot of recognition and the acceptance increasing with every passing day, it is still difficult and challenging to change the mindsets of the mass – especially in India where is considered socio-culturally offensive to identify as a member of the community. The Community is still battling to find their place in the country, where they can be who they are and not be judged by the mass.

In the year 1991, AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), with their report on Homosexuality in India titled 'Less than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India,' was the first of its kind to demand for queer rights in India. After the step taken by ABVA, there were many other steps and actions taken for the cause on both micro and macro levels. The LGBTQ+ Movement in India is comparatively younger than many countries in the world as it took it is first step in the 1990's. However, even with the movement starting very late India has made quite a progress than when it first started, though it is far from being accepted with open by the masses, it is still a remarkable feat. But even with the immense recognition and comparatively less acceptance, there are many underlying problems of the community that are ignored and overlooked by the majority and advocates of the community as 0well. This study aims to examine and understand those problems and bring them into the light.

UNDERSTANDING THE MAJOR CHALLENGES

The community, as we can see, have a lot of challenges and problems that they face in their lives that can be both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature – they may range from mental abuse through insults and shaming, the ostracization, discrimination and stigmatization, the different forms of physical abuse, violence, and torture in different social and political and civil settings, not only by the society but even by the community members themselves. The aim of this study would be to thoroughly understand the problems of the community that are felt by the community themselves, rather than the challenges that are observed by an outsider or someone else.

o *The Challenge of Acceptance, Self-Discovery, and Identity:*

The journey of identity, self-acceptance, and self-discovery holds profound significance within the LGBTQ+ community. For many individuals, embracing their true selves and navigating societal expectations is a complex and transformative process. It is accompanied by numerous challenges, triumphs, and personal growth of an individual. For the LGBTQ+ individuals, embracing their authentic identity is a courageous act of self-affirmation. Society often imposes narrow norms and expectations regarding gender and sexuality, leading many to suppress or deny their true selves out of fear of rejection or discrimination. However, embracing one's identity, whether it be as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer, is a liberating and empowering experience that fosters a sense of wholeness and authenticity. Self-acceptance is a fundamental aspect of the LGBTQ+ journey, yet it can be fraught with internalized stigma and shame. Many individuals grapple with feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness due to societal messages that invalidate their identities. Overcoming these internalized barriers requires courage, resilience, and self-compassion. Through self-reflection, community support, and affirming relationships, LGBTQ+ individuals can cultivate a sense of self-acceptance that allows them to embrace their identities with pride and confidence. Self-discovery is an ongoing process that unfolds throughout the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals. It involves exploring one's desires, interests, values, and sense of purpose in the context of their gender and sexual identities. Self-discovery may involve questioning societal norms, challenging internalized biases, and embracing newfound aspects of one's identity. It is a journey of exploration, growth, and self-actualization that leads to greater self-awareness and fulfilment. The journey of identity, self-acceptance, and self-discovery is not without its challenges. LGBTQ+ individuals may face discrimination, prejudice, and violence based on their identities, both within society and within their own communities. Additionally, navigating familial acceptance, accessing affirming healthcare, and finding inclusive spaces can present significant obstacles along the way. However, overcoming these challenges fosters resilience, strength, and a deeper sense of solidarity within the LGBTQ+ community. It is essential to recognize that the LGBTQ+ community is incredibly diverse, encompassing individuals of all races, ethnicities, cultures, abilities, and identities. Embracing this diversity enriches the community and creates space for intersectional perspectives and experiences. Celebrating diversity means honouring the myriad ways in which individuals express their gender and sexuality and affirming their right to exist authentically and unapologetically. Embracing one's authentic identity, navigating self-acceptance, and engaging in ongoing self-discovery are essential steps towards living a fulfilling and empowered life.

o *The Significance of Pronouns for Queer Individuals*

Pronouns play a vital role in affirming one's identity, particularly for queer individuals. They serve as linguistic tools that reflect and validate one's gender identity and expression. For queer individuals, pronouns are more than just words; they are affirmations of their true selves. Choosing the right pronouns allows them to express their gender identity authentically and with dignity. Whether someone identifies as *he/him, she/her, they/them*, or other pronouns, using the correct ones acknowledges and validates their identity, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance. Using the correct pronouns is an essential aspect of respecting an individual's identity and autonomy. Misgendering, or using incorrect pronouns, can be hurtful and invalidating, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and erasing queer people's experiences. Respectful use of pronouns demonstrates acknowledgment of their identity and affirms their existence in society. Language shapes our perceptions and interactions with the world. Inclusive language, including the use of preferred pronouns, contributes to creating safer and more supportive environments for queer individuals. By incorporating gender-neutral pronouns such as *they/them* or *ze/zir*, the gender binary is challenged and

it increases promotion of inclusivity, recognition of the diverse spectrum of gender identities. In many societies, queer individuals face discrimination and marginalization based on their gender identity and sexual orientation. Using the correct pronouns is a simple yet powerful way to challenge stigma and discrimination. It sends a message of acceptance and support, contributing to creating more inclusive and equitable communities.

o *Queerness and Religion:*

In contemporary society, the intersection of queerness and religion remains a complex and often contentious issue. While significant progress has been made in advancing LGBTQ+ rights and acceptance, many religious traditions still grapple with reconciling their teachings with the lived experiences of queer individuals.

Throughout history, religious institutions have played a significant role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender and sexuality. Many scriptures and religious teachings have been interpreted in ways that condemn or marginalize queer identities, leading to discrimination, persecution, and ostracization of LGBTQ+ individuals within religious communities. However, it is essential to recognize that not all religious traditions hold monolithic views on queerness, and there have been movements within various faiths advocating for inclusion and affirmation. Queer individuals often face significant challenges within religious contexts, including rejection from family and community, condemnation from religious leaders, and internalized shame and guilt. The conflict between one's sexual orientation or gender identity and the teachings of their faith can create profound psychological and emotional distress, leading to feelings of alienation and isolation. Moreover, institutional barriers, such as prohibitions on same-sex marriage or LGBTQ+ clergy, can further exacerbate the marginalization of queer individuals within religious institutions. Despite these challenges, there have been notable strides towards greater inclusion and acceptance of queer individuals within religious communities. Many progressive religious groups and denominations have embraced LGBTQ+-affirming theology, advocating for the full inclusion of queer individuals in all aspects of religious life. Additionally, grassroots movements and advocacy organizations have emerged to challenge discriminatory practices and promote dialogue and understanding between queerness and religion. However, resistance to LGBTQ+ inclusion persists within certain religious traditions, often rooted in conservative interpretations of scripture and moral beliefs. Debates over issues such as same-sex marriage, transgender rights, and LGBTQ+ representation in religious leadership continue to divide communities and fuel tensions between queerness and religion. Moreover, political agendas and legal battles over LGBTQ+ rights have further polarized the relationship between religion and queerness in some contexts. Despite these divisions, there are opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation between queerness and religion. Interfaith initiatives, LGBTQ+ religious organizations, and dialogue forums provide spaces for individuals to explore the intersection of their faith and sexual orientation or gender identity in a supportive and inclusive environment. Moreover, religious leaders and scholars have increasingly engaged in theological reflection and reinterpretation of scripture to affirm LGBTQ+ identities and experiences within their traditions.

o *Queerness and Disability:*

The intersection of queerness and disability presents a unique and often overlooked dimension of diversity within contemporary discourse. Both identities challenge normative conceptions of bodies, identities, and societal expectations, yet the experiences of individuals navigating the intersection of queerness and disability remain complex and multifaceted. Queerness and disability intersect to create unique experiences that cannot be fully understood by considering each identity in isolation. Individuals who identify as both queer and disabled navigate overlapping systems of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization, which shape their lived experiences in profound ways. Queer individuals with disabilities often face a multitude of challenges that stem from the intersection of these identities. Disability can intersect with queerness to exacerbate experiences of social exclusion, discrimination, and invisibility within both LGBTQ+ and disability communities. Traditional notions of beauty, desirability, and sexuality often marginalize queer individuals with disabilities, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and erasing their identities and experiences from mainstream narratives. Accessibility barriers also pose significant challenges for queer individuals with disabilities, limiting their access to LGBTQ+ spaces, healthcare services, and social support networks. Moreover, systemic ableism and heteronormativity intersect to create unique barriers to education, employment, and housing for individuals at the intersection of queerness and disability, further compounding their

marginalization and exclusion. Despite these challenges, queer individuals with disabilities have forged pathways to empowerment, visibility, and community solidarity. Disability justice movements, rooted in intersectional feminist and queer frameworks, advocate for the rights, dignity, and self-determination of disabled individuals across intersecting identities. These movements centre the voices and experiences of queer and disabled people, challenging ableism, heteronormativity, and other forms of oppression within society and institutional structures.

Class Disparity within the LGBTQ+ Community

The LGBT community in India, like many other marginalized groups, is not homogeneous. One of the most significant but often overlooked dimensions of diversity within this community is class disparity. While progress has been made in legal recognition and societal acceptance, class inequalities persist, posing unique challenges for individuals across different socioeconomic strata. The Class Disparity within the LGBT Community in India manifests in various aspects, including access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and representation in media and advocacy spaces. Economic factors intersect with other identities such as gender, caste, and religion, exacerbating the marginalization experienced by certain segments of the community. The Lower-Class LGBT Individuals face a separate set of challenges in India:

i)   *Limited Access to Education:* Lower-class LGBT individuals often face barriers in accessing quality education due to financial constraints. This lack of education limits their opportunities for socioeconomic advancement and perpetuates cycles of poverty.

