Let the RAINBOW SHINE

In a society obsessed with heterosexuality, here are love stories from the queer community that proves ‘love above all’

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“Love is love, gender has no role to play here,” says 28-year-old Nikki, a Visag-based research student.

When she logged on to an online dating app over six months ago, little did she know that swiping right would find her love. Today, she is happily committed to 22-year-old Cookie, for over five months.

After having been denied the right to love for decades, the Supreme Court’s verdict that decriminalised gay sex has brought in hope for homosexual people. The love stories that were shrouded in secrecy for years are now being told and heard.

Helping this are mainstream films that are using their massive reach and attempting to initiate a dialogue. The recently released Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga talks about Indian parents accepting the homosexuality of their daughter. The film was lauded for having a lesbian protagonist compared to Bollywood’s obsession for gay men while depicting the queer community.

We spoke to same-sex couples to understand the dynamics of living and loving in a society that is still coming to terms with it.

Nikki feels that the perception of people towards homosexuality is changing. “My girlfriend and I have walked down the Beach Road holding hands and we were not questioned. Of course, there were a few curious glances but it is much better than what it was over a year ago,” she says.

Nikki is no longer afraid of public display of affection (PDA) and thinks nothing of kissing her girlfriend in public. “You do not know how inclusive and accepted that feels after having been denied this right for almost all our lives,” says Cookie.

Need for support

Love awaited overseas in Canada for 24-year-old Martin who studied in Visakhapatnam for three years. He met his partner, Gary through a students group and there was an instant spark. Movie dates and pub hopping turned the crush into infatuation and deep conversations turned it into love.

“It seems like it happened yesterday, but this February 16 we will complete one year of our relationship,” says Martin. Recollecting his dating experience in India, Martin says it was traumatizing coming out here. “All my life I have kept my identity and relationships under wraps even from those you are close to me. It is an extremely suffocating experience.”

Martin has come out to his brother and a few friends. He says that the fear of losing people when they learn about his homosexuality has bothered him. However, it is a different life in Canada. “There, nobody cares; log kya kahenge (what will people say) is not an issue. That is why I am open about my sexuality here. But I haven’t even come out to my parents,” says Martin who moved to Canada in 2017. “The support groups that function in Canada makes life so much easier for the queer community. These help in dealing with the challenges associated with discrimination and stigma for the community,” he adds.

Group dynamics

Had this kind of support system been available to Srinath and his partner a few years ago they would have still been together. “It was like any other relationship We spent weekends together, cooking each other’s favourite dish. But all this came to an end when he had to marry a girl because he was pressurised to do so,” he says. “I could not come to terms with the break up and it took me five years to deal with it. During this time I could not share the incident with anyone either as I was unsure if anyone would accept it,” he says.

Trying to make change in this space are apps like Delta. Headquartered at New-Delhi, the app offers two services, dating and networking.

The dating section like any other dating app helps users to swipe and choose profiles. The networking space allows people to form or join groups of particular interest.

(Some names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals)