



A New, Positive Future For LGBT+ Inclusion in Asia and India – Reflections on the 6 September Ruling

• JIBY JOYCE:

Hello everyone, thank you for joining this session - A New, Positive Future For LGBT+ Inclusion in Asia and India – Reflections on the 6 September Ruling with our Guest Speakers, Amita, Deeptha and Ram.

• JIBY JOYCE:

My name is Jiby Joyce. I am the programme manager at Community Business, and I will be your moderator for this session.

- Thank you for joining us and being a part of this important session as we share perspectives on the future for LGBT+ inclusion in India.
- As many of you will be aware, yesterday, Thursday 6 September, was a great day for LGBT+ inclusion. The Indian Supreme Court made a landmark decision to abolish Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code - finally decriminalising gay sex in India.
- This decision has been the cause of much celebration for those of us, like Community Business, who have been championing and advocating for greater LGBT+ inclusion for here in India for so many years.
- Given this significant event we are delighted to include this additional session in our Virtual Conference Programme where we will reflect on and discuss the implications of this ruling.
- We are extremely grateful to our speakers, all of whom are experts, influencers and advocates in this field - who have made themselves available to participate in this session at such short notice.

JIBY JOYCE:

So let me introduce our panel:

- Firstly we have, **Deeptha Rao**. Deeptha is an advocate at the Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore. Deeptha's main areas of work include free speech and media law, gender and sexuality, and personal law.
- Next we have, **RamKrishna Sinha** whose accolades include: Out & Equal Champion of the Year 2017, Top 50 LGBT Future Leader OUTstanding & FT, Intel's D&I Hero of the Year, and a member of MINGLE.
- Finally we are also joined today by **Amita**, AVP - Project Delivery Manager at Barclays. Amita is a D&I Advocate and Counsellor and is passionate about Mentoring, Reverse mentoring.
- Welcome to you all and thank you for joining us for today's session.

JIBY JOYCE:

- So just yesterday, on 6 September, the Indian Supreme Court made a momentous decision to abolish Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.
- Deeptha, before we get into reactions and reflections, for the benefit of our audience, please tell us a little bit about the history and background to this. What are the events that



led up to this decision and what exactly did the verdict that was announced conclude? So, Deeptha, over to you.

DEEPTHA:

Just to give you a brief sense of how significant this moment was. Yesterday, at 10:30, the supreme court started off the hearing with the remembrance of two senior lawyers and their contribution. And, I would really like to point out that this judgement is the result of all the people who stood with us in this movement, all the way back from 1991- 1994- 2009- 2013 – 2016 – and finally yesterday, when the judgement came out. Legally speaking we have seen a long battle from the Delhi high court to the supreme court to the appeal, to the revision and finally the curative and the multiple petitions being filed. But the same time we also remember all the people we have lost along the way, who helped build and shape this movement. Significantly, there has been some other judgements which played a very important role in the ruling that came out yesterday. Most importantly, the Justice Puttaswamy's decision that recognized the right of privacy, looking at as the fundamental right in India. Also looking at the Hadiya Judgement which said that individual choice is extremely integral to a person's identity and their expression, to choose and be who they are. So, all of this has really shaped the judgement coming out yesterday and coming quickly to what the ruling actually says briefly. One, it reads down section 377 which very categorically the judgement says that the criminal law does not apply to the consenting adults in a relationship, which exactly is what the NALSA judgement said. They don't unfortunately remove section 377 from the standing books, they simply read it down and limit its core of application. Second, it significantly, the court has very beautifully spoken about the nature of constitution of India, which is not just going to benefit our communities but also benefit other marginalized communities in their struggles that continue today. And this is another thing that was very, very significant for us. The movement was not for only the members of the LGBT community, but solidarity across the board, across identities. Everybody who came together and supported this movement. Another significant observation that was made by the court was that we must have a very, very stringent and strong training for the police, as an institution to make sure that they do not continue to persecute community members under section 377. The importance of the judgment is that this judgement would apply to all pending litigations under section 377 today, which is a huge comfort. Additionally, the media has an extremely important role to play because it is said that the media's role is very crucial in breaking and combating stigma and prejudice against the community. So the judgement places a lot of owners on the state of Union of India and the state governments to state that this law does not remain only in black and white, but also pervades to society. Additionally the most beautiful part I think for me, was how Justice Indu Malhotra opened off her judgement by saying history owes an apology to all the communities and the families who had to wait so long for justice. And, that is extremely powerful coming from the supreme court particularly in the current political climate that India is in right now.