ii) *Healthcare Disparities:* Healthcare services catering to the specific needs of LGBT individuals, such as gender-affirming care and mental health support, are often inaccessible or unaffordable for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

iii) *Employment Discrimination*: Discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity is compounded by socioeconomic factors, leading to higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, and precarious work among lower-class LGBT individuals.

iv) *Limited Representation*: Mainstream media and advocacy spaces often prioritize the experiences and voices of more privileged segments of the LGBT community, neglecting the concerns of those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

The Class Disparity also has impact on the Community as a whole –

i)   *Social Exclusion*: Lower-class LGBT individuals face intersecting forms of marginalization, resulting in social exclusion and alienation within both LGBT and mainstream society.

ii) *Health Disparities*: Limited access to healthcare exacerbates health disparities, leading to higher rates of mental health issues, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS among lower-class LGBT individuals.

iii) *Economic Vulnerability*: Economic marginalization leaves lower-class LGBT individuals vulnerable to poverty, homelessness, and exploitation, further perpetuating their disadvantaged status.

iv) *Limited Political Power*: Socioeconomic factors often restrict lower-class LGBT individuals' participation in advocacy and activism, limiting their ability to influence policy and effect systemic change.

Class disparity within the LGBT community in India represents a significant barrier to achieving true equality and inclusion. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that recognizes the intersecting nature of oppressions and prioritizes the voices and needs of marginalized individuals.

STUDY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF THE LGBTQIA+ IN MEDIA

Over the past decade, LGBTQ representation in Indian media has undergone significant evolution. Initially marked by stereotypes and tokenism, especially prior to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018, recent years have seen a shift towards more nuanced and authentic portrayals.

Films, TV shows, and web series have started to explore LGBTQ characters and their stories with greater sensitivity, reflecting changing societal attitudes and legal reforms. While challenges remain,

including the need for more diverse representation and addressing lingering stereotypes, the increased visibility of LGBTQ individuals in Indian media signifies a positive step towards greater acceptance and inclusion.

1. Pre-2014: Limited Representation and Stereotyping

Before 2014, LGBT characters in Indian media were often portrayed through stereotypes or as comic relief rather than nuanced individuals with complex identities.

Movies like "Dostana" (2008) featured gay characters in a humorous context, contributing to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

2. 2014-2018: Emergence of Progressive Narratives

The years following the Supreme Court's landmark decision to decriminalize homosexuality in 2018 (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India) saw a gradual shift in media representation.

Films like "Aligarh" (2016) and "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga" (2019) explored LGBT themes with more sensitivity and depth.

"Margarita with a Straw" (2014) highlighted the issue of discovering the sexuality while exploring the theme Disability and Queerness simultaneously.

3. 2018-2022: Increase in Visibility and Advocacy

TV shows like "Made in Heaven" (2019) portrayed queer characters and addressed issues like same-sex marriage and societal acceptance. The repeal of Section 377 in 2018 marked a significant milestone for LGBT rights in India, leading to increased visibility and advocacy in media.

Documentaries such as "Sisak" (2017) and "Breaking Free" (2015) shed light on the challenges faced by LGBT individuals in India.

Web series like "The Other Love Story" (2016) and "Sheer Qorma" (2020) depicted same-sex relationships and the struggles associated with them.

4. Mainstream Integration and Commercial Success

LGBT-themed content began to find acceptance in mainstream cinema, with films like "Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan" (2020) achieving commercial success.

Celebrities and influencers increasingly voiced their support for LGBT rights, contributing to a more inclusive media landscape.

5. Challenges and Criticisms

Despite progress, some critics argue that media representation still tends to tokenize LGBT characters or sensationalize their stories rather than portraying them authentically.

Limited representation of transgender individuals and other marginalized groups within the LGBT community remains a concern. The stigmatization faced by the transgender community is portrayed in the 2023 film "Haddi", as well as the 2023 web series named "Taali: Bajaungi Nahi, Bajwaungi," – the series is a biographical drama of the transgender rights activist Shreegauri Sawant. The series highlights and shows the life and journey not only of the protagonist but of the community as a whole and is a one of its kind shows in India.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the findings and result of a small questionnaire and survey conducted anonymously online among a limited group of individuals, who were allies, members of the community and even people who were only curious about the community, between the age group of 16 – 30 years of age, it was found out that majority of the survey participants had positive views on the community. The major aim of the survey was to find out what kind of experiences did the individuals have when growing up as queer individuals and/or growing up around them.

The survey revealed that out of the 50 participants between the age group of 16 to 30 years, 38% were queer, 40% were allies and the rest 22% simply just curious regarding the community. The survey also revealed that among the Queer individuals 92% of them were not comfortable with the environment that they were growing up in and among the non-queer individuals, 79% were quite comfortable growing up surrounded in the company of queer individuals. It could also be seen that only 18% of the people had positive experiences while growing up as a queer individual when it came to the people they were surrounded by while growing up.

