






# FOREWORD

I am overwhelmed to write the foreword of this book which includes the stories of people who identify themselves as LGBTI. The narratives in this book are the real exemplary instances that reflects the changing perception of people towards the sexual and gender minorities community. This book is also the source of encouragement that widely encompasses the challenges that the community is still confronting and how together we can resist against the stereotyped beliefs in order to support and heal the community. May 17 became the designated day due to the 1990 World Health Organization's decision to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder.

Shouting out to 2021 theme of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia this year theme of the day is "Together: Resisting, Supporting, Healing!" The powerful theme has been chosen due to the recent challenges and struggles that the world has faced this past year. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact which has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide resulted into economic and social disruption. It is very clear that the outbreak hits marginalized communities in our societies disproportionately hard. LGBTI people have significantly lower health outcomes due to stigma and discrimination held by healthcare providers. A greater than average rate of them are unemployed and live on very limited and unstable financial resources. However, in the midst of the chaos,



disorder and constant challenges, there is hope among the people that simultaneously we combat the pandemic by supporting each other to heal the pain.

We felt the necessity to publish the book which further shares the stories of hope, inspiration, commitment, dedications and experiences that provide support to others to come out of the closet disclosing their identity and embrace the real them. Mitini Nepal is pleased to the LGBTIQ community members, executive board members, staff, volunteers and network partners for their immense support and contribution in the production of this book. Thank You!



**Laxmi Ghalan**  
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## STORY-1

NEHA LAMA

# A story of a bisexual woman: struggle that finally over

She is known to people by Neha Lama. But she has owned different name in her educational certificate and other formal documents. She does not want to share her formal name among people. She is the resident of Jhapa, Laxmipur.

She was completely unknown about her identity when she was a school student and even when she reached her 12 standards. She has just entered to her puberty period. During that time, she has had an affair with a boy of her own class. Both of them loved each other very much. But their caste did not match and there were questions raised by their family and society. So, their love relation did not stay long.

Neha started to pursue her study in Bachelor level after passing her 12 standards. She came to Sunsari for her bachelors. She was only in her 19/20's at that time. During her study at college, she fell in love with one of her female friends. She just wanted to spend all the single moment with her. Gradually, she became more closer with the girl's squad. She was amazed that why this has happened to her. She was completely unknown about all these incidents. Till that time, she did not know about homosexual and bisexual. But when she came to

know that she is attracted to girls only, then she begins to know more about it. Mery, the girl whom she likes was already known about it. Neha's that friend had so far involved to work for the community. Neha got all information from her. Then, slowly Neha fell in love with her. They begin to love each other desperately. In this way, they became intimate to each other. But, how to tell such to others? How to tell at home? This has become really a major challenge. Neha's family and society were very patriarchal. Their relationship was considered as unnatural, unusual and unacceptable in such society. How to convince their parents? Serious dilemma appeared in front of them. But for the sake of their desire, happiness and choice they did not stop them doing nothing.

Neha's partner also belongs to the same village. All the villagers are known to both of them. Initially, people did not notice them whenever they walk together but as time passes villagers started to talk about them observing their behavior, gesture and posture with hesitation. They started to closely monitor them. It is said that small things often have big beginnings. Their relation also became the topic of conversation for people in the village. Both of them have never shared anything about their relation but the rumour reportedly reached to Neha's home.

"Do not get connected to that girl". Said Neha's father.

"Will anyone love and marry girls?" This is not acceptable as no-one in our family have done such. We have desire to be called as grandparents. What you have done? Leave her... Neha's mother tried to assure her. Neha did not say anything. There was nothing to say. She was doing something that others have not done before. It was normal for her parents to take the matter differently.

Her family was supposed to say, "You have damaged our prestige. How to face the villagers? They were much worried about the issue.

Neha without responding anything to her family started to look for such news in newspaper. She also tried to search in the Internet and You-tube. "See... I am not alone, but there are other people as well." The relation is natural- shared Neha.

She has no contact with Mitini Nepal, an organization that works for such community at that time. Though she dared to convince her family putting a single effort.





“Whatever is happening outside, but this will not take place in our home.”. Her mother again tried to persuade Neha. “But this is happening everywhere as it is the 21st century and we are living in advanced year.” Neha tried to convince her mother.

However, Neha continued to be in relation with her partner. She just became restless remembering her partner when they could not able to visit each other. She really could not pay attention to any of her works. Neha missed her partner then and now also.

Neha’s maternal uncle home is in Kathmandu. One day, Neha’s mother with tears on her eyes talked to her uncle. Neha’s brother is also living in Kathmandu with whom Neha’s mother has shared everything about Neha. Then, Neha’s brother also made call on her trying to convince Neha saying “Whoever you will choose, we will marry you with him but leave that girl. Do not waste your life.”

Neha’s uncle too made call on Neha scolding her using unacceptable words. Our society always have disgraceful and discriminatory behavior towards this community. Her uncle badly scolded Neha using terrible words whereas Neha’s mother too becoming very annoyed made curse on her.

Neha cried. She came into depression as many days have become sleepless for her. She begun to lose her appetite for long. Sometimes, she thought to leave her partner, but she could not. Finally, she feels that she will remain happy only to be with her partner.

Neha did not lose her hope. Losing the hope was like to destroy her aspirations and to be in profound pain forever. Neha believed that she could not survive this way and thus tried to convince her parents once. Sometimes, she was completely devastated but she never loses her ambition.

Neha completed her bachelor’s level. Then, she begun to live in Sunsari. She had rent home in Itahari and lived there. She has no wish to return to her home Jhapa. She just used to believe that there is no-one who could understand her at home. However, we human are very elegant and so Neha. Sometimes, she wanted to go back to Jhapa where she had spent and collected her childhood and youth memories. She genuinely sometimes wished to return to home recalling all those beautiful memories. But her partner did not allow Neha to leave. Neha to leave. They used to live together in a rent house as a partner. May be her partner was afraid of that her parents will not send Neha back. Neha’s partner also related to the same village and both of them were familiar to the villagers. In this way, Neha did not visit her home for a long time though she was in contact with her mother. Neha’s mother sometimes tried to convince her, scold her and sometimes she herself used to cry. Neha also attempted to explain her mother and she also cried too.

Many factors are responsible to make the situation worse which is even applicable to home. Villagers too did not directly talk about Neha’s relation, but they tried to ask her mother in another way hurting her emotions.

Neha’s mother was struggling through all these matters but again time to time she was destroyed. Again, she became tensed with worst expectation in her mind. Finally, because of Neha’s constant effort, now her mother is positive towards her. A mother’s love for her children can never be changed and same thing happened with Neha’s mother. Due to her mother’s support, now Neha’s father too is trying to understand her. Neha and her partner are more familiar to the villagers since their childhood. They have used to call them with different other names. They did not dare to ask face to face with Neha and her partner after the couple obtained support from their families. Neha believes that society is secondary and if family support is there, anything is possible. Now it has become more easier than before.

They both have many friends during college life. All have friends. They gradually came to know about their relation. All have not taken the issue in the same way. College itself is formed by society of different culture, tradition, consciousness and consideration. That society is the exact copy or replica of our society. One of the friends of Neha in her group took their relation emphatically. But other friends responded her as she is suffering from mental complications. They just used to react over their relation saying the relation is not natural, they will not become parents and thus one should not get into it. Neha was also known to the fact that many of her friends in their squad have taken it as a matter of fun. But, how to stop them? She just used to ignore them. She used to have only few friends. What to talk about the then condition of Neha! She just had contrary way of behaving comparing to her gender. It was beyond the acknowledgement of common people. She was exceedingly condemned by other people for making such as unusual and tremendously rigid choice. She was really in a complex state. The situation was very stressful. She could not demonstrate the situation of that time accurately. She has only the tenderness but no words to express.

Neha and her partner's relation were getting more better where Neha witnessed with an organization called 'Mitini'. Neha started to work as a part time employee in Mitini and being paid for her work. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation became more deteriorating generating many problems.

Neha who has involved in a part time work to make counselling and meeting with people like her also stopped. There was no way to make money. Then, she faced difficulty to pay for the rent home that she has hired in Itahari. Almost there was slim chance to go back home. But she could not make more days to live in a rent home. Neha and her partner finally obliged to return home respectively.

Neha went home but could not feel calm. She gained support from her mother only but not from other family members nor they behaved her appropriately. The COVID-19 outbreak has created problems instantly. But staying at home also became hard. She did not have money to recharge mobile so that she could spent time talking with friends.

Though Neha was going with shortage of money, her partner was employed. Then, her partner helped to recharge her mobile. Now, Neha could experience more peaceful. Her partner is exceptionally supportive, kind and caring.

As the lockdown period was extended and when Neha was asked by Mitini Nepal to call and understand other friends, she started to communicate with them. She also started to make a call to her partner secretly. Most of the people she used to communicate were from their own community. She has experienced more pain while getting to know them. Many of them were thrown away from their home. They used to work hard as laborer but due to corona, that also halted. They have faced considerably major problem. Neha though she also has encountered such but was at home. On that note, if Neha was thrown away from her home, she

**These discriminatory legal and policy provisions should be repealed and laws and policies should be formulated for them.**

had thought to go to the rent home in Itahari. She had also belief that she will go to her partner's home. She was much assured by that reasoning.

The house owner of Itahari was also very reliable and well behaved. He tried to call on them time and again but never asked for the house rent. He has also no other way of income generation but has to run home with that money. Thus, there was not any condition that Neha could tell their house owner not to take the rent. Later on, they paid the house rent. The house owner waited, asked for no rent which is also a sort of kindness.

Neha has noticed regarding the relief package while she was living in Itahari. The ward office has distributed the relief to different places in Sunsari where there was good lobbying, but Neha did not receive any. Neha has now again returned to Itahari. Her partner is also with her. Neha is feeling more relaxed now. They have associated to 'Mitini Neoal' again. From last December 2020, a project was initiated where Neha has started to work. She also earns with her partner. Now, they are rather more than free and happy together.

Corona taught Neha to a great extent. During corona period, she used to talk with other friends who were involved in entertainment field. That field was also entirely terminated due to the lockdown. All became jobless and came into depression. On the other hand, many belongs to their community have no habit to be more economical. Whatever earned was expended straight away as they have mentality to earn and expenditure. However, corona taught to Neha and her friends that such thinking is wrong, and everyone need to be more economical. Even relief should be distributed by the government properly. There is no

guarantee of such relief packages as government also cannot support all for many days. Thus, saving is as much important as earning to remain alive. She came to know all these during the prolonged lockdown. Next is this is applicable to all but the most significant for this community is how to be survived creating capacity and skill development trainings as weaving and cutting. Neha also understood that such programs will further help the community to generate income on regular basis and can be self-dependent. When people are self-dependent, they can feel more liberty and can fight with the so-called rigid system of the society and its confined thinking. For this, government should do the utmost planning designing different projects for skill development of the community. At the same time, they should be prioritized being provided with different opportunities for investment. Neha believes that such programs will be really supportive to be sustained by running small businesses and pay for the credit. On this note, Neha requests to her community members to be more self-reliant learning various life skills. And, may be Neha and her partner has an additional portion of their struggle which is concealed to others. The laws relating to the citizenship and particularly the prevailing laws have failed to address the issue of marriage equality which are discriminatory indeed. It has creating problems at all. Thus, those prejudiced laws system should be dismissed while inclusive laws should be entertained.

We all are equivalent in the eyes of the constitution. So, there is no meaning if the existing constitutional provisions are not executed meaningfully. Neha assumes that state cannot be succeeded to move on if it fails to address and protect the rights of its citizen. It has to solemnly ponder on this matter”.

# Being a Lesbian, I am okay with that ...

Now she is 21 years old. She has already attempted final year exam of her Bachelor level. She lives in Nepalgunj. She is Sarita Sunuwar.

Sarita was 15 years old. It was the age full of dreams, hopes and imagination. There is always one good thing about the world and that is spring. Spring adds new life and new beauty to everyone. Sarita has also experienced the same since that age. She considerably came into true friendship with one of her friends. Sarita found her more comfortable to share anything and everything. Many of Sarita's friends used to come closer, have talk, make fun of, graze and even were in relationship with other male friends. But, Sarita has no attraction to get closer and have chatter with other boys with excitement.

She was amazed thinking about herself. She just used to think why she is experiencing such. Why she thinks in different way than her other friends? Why she likes to stick around her female friends instead of males? Why she has such crave to go close to girls only? Sarita had no answer to all those questions rather she was wondering here and there.





She was 17 years old. After completing school's education, she started her college and coming to this time gradually her other friends became contactless. But she made new friends which welcomed her with new considerable experience and ambience. But again, as before, she desired to make female friends in college and wanted to get closer to them only. She wished not to be away from them during their meeting. Thus, Sarita's friends used to make her a fun. But she was undisclosed about her identity. She was unaware of the existence of the LGBTI and now she has learnt about her condition.

At first, she was puzzled while getting to know about her. Then she knew about an organization working for the sexual and gender minorities in Nepalgunj. Once she went there and had meeting. She started to visit time and again to that place. She learned that her feelings and emotions are natural. Such people also survive and have their own community. She made herself calm and found in more comfort zone. As she was disclosed about her identity ending all uncertainties, she has encountered with the major turning point of her life.