JIBY JOYCE: Right. That is amazing. In fact, I am very, very curious to know, Deeptha, at this point of time, we have been struggling to read down Sec 377 for quite some time, why do you think the courts ruled in this way? What influenced or persuaded them?

DEEPTHA:

Definitely the fact that this judgement was not the result of only legal arguments that a couple of petitioners took before the court. This judgement is the product of a movement, where after 2009, you saw the community coming out and being extremely proud and claiming the public



spaces that was originally denied to them, since 1861, when sec 377 came into the standing books, early where the criminal act was there. So, visibility has been an extremely important thing. Additionally, you have the NALSA judgement of 2014 which recognizes the gender identity as a fundamental right, has something the transgender community has fallen back on in the last 4 years. Additionally, what we have seen post the NALSA judgement is unfortunately a legislative rule that is slowly eroding the beneficial provisions which was given by NALSA. You have seen attempts at doing NALSA through the Transpersons Rights Bill of 2016, which completely erodes the beneficial provisions of NALSA. We have seen a lot of mobilization and opposition to that bill. So, the community is being very vocal right now. You also seen attempts at a model beggary bill, that has finally been junked due to the strong opposition by the community. Unfortunately, the trafficking of persons bill which was opposed, has been passed in the Lok Sabha. So, you have seen a lot of back and forth, a lot of conversations particularly with trans-rights, which is led to a lot of articulation of rights. Not just imagination of rights, but actualization. We have also seen communities and groups and other organisations slowly coming together and accepting and including communities that were traditionally marginalized. So, that is been a very significant one. The media also has had a very important role to play - however, the media has been particularly dicey if you keep in mind Operation Anandi in Bangalore in 2016-17, when sting operations were conducted on a group of transwomen. So, we are seeing visibly communities coming out and reclaiming spaces that were traditionally denied to them. But the same time, it has been the effort of thousands of people across the country working together as one.

JIBY JOYCE:

Right. Great. I am going to direct our discussion a little bit over the implications & responses. Amita to you. What was your personal reaction when you heard this news?

AMITA:

Yeah. Hi. First of all, congratulations on this monumental judgement to everybody who is involved in bringing this change. Well, of course when the judgement was out there was this army of messages and you know, it was really overwhelming, and there were also certain subtle jokes around it, cracked by maybe people who do not belong to the community. But then it happened at such a magnitude and had such courage surrounding this judgement, and the message was spread across to everybody. So, you know, for now if you look at India you have this urban versus rural divide. So, the urban, you know, the urban community is well connected with the internet. So, you get to read everything, we get to know everything, whatever is happening, but when it comes to the rural community they are not well connected to the internet so what they get to hear is from the main stream media or the regional media, so this particular judgement was aptly covered by the regional media also, which has reached the rural sector also. That is where, and that is how, it has in a way, I think, brought in the required change also, which is needed. Ofcourse the change, which is right now, is a fraction of it, the mind set shift, which is a major hurdle, which needs to be brought in. But, then this particular change will definitely set the tone for the bigger one, which is what will happen, definitely.

JIBY JOYCE:

Ram, to you, why is this decision so significant? What do you think, will it bring a difference to the LGBT+ community in India?

**RAM:**

Yeah. First of all, a big congratulations on the judgement because I think it is historic, it is monumental. Not just for the LGBT community, but to everyone collectively. I think as a nation, I think we progress collectively, and we also regress collectively. And, another thing is, in this judgement, there was reference to the other judgements, you know, I guess, you can choose your partner. It is a fundamental right. And it applies to everyone. Not just the LGBT community, so it is a very good decision and we are going in the right direction and everything. So, it's a collective win for everyone. First thing first. Second thing is that, in India, people have been growing up with this stick. Sec 377 was this stick that people were beaten and pushed around into the closet. Social acceptance was one part of it, as even legally it was a crime. So, people who oppose have so much might that even legally you are a criminal right, so you have nothing to stand on, and that itself affects self-esteem. People learn to take lesser space, people learn to put their head down and try not to get attention, because people think that they deserve that. That they are lesser than their peers. I think that creates damage to everyone and it was very beautifully said that the country owes an apology, history owes an apology to the LGBT community, right. For the ostracisation and discrimination against them by Justice Indu. It very beautifully captures what was our history, where people were pushed committed suicide, people were bullied, fired from the jobs - that has happened in this country, because there was a law that criminalised it. There are many companies that want to do stuff, but they might be committing a crime. It's like creating an unequal standing point for everyone. Right? And the other thing is that the decriminalisation is just the first step, which was said by Justice Chandrachud. So, I think it was a very monumental judgement that can enlighten the lives of everyone from the LGBT community and their families.

JIBY JOYCE:

Right. Thank you so much Ram. Deeptha, to you. What has been the response and reaction from other groups? Has there been any, or do you anticipate any backlash from particular groups.

DEEPTHA:

At the moment we have been seeing instances current dispensation trying to take claim for the fact that this judgement has been passed for the political juncture we see right now. And that is a very huge problem, because this judgement isn't something that has been given to the community from up on high. This isn't something that the judges have granted to the community. It has been a very long fought, hard fought battle. On the streets, homes and the court unfortunately. So, that is I feel the major problem, we are waiting to see where the credit for this judgement is going to be very conveniently misappropriated, which is a huge, huge danger at this point of time. Secondly, this judgement we must understand comes at a very crucial and critical juncture. Immediately after the judgement was announced, the same court heard the case of the 5 lawyers and activists who were picked up and arrested last week, in connection to the Bhima Goregaon incident. So, this judgement cannot be used as a deflection issues from cracked down and debate on defense and democracy in this country. At the same time, we must also understand it is important to learn from our experiences post the NALSA judgement, like I said, once you have decriminalized same sex love in India, they will immediately follow other entitlements which the community very rightfully claim and should



rightfully claim. We are looking at a huge gray area in the law on marriage, adoption, domestic violence, property, civil partnership even. So, it will be very, very important for us to maintain this momentum and liaise with the government, lobby with the government in ensuring that these entitlements are definitely egalitarian and fair, and not eroded in the manner, that NALSA has slowly been eroded through the legislative law.

JIBY JOYCE:

- Those were some very valid and wonderful points, Deeptha. Thank you for throwing light on those points. I just want to quickly reflect a little bit on the past. You know, now, it's worth remembering back in 2009, when the Delhi High Court ruled that Sec377 was unconstitutional, the future looked bright for the LGBT+ community in India. You know, there was a new spirit of openness and many Indians "came out".
- In fact that time coincided with the time that Community Business first started working with companies on this topic, you know first in Hong Kong and then here in India.
- We launched our *Creating Inclusive Workplaces for LGBT Employees Campaign* and launched our Resource Guide for Employers in India to help companies understand the business case for LGBT+ workplace inclusion and provide recommendations on what actions they could take. Mingle, you may remember this, as we worked very closely together at this time.
- Then of course there was the reversal of the decision in 2013. The response was that many became fearful of addressing this topic at all.
- So, Ram, do you think there is any risk of this happening again? Do you think LGBT+ individuals will be nervous about coming out as this point in time?

RAM:

So, like she said, it was a long time back. It's not something, they woke up and said, let's do this. Right? So, this particular judgement, which was also the Supreme Court judgement, right? The 2103 judgement. The first judgement. So, it's a well thought out, even if you read about it, it was a very well put together, the judgement has been like very well thought out. And, it's a 5-judge bench, and it is as strong as it can get. People can go for a 7-judge bench, but I don't think it is going to go there. That is for sure. And talking about coming out, actually I have two incidences. Very quickly, like how people are coming out. There was this friend of mine, from college, he came out to his parents like a week back. Yesterday he posted a picture with his parents, both the parents, which said, our son is not a criminal anymore. Right?

JIBY JOYCE:

Wow!