The satisfaction of the people with the provisions of the Government for the LGBTQIA+ Community was also revealed through the survey, 79% voted that they were not satisfied while the rest were neutral regarding it. Majority of the participants agreed that the representation of the LGBTQ+ in the media in the contemporary scene is unsatisfactory and misleading as well.

Given below are the responses of some of participants, to the question on what could be done by individuals on personal levels to help the community move forward that also act as recommendations –

1. *"Teach people to behave normally around people from this community and not make it obvious that you are acting "normal" around them... Treat them like you would any human being."*

2. *"Small pockets of communities where people feel supported, safe and dignified are the most direct way of helping LGBTQIA+ people. It's so important to find people who accept you and who you can talk to about your problems without facing any prejudice. I think being a part of these communities is one small way to help. Other than this, there are some NGOs that support the non-privileged part of the community and help reduce stigmas. Volunteering at them and even being a part of such organisations is also helpful.*

3. *Talk to people and spread awareness amongst people about what exactly queer means, try to make them understand about how we should be inclusive of them and not look down on them.*

4. *"More active queer communities in schools and colleges to create a safer space for students"*

5. *"Ensure homophobia/micro-aggressions are always called out, expect accountability from professors to be inclusive towards all the students in their classroom; As a psychology student, I aim to push queer-affirmative, and class and caste-informed therapeutic practices as the standard for all therapists."*

6. *"What I personally do is ask "so?" , every time someone points out the community, generally it makes the people introspect that why would they point out or perceive them any differently. In my opinion, normalising the existence not only in the social platform but in our mind should be the foremost priority. To perceive all the genders as normally as they perceive orthodox genders. It is through the change in the outlook that any further changes would take place. If given opportunity and ideas on how I can contribute to the community's welfare, I would be happy to."*

7. *"If I get the chance, I would start by educating myself about the specific needs and challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community. Then, I would volunteer my time and skills to local organizations or initiatives that support LGBTQ+ rights and welfare. Additionally, I would strive to be an ally by advocating for inclusivity and acceptance in my personal and professional circles, and I would actively listen to the experiences and concerns of LGBTQ+ individuals to better understand how I can be of assistance."*

8. *"A single helping hand can mean a ton for some people who have not got anyone. Hit up that friend of yours who was feeling down. With time you build trust, and this trust contributes to the arising of positive social groups. Outside of those groups there will still be prejudice, that is for sure, but the point is to have a "safe zone". That is the best you can do in a personal level."*

9. *"Recently I asked some queer pages to create a reading group on goodreads. As a queer person, I feel that what we need the most is unity within our community, understanding of intersectionality. In the coming months, I hope to be an active member of the queer community. the best work is what is done within. we need queer spaces - where mostly queers live, queer dating apps which are checked and verified to avoid criminals, queer bars, clubs, cafes, reading spaces, library. we need enough safe spaces that those who are queer feel comfortable and welcome enough to be who they are - only if we can manage it, can we be a force that the govt could recognize and accept. it is pointless to try and appeal to the Indian mentality. queerdom is too foreign a concept for them however it HAS existed for centuries and was once accepted. one of the questions in this questionnaire asked whether queerdom is a western construct. i say, homophobia and queerphobia is a western construct. we managed to move pandit of olden times to the modern age, but we did not manage to move our transgender sisters, brothers, and non-binaries to the current age. regardless the community should be strengthened, united, have their spaces - if someone can then open a queer cafe. create a space to converse and talk. We are miles behind the rest of the world in queer acceptance."*

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research paper has shed light on the significant challenges faced by the LGBT community. Discrimination, violence, lack of legal protection, and societal stigma are pervasive issues that continue to hinder the full inclusion and equality of LGBT individuals. Despite progress in some areas, there remains much work to be done to ensure the rights and well-being of LGBT individuals are upheld and respected globally.

Efforts to combat discrimination and promote acceptance must be multifaceted, involving legal reforms, educational initiatives, and cultural shifts. Policy measures such as anti-discrimination laws, inclusive healthcare policies, and comprehensive sex education programs are crucial steps towards creating a more equitable society for LGBT individuals. Furthermore, fostering empathy, understanding, and allyship within communities is essential for creating safer and more supportive environments for LGBT individuals.

By challenging stereotypes, advocating for equality, and amplifying the voices of LGBT people, we can work towards building a world where everyone can live authentically and without fear of discrimination or violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Ultimately, the journey towards full equality for the LGBT community requires collective effort and ongoing commitment from individuals, communities, governments, and organizations worldwide. It is only through continued advocacy, education, and solidarity that we can create a more just and inclusive society for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

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