Sarita also met one of the friends who was also like her. Though Sarita's that friend looked like a female, she was a transgender. Her habit, behavior and interest were all like a male. Thus, after some time, they accepted each other as a partner not only as friends. From here, Sarita's life took new beginning. Sarita used to live at her own home. Her partner started to visit Sarita's home over and over. Sarita was literally panicked initially regarding her partner's visit. She was really bothered by queries that society may inquire her about the staying with her partner. She was also worried about her mother that what

will be her reaction and the next step. She could never pardon her if something bad had happened to her mother. Sarita found herself exhausted and shaky time to time. The behavior and actions they have performed proved that their relationship was unusual. It was creating doubt on people. So, people made them as a topic of conversation. They must go down to share about them with their family one day. It has to be told but how? What to say? Such behavior is considered unpleasant and unnatural to the society. "What will be Sarita's mother response if she has shared her determination?" Sarita's mind was full of distress.

But as she thought it was not so difficult and Sarita made herself comfortable to share about her at home. Once during Sarita's partner visit, her family came to know about them. At first, Sarita's mother did not accept them. She really has lost her mind while encountering with the reality. She badly scolded her and told her to leave home. However, life is uncertain, and things are likely to happen for a reason. Sarita did not stop her to convince her mother. She tried to make her mother listen to her in any way she could. There was nothing wrong and questionable to her character. Sarita was determined that one day she will convince her mother. Then, after her continuous effort of almost 4,5 months, Sarita's mother was convinced and she accepted their relationship.

She shared- "It is all right, I am happy with your decision and happiness but do not make any disturbance to your study, you just continue it."

Sarita's father is no more. After listening such statement from her mother, Sarita felt completely relaxed. As her mother support was there, Sarita



thought she has to ignore others. Sarita now keeps her foot strongly. Then after one and half years living together with partner, villagers also stopped to talk about them. They also accepted their relationship. It has brought Sarita into more comfortable zone.

Sarita is now 21 years old. She lives with her partner. If she wished, she can conceal her identity in front of others. It can be possible because Sarita and her partner both are females. They can easily justify others by saying they are friends, live together and can spent life accordingly. But Sarita believed that it is not good. "Not disclosing the identity will create many obstacles in their life." She prepared herself and thought that it will make others easier to disclose their sexuality and gender identity. Sarita believes that identity is the most prominent thing. She shares with no hesitation if any reporter comes to ask her about this matter. Sarita further shares "Most of the members of their community have discontinued study in between and they are discriminated by their own family and society. If they are open and known to the fact that lesbians can also be the academicians and experts, then it will provide inspiration to others to continue their study and disclose them. She believes that it is good to listen that one has revealed his/her identity by observing her."

Sarita has not thought about the child till now. Because they are lesbian, they have not obtained their marriage registration. It is much difficult to go for the process of the registration of marriage. Sarita is a woman. She has just reached to her 21. She has also desire to be a mother. But it is worthless to think and plan about children without marriage registration. She believes that child can be possible through test tube also but for it one has to be fully

prepared mentally. Sarita is not mentally prepared right now.

She is also known to the fact that many in her community have attempted suicide for not receiving child in proper way through test tube process. She needs to be economically strong for it. There is compulsion that parents name should be mentioned after childbirth in the birth registration certificate. Right now, Sarita do not have any legal document to show which proves that they are married. Sarita understands that there are many legal complications behind it. She has to be mentally strong to fight against all these hindrances for which it takes time. Still, she has some more years. Sarita shares that it is not good to be in stressful condition for the future instead everyone must enjoy each moment happily.

Sarita wish to study further. She has motives to be introduced as a one of the pioneer women in her community. Thus, she has planned to pursue

**In the midst  
of all these  
adversities,  
we must  
first be  
mentally  
strong. That  
takes time.**



her study to the next level. On that note, it has become hard to sustain from only single earning. So, she has compulsion to carry any other jobs. Now, Sarita is working as an employee for Mitini Nepal in Nepalgunj. There was the hard period of COVID once as lockdown was imposed everywhere. Business, corporate sector including tourism was at the verge of collapse.

There were only few employment opportunities. During that time also, Sarita along with her partner used to reside in a rent home. They went really hard situation sometimes that they could not afford for the rent during some months. But, thanks to god their house owner who was living in Kathmandu was a kind person. He never forced Sarita and her partner for the rent. Sarita now also clearly remembers his statement that “There is no worry to pay for the rent. When you feel comfortable, you can pay that time as we are a family living together and share if there is any problem.” Sarita was very happy listening to her houseowner. She finds herself lucky for this. On the other hand, she has listened that some of her friends were asked to pay for the rent repeatedly by their houseowner. She has also listened that they have lost their jobs and were put in pressure to leave the room if they could not afford to pay for it.

Sarita could not feel well this time. She has to visit the hospital. At first, she decided not to visit the hospital being afraid that how doctors and nurses there will react. But her sickness did not recover and this time she could not stop herself go over to hospital. Sarita genuinely observed herself uncomfortable to let others examines her. She really felt guilty and uneasy. In the end, she visited the hospital. She was also thinking about separate



hospital for her community where they can examine during illness. At hospital, she was asked to mention her name. She did not feel uneasy but assumed about her partner in her place. She was incessantly thinking that for trans in particular, such situation becomes extremely rigid to accept. We are called by our name in the entrance gate of the hospital room. But again, the medic started to observe us peculiarly. People’s attention surrounded in the hospital also found to be annoying. We have been noticed and behaved as strange as we have arrived from another planet.

Many people even make us fun with the intention of insult. From time to time, Sarita wished to make loud sound with booming voice so that the whole universe could listen her. But it is not civilized manner to do such activity in the hospital. Sarita again assumed that her community is approached by opportunities and trainings. But such opportunities should be frequently occurred. There is almost no meaning if only few are trained with parlor and driving skills as meaningful transformation cannot take place. Even, health sector must include people of such community and should be benefited accordingly.

It will be much beneficiary if the health professionals are more friendly to this community particularly who can understand their health-related problems. Mostly male technologists are likely to appear in ECG room of the hospital which is also making them feel not comfortable.

Noe, Sarita's turn came this time and she entered the room putting an end to all her thinking. She found male doctor in the room and took long breathe full of joy. Sarita returning from hospital begun to think about organizations that works for the sexual and gender minorities community. She also thought that it is difficult to work in other organizations for this community. Most of the time, they are compelled to work with male colleagues and even have to go together to visit fields. How difficult it is! Neha has listened to her friends about such difficulties. They might not be aware of their sexuality which can make life even more complicated. On the other hand, there could be many chances of arguments with their partner if they were forcedly married.

When the rickshaw abruptly tried to stop, Sarita was about to fall. She found herself nervous and said to the rickshaw puller to ride the rickshaw carefully.

The rickshaw puller did not respond anything. His feet were continuously on the pedal.

Sarita fall into the ocean of thinking one more time. She begun to think it is also challenging to travel in the public vehicle. One of her friends who is transman once has shared to Sarita that once one man was travelling in a two passengers' seat. One seat was empty and then she sat there but suddenly that man left the seat and stood straight next to the place. For sure, that man might be thinking that it is not good to sit with such people.

But he did not even think that people with different gender identity have also sentiment as others have. There is offense and inferiority step by step everywhere to be faced by the community. The organizations working for such community have made it easy for them to work and even help them to disclose their identity. If there would be no support, then people like Sarita could have nothing to do.

"Sister your station is here."- rickshaw puller asked Sarita to get down. Then, she gets off from that rickshaw, pay for it and proceeded towards the way to her room.



## A Transman: over every mountain, there is a path...

His name is Shila Gurung. His residence is in Nepalgunj but originally, he belongs to Bardiya. He has studied up to grade 10. Shila considered himself as young just as yesterday but he has already reached in his 50's. Shila nowadays assumes that time waits for no-one as it flows so swiftly in its own way.

Shila biologically looks as a female but he is not female emotionally and because of his behavior and desires. Shila identifies him as a transman. He has encountered with many ups and downs in his journey as a transman. He has experienced many bitter and gladdening moments and many others are humorous and amusing as well. Most of his past, he did not have craving to remember but known to the fact that many experiences he has confronted with are the source of encouragement that adds power to his life. Thus, sometimes he observes his past life thoroughly.

It was the time when he was studying at his school. He was 13/14 years old. He is biologically born as a female and thus had many female friends. But gradually Shila



begun to feel different than normally his other female friends used to think, act and behave. He then left to wear female clothes and even the school uniform for girls. Slowly, he desired to play football and stick and wooden pin with other boys in the group. He found himself happy playing with boys.

Shila was surrounded by many questions as why he is not like other girls, why he feels distinct and why he likes to play with boys? He had no answers to these questions. He was amazed to observing his own behavior. Sometimes even he was scared about what was happening to him. He was unknown that with whom to ask and what to say? He has never seen such people in his village.

He was in 8th standard. There was a vacancy announcement for Auxiliary Nursing and Midwifery. One can obtain employment after being trained from there. Shila also filled up the form. At that time, one has to wear sari, and all used to wear such. They were also told to wear sari. But Shila did not want to wear it. Though he made his name on the list, he quit that job. It was strange indeed that he never be disappointed on his decision he took. After some years, he begun to work in trade unions.

Shila after some years met two friends who have the same feeling like him. Then, it became quite easy for Shila to express feelings as well. They used to meet and greet being company for one another. They were likely to share many things related to their interest, problems and sometimes on hilarious matters. They used to help each other and visit everywhere together. Their way of behaving and acting were doubtful. They became the subject of interest as many people started to insult them. People may have talked redundantly about them. Not always, but sometimes Shila also has listened people gossiping unusually.

From time to time, he used to disregard them but again sometimes it made him completely devastated. Shila also wished to argue with them but there was no meaning of such arguments. He did not want to make him a fun among people. However, when he found people crossing their limits, Shila steadily used to put them a side and make them speechless.

Shila during his 25 years came to know about his identity. There was not internet facility that time. It

**Although our community has gradually become more comfortable with the passage of time, the legal issues are still incomplete.**





was beyond the imagination to look for information searching in you-tube or google it. Then, Shila found himself in a very frightening circumstance that how to face the family. People outside have the practice to talk distorting the facts. Shila was trying to create a favorable time to talk with his mother. Actually, generating such situation is not easy. Shila commenced to focus his mind on resulting in such opportunities.

At the same time, a marriage proposal came into Shila's home. Shila then shared to his mother that he is not ready to get marry. In the beginning, his mother did not listen to him. But Shila placing promising efforts attempted to satisfy his family. Then, Shila's mother also did not out him in pressure for marriage. Shila belongs to Gurung family who are more generous by nature. Now, Shila obtained consensus from his mother to pursue his life as per his will.

Shila's father was an Indian army. He used to reside in India most of the time for his duty. He was not much interested to such matter after all. Thus, Shila did not experience any pressure from his father. It was ill fortune that Shila's father passed away in 2051 B.S. Thus, Shila got only few times to talk with him. Shila has owned one brother as well. He also used to live away from his family. Shila's brother also did not intervene him in his life and relation. Thus, Shila did not find any discomfort inside his home. Shila's family is familiar regarding his gender identity and his partner. But nobody has talked about it. Shila himself also has not shared anything which he thinks is an easy option.

Shila has a partner. It has been around 24/25 years since they were together. Shila has retained his partner at home. Initially, he has confronted many troubles in the recent years. The society is the same.



We can imagine how rigid was the society at that time. They used to make fun of the homosexual relation. But thankfully Shila was also involved in sports. People had the thinking that players are celebrity and mostly they wear such clothes. Such judgement of people has made easier for Shila somehow. Society still have the belief that homosexual women lives together but nowadays it has become known to all. People now assumes that law has been made to protect such community. So, people do not easily challenge to talk against them. On this note, Shila was previously involved in social work. Due to this reason, it has become comparatively easier for him. But again, his life is complicated if compared to ordinary people. Shila was introduced to Sudip Bhatta of Dang. He used to work in Bardiya. Then, he shifted to Nepalgunj from

there. Shila through his network became acquainted about an organization in Nepalgunj working for such people with different gender identity, transgender and homosexual people. He made contact there. It was 2065 B.S. Shila when he was unemployed, he along with his friends have registered an organization. The organization was named 'Nabaratna Sewa Nepal'. Shila worked for some years being in the working committee of that organization. After four years working there, Shila has been working for the sexual and gender minorities being associated to another organization. He always believes that one should give importance to his or her identity and should live with the same identity disclosing it. One should fight against those who insults them. He further assumes that if the community do not make objections on such offense, then the future members will have to face such and cannot live a dignified life as of first-class citizens. Thus, Shila provides inspiration when he meets the community members so far. He inspires everyone in his community to disclose their identity, be organized and face the adversaries. Shila also believes that if the community struggles for their identity, then it will make easy for the future generation. So, the upcoming generation should also know about their rights and dignity and should utilize them accordingly. Now, it has become more acceptable. People are becoming more understandable than before. It is the age of communication and information. It is easy to search anything in google, you-tube. Now organizations are proceedings to work for such community. It has made easy for them to take help to overcome their problems if any. Shila also thinks that if the situation is same before 25/30 years, it would be easier for her.

COVID-19 pandemic in the last year has had an unprecedented effect. Nepal also witnessed to lockdown though the problems appeared were relatively lower than India including other countries.

## Those who come tomorrow should also know about their rights

People were obliged to confront complicated life for around 8/9 months. In between, many people who were known to Shila also lost their job. There was no way to generate income. The situation became even more harsh for the daily workers. Many people in his community were in the condition not able to come out of the closet. On the top of that, it has become more difficult for those who became jobless. But, fortunately Shila was employed. He received remuneration from his work even during the lockdown.

Though he is the permanent resident of Bardiya, Shila has lived in a rent house after being employed in Nepalgunj. Sometimes, he visits to home but frequently he lives in Nepalgunj. He did not face any difficulties to live in rent home even in the course of lockdown. His houseowner belongs to the Muslim community. The wife of his houseowner was very exemplary and compatible. But as the COVID-19 cases were emerged in Nepalgunj, it was risky to visit. It was almost not possible to visit anywhere and do anything. It was manageable in his side telling the visitors not to come at home but was not easy to tell the visitors of the houseowner. There was more risk to be infected by the deadly virus. Thus, Shila went her home at that time.

Shila is the patient of blood pressure. He has already completed his 50's. he believes that age also matters. Shila has listened that many in his community takes



hormone but Shila has never used such. Once during the lockdown, Shila faced health problem. It became hard for him to deal with the situation. It was difficult to meet the doctors. Though he encountered with some doctors, they did not properly examine him. It has also become hard to get the regular medicine. Shila also faced many problems due to the lack of medicine. There was obligation to visit the Indian border for the medicine. He also faced unnecessary interrogation by police administration on the way visiting there. The medicine seller and police too ask for the prescription, but doctors were not available for the medical examination. Then, how to get the medicine? It made Shila really annoying when he recalled those problems he had faced during that time.

Shila has also another disagreement that is there is no separate hospital for the transgender. On that note, there is also not specific provision for medical checkup for such people in the hospital. The hospital staffs are likely to call the name for the purpose of sending patients to the rooms of particular doctors. But it is really problematic. In his case, Shila was supposed to tell the staffs to send him in medical ward directly. Shila is much matured now as per his age. He has struggled with such complicated situations. Thus, at first, he used to share everything openly otherwise it may create other problems. However, young people

may hesitate to behave in such way. They are not likely to tell everything openly and at the same time some do not want to share but keeps it in privacy. Shila assumes that though it has become easier for his community, existing laws are still incomplete. The constitution has guaranteed their rights, but they are not implemented meaningfully. Law is still not clear regarding the issue of same-sex marriage. Marriage is the fundamental human right of an individual. It is totally not acceptable that citizenship will be provided only after undergoing the sex-change surgery. If it is the case, then who will provide with that huge amount for the surgery? Who will be responsible to the problems that may occur in their health? It is said “My body, my right.” Thus, it is important to address them in proper way after disclosing their identity. Shila really feels irritating remembering all these problems now also. After completing many years living together, Shila believes that law must address their property rights. For this, marriage registration is mandatory. But the problem is still the same as before. If marriage is not legalized in the future, then it has almost no meaning. If this right is not secured, then people in such community can never be able to spend happy family life. The situation is really complicated that gives Shila mental and psychological strain time to time.

## Cut the ending: Women are beautiful, strong and compassionate...

Sujata is astonished thinking about her own life of six months before. She has experienced immense difference between her life then and now. Sujata turns back to her past life. The past of any person is an inseparable part of their life. Past and present life has more connections to each other. Thus, sometimes Sujata wishes to observe her life history. Sujata belongs to Chhetri family. She is resident of Hetauda. She has five members in her family including her parents, one elder brother and one elder sister. She lives at home.

Though Sujata was born biologically as a female, she had such a behavior to straight forwardly get associated to the male squad. She used to sit with boys even in class at school. She was also fond of wearing men's clothing. But during that time, it was not acceptable to wear such clothes. She had never put on men's attire before. She used to wear sari cholo sometimes when participating in different programs organized by the school. But she felt really uncomfortable on that costume. There was



compulsion to wear sari. Nowadays, she wears men's clothes.

Recalling her past life, Sujata was much disturbed by queries like what is happening to her? Why she is feeling uneasy to wear women's clothing? Why she is much closed to boys and likes to play with them? She was scared of the reaction that people from her school and village will make. She was more confused. Consequently, she had no option left beside remain silent and listen to those people. Mostly she used to manifest artificial behavior.

Sujata found herself different than other girls as she was growing and getting into the higher education. Then she also decided to make an experiment in order to examine her. She succeeded to convince one of her female friends. After that, she has had a sexual intercourse with her. Sujata became much satisfied from that relationship. She really enjoyed her company. Then, she decided to keep relation physically with male friend. She requested to one of her friends for the relation in her circle. Once they have had the intercourse privately. But, Sujata did not like the warmup exhibited by that boy. That actually did not work. Sujata stopped him before he entered the main activity. Thus, the work could not complete. Then, Sujata became constantly restless. She got disrupted by her condition. She frequently assumed about her existing state. Once, she shared all these to one of her close friends. Sujata shared that she has something to tell that is she did not find any comfort having intercourse with male. She was confused of who she is supposed to be. Then, Sujata's that friend told her not to be worry and do not take decision quickly. She also told her that maybe she did not like the person, but she may feel comfortable with somebody else. At the same time, Sujata was familiar to two boys. She used to talk with both of them. When, she failed to make relation with one, she tried with another

boy. However, again Sujata experienced the same as before. She did not get any sexual pleasure even this time. She did not feel any intimacy. Then, again she shared with her friend that she could not enjoy and feel comfort with another boy as well.

Finally, her friend convinced Sujata saying she is different than others. She also told her that there is no worry as there are many people who feels the same as her. She also told Sujata to accept herself as she is. Sujata was positive towards her friend. She became happy. Then, she started to search more on google about such including its causes and symptoms. The information she obtained from google were matched. Then, she again started to look for much related videos on you-tube. After that, she decided herself to be call as lesbian determining her sexuality. Sujata succeeded to free her from a state of confusion after disclosing her sexuality. But there was a challenge for her that how she will share about her at home? How her family will react? What will be their response? All these queries became very weighty and dreadful for her. But there was no way to skip as it has to be told sooner or later. Sujata was much assured to share the matter with family with her own effort rather than to let others to say. Finally, she resolved to put into operation the solution. Sujata has such a behavior to easily get associated with juniors. Sujata's sister children were younger than her. They were not only connected as a family member but also had friendly relation. Once, Sujata told everything about her while playing with her juniors. Her gesture and posture were same as a man have. She also has a same hair style and dressing sense as of male. Even they were young, they considered the issue positively. They genuinely helped Sujata. They responded Sujata in normal way. Sujata was much relaxed listening such. But, the seniors at home were unknown. Sujata was not able to share about her to them. She was actually in search of an opportunity. She had tried many times



but failed. Sujata was panicked observing her situation that time. Sujata was also disturbed by the fact that she has to tell the truth regarding her genuine relation with a partner to her family. Sujata was now much sure of her family that they have doubt on her. One day, Sujata residing in a room was busy in using the Internet on mobile. Her brother sitting in another room was busy with his laptop. Sujata collecting all courage dared to say everything with her brother by sending him a message in messenger. Sujata was much worried. "It cannot be possible; you are likely to learn and talk more. It can be happened sometimes with everyone, even with me." shared her brother in a message.

Sujata convinced her brother saying it is genuine and happens naturally. After some time, Sujata's brother also realized more about this. Then, he did not approach her angrily instead helped her. Sujata also get connected to a partner till she completed her 12th standard. At the outset, they had only relation of friendship. However, they became more intimate. In this way, she lives in a relationship with her partner. Though they were in relationship, it was not easy for Sujata to meet her partner. How to make an excuse? What to say always? How to keep relation? But finally, Sujata got a break as she was called to participate in a training. After she approaches to that training, Sujata took a flat in Hetauda. It was around 5 years ago. After Sujata and her partner started to live in that flat, Sujata's brother came to visit them. He talked to her. He also permitted Sujata to come home. Sujata told her brother that she will visit home alone but Sujata's brother told her to come with her partner.

But at first her parents did not accept their relation. They even tried to convince Sujata to withdraw her decision. Then, Sujata assured her father peacefully. Mostly, she did not have conversation with her father. Sujata did not take otherwise whatever her father said to her.



**The existing laws must be revised that can address other identity issues beside male, female & others.**

Actually, her father was distracted by the malicious talks carried by the people outside about Sujata. That situation was really uncontrolled. She cannot express that stressful situation at all. Sujata's parents decided to take her to hospital. Then Sujata responded them

patiently that she needs her family and partner too. She also said that she could not find the right way to tell about all these and thus she may experience such. She also said that she does not need to go hospital.

Then, for the first time, Sujata's mother told her that she would have to share everything with family so that they should not have take any pressure. Sujata after observing the incident understood that more conversation has to take place, need to convince family and everything should be told. Communitarian should be initiated. Sujata also believes that everything experienced by an individual has to be shared compulsorily. Finally, Sujata succeeded to convince her father as he told her it is alright if they are happy.

Sujata assumes that disclosing one's identity is very important. In fact, people become happy if they are supported by others. But it is not possible to have such always in life. Sujata used to teach at school in Hetauda. One of her friends also used to teach at the same school. Her friend had already left the school as lockdown was about to impose due to corona. She had also been to Australia after getting marriage till that time. Sujata was confirmed that her friend's life was awesome. However, once Sujata received a call from her during lockdown. She told to Sujata that she wants to talk with her. Sujata also responded her that she also wants to talk as she has noticed some kind of doubt on her way of talking. Sujata's friend then shared to her telling she is boy. Sujata in a shocking voice told her that it could not be possible. Then, her friend again tried to persuade Sujata stressing on her words.

Sujata also told her friend to share everything with her husband. She believes that first an individual should be happy and then it is possible only to make others happy. Thus, revealing one's identity and accepting it is important. Now, it has become more easier than before.

Society has now tried to understand. However, Sujata's friend problem remained unsolved. She has been criticized by people about her such condition. Then, Sujata suggested her to get connected to organizations that works for the sexual and gender minorities.

In between, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact everywhere for around a year. Lockdown was imposed since Chaitra 11 in Nepal. It has been only two days when Sujata had an operation during lockdown. She was taking rest at home. Sujata's life was also badly influenced by the lockdown. Schools have been closed till long. Though later on schools introduced online classes. Teachers were provided only half of the salary. Sujata as she was living in her flat, she also has to pay 8000 rupees as a rent every month. Because school was only providing half salary, Sujata started to teach in tuition class to solve economic crisis that is likely to take place. Government also provided relief that time which also supported her. Her houseowner also did not ask for the rent till 3,4 months. Later on, the her houseowner's wife was asked to undergo uterus operation.

Thus, Sujata realized that they have to provide the rent even from humanitarian perspective. The houseowner also did not take the rent for a month. Sujata then managed to pay all taking loan from school. She used to take credit from other and pays them subsequently. Though the situation was stressful during corona, Sujata somehow succeeded to manage it.

Sujata is completely unsatisfied with the legal provisions guaranteed by the law of our country. Specifically, the members of her community are dealing with legal complications. They are not able to live a dignified life due to such discrimination. For instance, she has raised question over the issue of citizenship. Now, the government is working to manage smart identity card in

the place of citizenship. She wishes that the card would mention their partner's name with identity. It is the privilege provided by the government to its citizens. She also assumes that identity has to be disclosed in other documents as well. She also stresses on that when they talk about this in government office, the officials used to make fun, insults and even discourages them.

The bureaucracy has not understood the sensitivity of this major issue of identity. The existing laws must be revised that can address other identity issues beside male, female and others. She has desire to adopt child. But problem is likely to occur while mentioning parents name. Thus, Sujata is familiar with such discrimination that her community is facing. Sujata is also worried about when people's thinking will change that they will understand dignified life can assure peace and peace brings about ability. Sujata is now 29 years old. As she has mentioned earlier, her life has been changed completely in the last six months. Once she experienced extreme change in her body. Suddenly she found herself as if deity power has entered to her

body. She could tell about the past and the future of even strangers at that time. Generally, it is not usual, but when she observed the entrance of Bhadrakali and Shivaji in her body, she encountered with spiritual power and belief. Because of the reason, it became difficult for her to continue teaching at school. Then, she left her job. With this, after the incident she could not continue her bachelor study.

Next is everyone started to believe Sujata after they noticed such changes in her. People started to share their problems to her. People are afraid when it comes about deity. They may scare of something that bad can happen in future. Thus, people agreed listen and follow to her. Even her family members have been changed radically. Due to this, now Sujata can feel more comfortable than before. No-one dare to ask her even she is living with a girl as her partner. On this note, god has created all and has let them to live freely. But people make it tough by forming worthless rules and creating fence which Sujata really hates.



## A Journey to become a transwoman: openness is a good place to start

She was biologically born as a male. As per her birth, she was named Jiban Khadka in the naming ceremony. She became younger and younger from the age of three, four, five and six years and started to go school. She was then recognized by Jiban Khadka at her home, neighborhood and in the village. She was introduced in that way.