RAM:

Yesterday, I was at this party, and one person I met was like, Dude, I have been trying to come to this place, but today, I said, today I must go. So, obviously, people are coming out. People are realizing that they deserve the right to live like anyone else in the country. So, that definitely is happening, and the community is getting together, celebrating it, and as she said, we are trying to reclaim the spaces which belong to us, not like someone is doing charity for us. So we are trying to make these places more safe, more accessible, and more available to the community. So, this is not going to change. It is not. It is only going to progress, we are talking about marriage rights, we are talking about civil rights, we are talking about adoption, we are going to talk about everything until it becomes legit. This is just the stepping stone.

**JIBY JOYCE:**

- Right. Right. So, as he rightly said, this is just the beginning. And I think we should not forget that the Supreme Court's decision is of course a huge cause for celebration, but we need to be mindful that there is much to be done in India, isn't it? to solidify true inclusion and equality for LGBT+ people.
- So, Deeptha, What are your thoughts on this – what still needs to happen, and how tough do you think the road ahead is going to be?

DEEPTHA:

So, somethings that are a definitely encouraging especially through this judgement would be the fact that you have an extremely lucid piece of legal text here for you. The court has not just thrown out certain misconceptions that were there in Suresh Kumar Kaushal judgement, like miniscule minority as an argument is no longer a valid defense. They very categorically said that every single individual that was prosecuted by the law, will definitely have to get the full protection by the constitution. They also describe and define the constitution very beautifully by saying it is a transformative constitution, it will always change to include, marginalized communities or society, based on the prevailing needs of that society at that point of time. Also, tells us that social morality has nothing to do with how the law is going to be interpreted or applied. It will always be tested on the angle of constitutional morality. So, these principles that we have, these, these basic body of juristic that this judgement gives us is going to offer us a lot. Especially in the pricing of the interventions in the police stations, where we no longer have to hide and tip toe when community members are trying to access justice. That is an important step forward. Secondly it is something that helps us negotiate with our own families, with our own immediate peers and social groups that we are a part of. At the same time, it is also important to say that, now I will personally be very interested to see how companies and organisations take forward their inclusivity programs. Because over the past year or two, one of the biggest questions that we have been asked is whether it is going to be a problem for a company to start off an ally group or a support group for their queer employees, if they are deemed to be criminal. Now this is extremely disheartening especially when you have a community that is struggling so hard articulating an imagination right. So, I will be very, very interested to see what kind of inclusivity policies comes in, whether it is going to be tokenistic measure or actually going to be talking about anti-discrimination and inclusivity. I think at the same time, it is exactly like Ram said, this is just a beginning and we have an awfully long journey ahead of us, it is really important for us to keep in mind, that we are here today because of a movement where everybody came together and fought for your rights together. And it is equally important going forward, this does not get fractured.

JIBY JOYCE:

Thank you so much Deeptha. You basically helped me get to the next question. Amita to you, what do you think are the implications for companies in India? I mean you have been in the corporate sector for quite some time. How would you like to see them respond? What advice do you have?

AMITA:



Yeah, you know Deeptha mentioned a very valid point, when came to any initiative which is around LGBTI community earlier, and especially when it come to the Indian organisations, there are a lot of hang ups when it comes to Sec 377. Even though in the back of their mind, they knew that Sec 377 does not criminalise the individual or the identity, it criminalises the act, still because the act was there, there is a hesitation. This hesitation block will now go away. So, now the organisations would definitely, proudly showcase their inclusivity to the LGBTI community on all platforms. They need to run all the initiatives, all the policies which they have, they need to expand those, and they need to make them more considerate towards the LGBTI community. So, the major block which was there, that will be taken off because of this judgement. And, of course, when it comes to the HR, now they need to proactive, they need to understand what the judgement is, they need to proactively participate in all the discussions that are taking place around sec 377. Because they are the ones who are closely associated with the policies, initiatives which are run when it comes to diversity and inclusion. And then the next point is, they need to reach out to the actual beneficiaries. Otherwise what will happen is, the D&I initiatives, they just lie on the fences of the HR, they don't reach the actual employees, they only become a tick mark for you know the annual BD process. So, the HR needs to break this and make sure it reaches the actual beneficiaries and truly run the D&I initiatives in their own sense.

JIBY JOYCE:

- Great. Thank you so much for that Amita. I would also like to mention that from our side at Community Business, we've observed that 2012, many companies have been nervous to progress their LGBT+ inclusion strategies. In fact, given the change in the legal context, this is not surprising. But interestingly, a number of leading companies, have continued to drive things forward.
- In fact we are just in the process of assessing the submission for our D&I in India Best Practice Benchmark – which includes a section on LGBT+ inclusion. So, we are also shortlisting the various nominations for our LGBT+ inclusion award. We have been hugely encouraged to see many examples of great initiatives by companies with regards to the LGBT+ inclusion.
- As an FYI, we will be announcing the results of the Benchmark and the winners of our various awards at our Awards Ceremony on 26 November. So, kindly it is hosted by the Lalit Hotel and sponsored by Northern Trust. So, we hope many of you who are tuning into this Conference will be attending.
- So, now I am going to open up to more questions from the audience, so I would request the audience to pose your questions using the chat box functionality right now.
- We have one question, and I am going to quickly read that.

RAM:

I will add to that. The question is on corporate workplaces, implications and what we can do with this judgement. So, what is, when we did the MINGLE survey, climate survey in 2016, we found that 40% of the LGBT people faced discrimination at the workplace, 2/3 have heard homophobic comments and jokes, and 1/5th of them have faced harassment from their own managers or HR. And, this number is shit. This is pathetic right, and like these are the kind of numbers we have today. What is the culture we have today, and we need those numbers to



change. So, companies who have taken affirmative actions have said in a sense, now that is changed now. Because of sec 377 is gone, it may look like a betterment of time, to do something in terms of inclusion. But with that and the verdict from yesterday, that changes now. So, now they are more than welcome to take affirmative actions. And it is one of good things to do now, it is all over social media. I think we a lot of companies celebrating the verdict, right, we see Flipkart celebrating it, the Infosys logo is in rainbow, we see Uber marking the paths in rainbow. So, there are many companies who realise that we must stand with this community, realise that there is a market to attend to, so it is not just a charity thing. It is a real business case by the LGBT community inclusion. Right? And how they can do it. There are so many ways, they can by referencing the MINGLE research, Community Business research etc. So, I would request everyone on the call, if your company is just thinking of how to get started, reach out to avenues and do something about it. Because it's high time now, because you are an LGBT inclusion company, people are watching, what you and what you don't do. So, it is important that you take affirmative action, to create that space to learn more about the community and engage with the community and figure out which are the ways to, in a certain sense create a more inclusive workplace for everyone.

JIBY JOYCE:

Yes. Go ahead Amita. Yes.

AMITA:

I just want to add another point. Of course, now companies will come out with policies, they will start creating role models. But then, there is one major, crucial precaution which must be taken by the organisations, which is the us versus Them syndrome. What happens is when the role models of the LGBTI community are celebrated, then there is also in a percolate the us versus them syndrome. So, the HR especially, needs to drive certain awareness sessions to break that us versus them syndrome and the rather than compartmentalizing the identities and restricting to those compartments, they need to in a way try to bend everyone into in a sort of main stream of one unit. That I think is very important.

JIBY JOYCE:

Right. We have another quick question here in the chat box, and this is open to the entire panel. Have companies been making big statements since the announcement yesterday? And which company has been more vocal about this topic?

RAM:

I have some on the top on my mind. So, well, IBM did a tweet about it, Intel did a tweet about it. Infosys changed their logo to rainbow, we said Uber, Ola cabs, Flipkart, there was this Zomato, Swiggy. So, there have been a lot of companies who have taken a public stand and changed their twitter handles to communicate that they are supportive the verdict. Yeah. Do you have any more Deeptha?

DEEPTHA:

I think the question is relevant right now, but I also like to point out that several companies



have been in this country ever since 2001- 2004 – 2009. And, I would like to point out that my sexuality, my identity and my orientation are all extremely political. Right? And it is also very important for us to know that this judgement is a result of a movement and I do not, correct me if I am wrong, I do not remember most of these companies being vocal before yesterday's judgement. I would like to see where those rainbow flags were before yesterday. When we were fighting over Kaushal and we were crying over Kaushal. Where were these companies then? And I think we will take off from the sudden outpouring of support and really hold you to task, because this again I repeat, is not a fight of one or two people. It is everybody as in everybody of these companies. And I don't think, any sort of policy slowdown of policy, inclusivity and entitlements is going to be left unchallenged.

RAM:

To be fair to the companies, there has been companies, not so many, but they have been companies who have been supportive like they have been walking the pride marches, like Intel, the interning with Pride, which is before the judgement right, RBS has same sex insurance benefit policy very publicly, before the supreme court judgement. So it is not like nobody has been there, but there have been people in the journey. But more are coming, now the flood gates are open now.

JIBY JOYCE:

But then Deeptha, I have a very crucial question, you know before the reading down of sec 377, obviously the companies were skeptical to start on anything new on LGBT, because the internal legal teams were not very about the entire law. Right? What do you think, now, now that it is been read down, the internal legal team of every corporate organization, what do you think their role is going to be in this new journey?

DEEPTHA:

So one of the things that the internal legal teams have always struggled with was a bit of false legal myth that if certain acts are criminal, therefore the person or body is automatically criminal. So therefore, if we support the community members have been deemed criminals by the reduced facts, the companies are going to be complacent and implicant in the commission of crime. And that was the logical legal false that has been a major deterrent for most companies to engage with communities. Now that we have seen the same sex love between consenting adults is no longer a crime, the most important thing for us to do is to build on this and say that we are not reducing people to acts. We are not going to be looking into your bedrooms to see if it is consenting act or not. It is just the fact that because of my identity, because of my orientation, I should not be denied full access to the job. That is the point, plain and simple. And this judgement makes this categorically clear.

JIBY JOYCE:

Great. That is a great point. Thank you. So, Amita, the net question to you now, what do you think, I am sure a lot of organisations will want to start their journey in the LGBT space. You know they were waiting for Sec 377 to be read down or to get more clarity about the rule. What do you think or how these organisations can go ahead and start their journey in the space of LGBT Inclusion.

**AMITA:**

Yeah, first thing is, you know, educating themselves, and connecting with various organisations or various groups, which are already working in this space would be I think the starting point to understand what is happening in this space. Ofcourse, there is this term called sharing wellness value and wellness norm, so that can definitely get in touch with the organisations which are proclaiming to be LGBT friendly or LGBT inclusive. they can understand the best practices which are being run, they can adopt those best practices into their own spaces, they can start updating their policies to be more inclusive to the LGBTI community. So I think this is how they can drive this inclusivity further, based on this judgement and for the LGBTI community.

JIBY JOYCE:

And Ram, do you have something to add on there?

RAM:

Sure. So there are some basics which you need to get right, so get yourselves educated, so like get your HR team, D&I team legal team, educated about what it is. What the community is like, right? Then start with the sensitization processes, because the fact is that so many people don't know stuff. The fact is that a lot of people are unaware, what is the right thing to do, what is the right question to ask to a trans person, how many people really understand transgenders today, it is all gender binary. It is difficult, we understand that. But the solution is not to start away but engage and in the process you will learn. It is not to accept that you will get everything right. Some people assume that we get everything right, then you are from the community, not realizing that we already have LGBT employees, who are in the organisation, who are in the closet, right? How are you making the workplace more inclusive. The idea is simple, make your inclusive workplace, have an LGBT ERG, access to gender neutral washrooms, policies which are gender neutral. Same sex partner benefits, like equal benefits to same sex partners as you give to the opposite sex partners and stuff like that. So there are various best practices which are good. And another thing is that connect to organizations which have been inclusive for a while. So, what you have to do is giving back to the community, connect to people who work in the LGBT ERG, D&I, come together, share, build the community, learn from each other. So join us for that. Connect to community to get more information, reach to MINGLE for that, we have various researches on that. So, there are tons of resources available, just go and find what works for you.

JIBY JOYCE:

Exactly. So I think that it is a very valid point and so now that there are opportunities for organisations to explore more in the LGBT inclusion, I think in fact there are these guys who can always be invited to talk about the legal points of, you know, this entire situation. Amita and Ram is always available, Community Business is very much committed in training and spreading awareness in this space of LGBT as well. So, we are just a call away and you can just call us and we would be happy to come to your organisations and help you people to get educated about how to start your journey in the space of diversity and Inclusion.