But as she has grown up, Jiban performed such a behavior and manners as a female citing as stereotypically feminine. Her childhood friends slowly begun to tease Jeshika. Till the age of 9/10, Jeshika was unknown regarding her that contrasting behavior. She was downhearted by such activity of her friends.

Jeshika lost her parents in her young age of only 9/10. Guardians are supposed to be the most intimated persons for their children. As Jeshika has already missed her parents she had nobody with whom she could express her feelings, confusions, interest and even dissatisfactions. She was really disappointed as the situation was getting more complicated.





As Jeshika became matured day by day, she found completely different momentum, feelings and thinking than of male. She found herself as a female who possesses all feminine traits. A huge contradiction of her life resulted into a sort of conflict. She was much suppressed inside by that clash.

Jeshika thought many times that she really could share about all these to her mother if she was alive. When she reached 13/14 years, Jeshika was much curious to know about herself. That age is such an age when physical differences are likely to appear. With the physical transition, psychological changes and development also occurs during that age. And same thing was happening with her. But, contrasting from an ordinary people that changes, frame of mind, feelings and emotions was different than of male. If Jeshika's mother was alive then she would have already told about her condition to her. Jeshika was confirmed that her mother would completely support her as no parents can go against their children will. But it was not possible in Jeshika's case.

Jeshika was living with her brother and sister in-law. Once, she decided to share about her with her sister in-law. With full confidence, she shared everything to her. Jeshika's sister in-law also reacted her positively. Her reaction was very admirable and adoring. Then, she convinced Jeshika's brother in a very good manner. She succeeded to convince him. Then, Jeshika's brother too responded to her saying it is agreeable if her situation is such. He also said Jeshika not to approach her into disastrous way and be aware to perform anything maintaining the reputation.

Jeshika was very delighted listening to her brother's statement. She thanked to god for everything and became thankful even to her brother and sister in-law. In this way, after getting support from her family

Jeshika when she reached 18 years, public herself with her new identity.

The society is the same. It has such a skeptical nature. It is somehow responsible to propagate unpleasant thoughts. Society is full of greed, jealousy, angerness, hatred and negativity too. Initially, Jeshika also faced unfair behavior performed by the society. Society also criticized her brother and sister in-law with prejudice for allowing Jeshika to present her in whatever ways she likes. Fortunately, they were not distracted. They responded to society that it is her interest and state of mind and thus not good to interfere her. Hence, society also did not dare to say anything to Jeshika as she has got full support from her family.

However, Jeshika was tensed. When she went to study, there also her friends and teachers used to ask her in such a manner with no reason. She tried to ignore all of them as she was not interested to answer them. Many of them used to make fun of her identity. Sometimes when the situation was uncontrolled, Jeshika also thought to wear male costumes for the sake of family and society. She even tried it. But it did not actually work despite many attempts. Then, she also once thought to take her life instead of bearing all these insults and hatred. But she could not destroy her life. Though Jeshika has completed grade 12, she did not continue her bachelor level due

**Society is like that. Greed, jealousy, anger, hatred - there is more negativity in society.**

to such discriminatory and offensive behavior. She also believed that she could not have to listen to any others if remained only at home. She found this one effective way to get rid of that situation. But it was not the permanent solution to her problem. She used to make each effort to satisfy many people who made fun of her. But there were many other people who did not want to understand her. Then no options were left for Jeshika. Though some have tried to realize her. She used to say them not to use any offensive words but try help her. Any person does not become



such because of their interest. What will people do if children with such identity born to their home? She just responded people in such way. Then people also come to understand her and let her free to do what she feels comfortable. After that, one day Jeshika decided to be presented with her real identity. She was determined to change sex for this and took counselling with her brother and sister in-law.

Then, her sister in-law told Jeshika to be satisfied as she is. Again, Jeshika convinced them saying she cannot change her decision. Finally, she got permission to perform sex change surgery and had undergone the surgery. She also changed her name. Now she has become Jeshika Khadka from Jiban Khadka. Jeshika believes that after getting family support and disclosing her identity, she must do something good in a society and community. She believes that society cannot dare to say irresponsibly if great deed is performed by an individual. The country faced the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly it has affected the border areas closed to India. Nepalgunj and Kohalpur are also very near to the Indian border areas. Lockdown was imposed in the whole country. The hospital of Nepalgunj and Kohalpur were filled with corona infected patients.

Many people who were familiar to Jeshika have been infected with COVID-19 positive. The situation was really under imagination. All were said to follow the health protocols strictly while visiting outside. Jeshika used to work in an office called 'Paschim Tara Sanstha Nepal.' She is also working there now. The organization works for the human rights of the marginalized community and relating to sexually transmitted diseases. It has been five years since Jeshika has started to work in that organization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible for Jeshika to work in an office. Then, office allowed

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her an opportunity to work online from home. She did the same. Sometimes she used to visit the field with permission in an emergency to tackle with problems of HIV infected people and other human rights violation issues. But there was a compulsion not to carry such work at large.

As she was working online, her office continued to provide her wage and allowance. On this note, Jeshika lives with her brother and sister in-law. She had no obligation to live in a rent house. Her family has proper income and they are likely to take all the responsibility to manage the home. So, Jeshika never faced any problems for the economic cause.

But the COVID-19 has had serious impact on the operation of such fairs and festivals outside. The entertainment field was adversely disturbed. Jeshika is also interested in acting field. She is third gender actress. She used to participate in various cultural programs and in different festivals as she had been invited by the organizers.

She used to go there and even sing and dance. Jeshika also used to tell about her community while participating in such programs. She tried to change the vision of people towards her community in positive way. She was much benefited financially by such programs. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, now her this interested sector is also being fully closed.

If she did a good job in the society, the society will not be able to point a finger at her. After this, it will be easier for such third genders to come tomorrow.



Jeshika is now 25 years old. She is completely fine up to now. Thus, she has no experience of her own regarding the problems faced by her community in the hospitals. But Jeshika is familiar with many problems that she has listened from the community members.



Whenever to buy a ticket or medicine in hospital, there is queue for the male and female only. In such case, where the people with different gender identity will stand? They are not made fitted to any of the lines as people interrogates them unnecessarily. Similarly, the problem is the same is restroom. Restroom have been designed for either male or female. There is no gender friendly washroom. Now the question is where should people with different identity will proceed? Hospital management is totally unaware of such a problem.

Jeshika has to work simultaneously with officials of the local government body. Even, the public officials are not familiar with the community. She tried to convince them which has made easy to work. But again, if one is sent to another area then it becomes challenging again to make them understood. Some even never tried to understand their community. Jeshika believes that the problem is everywhere.