My one last question to all the panelists would be that, what would be your one strong



message to everybody who is there in the session seeing all of us. What would be your one strong message that they may want to take back home?

RAM:

If I go, the answer is engage, right? For way too long we have been side doored, we have identified ourselves to a certain circles, whatever the identity is, we have a certain identity which a mix of various wonders. We have built barriers around our identities, we are the Us-Us. Like whatever the identity difference is. I think it's time to start engaging with the differences, it's important to have a conversation which is very difficult, where we don't necessarily agree to everything a person has to say, but we can still have a conversation. I can definitely engage, and once we engage, the next part will be certainly simple. So that's why I said engage.

JIBY JOYCE:

Right.

AMITA:

Now, I would say, fine, now a beginning has been made, but then there is so much which needs to be done, especially when it comes to workplace equality front. And I think all of the participants on this particular discussion belong to a certain organization, so there is a lot on workplace equality which needs to be done. So, I think all of us must come together, understand where the gaps are, and start working towards making our workplaces truly more and more inclusive.

JIBY JOYCE:

Right. Before we get on to Deeptha, there is one more question, I'd like to take that we have got from the chat room. Again it is open to any of the panelists, is there a way of a forum where the new entrants and existing organisations can come together and collectively work towards building an inclusive work space. You think there is a forum like that as of now?

RAM:

I can just pitch for Pride Circles here. Because the idea, why, I will just give you the idea of Pride Circles, because it is just that, when I was starting my journey in the organization, I was strongly involved, programs to do and even how to talk to head of HR, right?

And this is a struggle for everyone, but when people come to together and share with each other, because this is not about IT, this is about getting better at including people. So, if we could get people together and build that community, because sometimes HR wants to do the right thing but they do not have access to LGBT people, right? In most companies the number of out LGBT people is zero today, or 1 or 2 of them. Right? So the idea of Pride Circles is to do monthly meet ups, come together in a room, talk to D&I people, learn from one another, a person's coming out story, the journey of a trans person, how they transitioned, what it means to be inclusive. If I have done it right, then how did I get it right, and learn from each other, right? So that is one avenue.

JIBY JOYCE:

Great. So, I am so very happy to announce that Pride Circles, which is managed by Ram and his colleague, Sriniwas, they are also our supporting organization for this particular conference. Thank you so much for supporting us in this effort. And, Deeptha, back to you. I



am so sorry, I had to cut you short. But, do you have one strong message for people to take back home?

DEEPTHA:

I think that would just be, the law has changed, yes. But that doesn't mean that the societal stigma will vanish overnight. It still requires an awful lot of courage for someone to come out to express their own identity or their orientation. But the most encouraging thing that I would probably say to you is that today, we have a judgement that backs you up. So, we, as your lawyers, we will do our best to make sure that we take that argument to every legal avenue that we possibly can. But, always, always remember that the strength of any litigation comes from you. So, thank you very much for giving us this judgement.

JIBY JOYCE:

And thank you so much for, you know, being such a supporting, you know, source of strength for the entire LGBT community, Deeptha. I think that is amazing.

DEEPTHA:

It is actually the other way around, you know, because we are inspired by the communities we work with, we are just agents, nothing more. So, thank you to all the thousands of people who have struggled for so long to give us this judgement.

RAM:

Just one acknowledgement. I would really like to thank all the allies of the community as well, who have worked tirelessly and been such a huge part of this community and the movement since forever. Right? So, I would like to thank all the allies for being with us.

JIBY JOYCE:

Thank you so much.

- So, unfortunately, that is all we have right now.
- On behalf of Community Business, I would like to thank our guest speakers – Deeptha, Ram and Amita for joining us today, being a part of this discussion and sharing their perspectives.
- I think we would also like to acknowledge all those who have played their part – however big or small it has been, in bringing about this positive change. That is really what the theme of this Conference programme is all about.
- This decision brings with it the possibility of real change and acceptance. But we must all continue to ensure that our call for equality, regardless of any diversity marker, remains loud, proud and heard by our governments and our companies.
- So it just remains for me to thank you for attending this session and highlight that the recorded session will be available for download for 30 days – so if you found it useful, we encourage you to share with your network and spread the learning.
- Thank you and goodbye!



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