The constitution beside male and female has mentioned people with different gender identity in 'others' category. In the same way, Jeshika believes that her community should be given priority to other sectors in education, health, citizenship including all. Even people with such identity mostly come to know about them during adolescence. Thus, she also believes that separate seats at school for such students should be managed.

Jeshika has learned driving as well and has got driving license. Once, Nepalgunj Sub- Metropolitan City hired some public buses to run public transportation. It also called for some bus drivers. Jeshika also applied for

the position and submitted a form. But later her form was rejected being told that there was a problem in her citizenship. She has owned a citizenship with the name and photo of Jiban Khadka. Now she is Jeshika Khadka, a transgender woman. Jeshika thinks that such citizenship issue will create biggest problem in future considering that how she will get an opportunity to fight in the public service commission. It means the community is deprived from applying for a government job. Thus, Jeshika thinks that the rights are not equal. There would be no problem if the present name and photo is mentioned in the citizenship, but administration has failed to introduce such system. Jeshika is worried as she could not get citizenship where she can mention her name as she wishes.

Jeshika has turned herself into a female after undergoing the surgery. She also could get citizenship with female category. But she thinks if she does so, then who will fight for their rights? Jeshika sometimes also thinks that people have developed negative perception towards her community because of the behavior they perform. She also believes that not all, but some in her community have involved in sex work openly and even in stealing which has dishonored their whole community. There is still lack of favorable environment for them to study at school. There is identity crisis and citizenship issue to apply for the job. Being unemployed there may be compulsions to carry any jobs for earning. But Jeshika assumes that any work can be conducted with dignity and respect. If it is done so, then society cannot dare to talk meaninglessly and spread hatred about her community.

## My heart and soul define me: his fascination to work for the sexual and gender minorities over a decade

His name is Sudip Gautam. Residence in Hetauda. But currently he is residing in a rent house in Lazimpat. He is now 29 years old. He belongs to the medium family. He has left study while pursuing his higher secondary education. There are many reasons behind his discontinuation of study. Now he is working for an organization for sexual and gender minorities community. He is continuously working for the sexual and gender minorities for one decade long. He likes to call himself as a transgender man and he do not like to be identified by any other name beside this. This is all about his introduction but there is prolonged story he has experienced of the rise and fall movements in his life.

Sudip was born as a female biologically. In a way to grown up, he left his behavior that belongs to feminine. Such thing may not be known in very small age. But as the time passes, he begun to experience himself different than other female children of his village. He begun to experience such not for one



day, two day but regularly. But he was completely unknown regarding why he is different than his female counterparts. When he reached 13,14 years old or entered to his adolescence, he begun to like a girl of his village. Not only less, but his leaning towards that girl begun to increase gradually. Sudip started to love that girl deeply. Sudip now could feel astonishing thinking that his all-female friends like male but why he likes girl? He begun to question himself that why he is different than other girls? Now he became much worried about him. Different momentum, feelings and interest lies inside him started to fill his mind with sorrowful thoughts.

Sudip initially did not share this to anyone. How he could? What to say? He was born in a brahmin family with highly conservative thoughts in a countryside area of Hetauda. Being born as girl and liking girls if sharing this all to family, what will be his family reaction? What will be the villager's reaction? If told by Sudip, how they will take this and what they will understand? Sudip himself was in a very confusing situation. It was beyond the imagination that such thing is natural. Sudip begun to experience lots of pain in his mind. Her became restless. Now, almost after 12/15 years due to the development in communication and education sector, it has become easy to understand somehow. No-one in the village at that time were known regarding such community.

Sudip always used to question himself and finally when he reached 16/17 years old, he shared about his identity to one of his friends with trust collecting all courage. But his friend took the matter very lightly and shared to all what Sudip told to him. Then after, Sudip's own friend begin to tease him calling hermaphrodite as 'chhakka', 'hijras'. Many people commenced to call him 'chhakka' whenever and wherever they immediately meet him.

On the next hand, Sudip was completely unknown regarding such terminologies. But, when people used to say such words him pointing towards him, Sudip tried to understand it. Is he himself responsible for the situation? Remembering such questions, he became very upset on those days. Sometimes, he could not see any hope to live due to hatred and misbehave. A thought to commit to suicide also came into his mind 3/4 times. After knowing that he could not survive facing such hatred and discrimination, Sudip once also tries a liquid substance that lies inside the thermometer going in a jungle. He wished that he will not survive after that as he also wanted that no people could encounter him in a jungle though animal could. But he was survived. He returned back to home.

However, he continued to face such misbehave, hatred and humiliation. He was compelled to live with lots of confusions whereas at the same time faced heart pounding attack created by social humiliation. After that, again he attempted to commit suicide taking poison. Again, he was survived but this time he remained in the hospital for a longtime. He begun to face more challenges after consuming the poison indeed. Sudip was highly criticized for showing unusual behavior of liking the same sex. His family also became irritated listening about Sudip the negative comments by the villagers. In this way, Sudip could not get any support and trust from his family. Society too have very unpleasant and unfortunate contemplation towards those who have attempted to put an end to themselves. The reason he could not continue his study was also the strenuous circumstances.

No-one tried to ask him why he consumed poison? They never tried to know and understand the reason behind the suicide. He was much devastated by such disgraceful attitude. Sudip is now spending a respectful life in Kathmandu but sometimes acquainted with



his past terrible incidents. He still believed that if he earned well-behaved ambience, love and respect at that time, he could live a dignified life in his village. Considering all these, Sudip now believes that he is in this present situation struggling with the unpleasant behavior exhibited by the orthodox society. He was known to the fact that success can be achieved with hard work only.

Sudip owns two mothers at home. His mother is elder. He has one elder and one younger sister and one younger brother. He has one elder brother and one younger brother from his next mother. His father lives with younger mother.

His elder sister is disable. For this reason, Sudip from the young age of 9/10 took all responsibility. He used to carry all sorts of household stuffs. Though he took such responsibility, there was huge contradiction between his interest, family and society. This has made him even more frustrated. However, there was not any interference on him regarding the costumes. He was provided with the permission to wear any clothes of his choice as he was the decision maker at his home.

Despite of many attempts and because of not having promising environment at home, Sudip at the young age of 17 left his home. He came to Kathmandu in 2068 B.S. though he was still fighting with him regarding his identity. He also thought in between as if he did something wrong. Gradually, he begun to be familiar with the member of the community. Now, he became completely satisfied that he made right decision and has been always looking for such a platform. Community members also made counselling on him which has provided Sudip an immense morale and guidance.



**This is not possible in the current legal system. Sudip is sad. Much remains to be fought for.**



He took shelter for nine months in the residence of the organization that works for the sexual and gender minorities in Kathmandu. Till that time, he came to realize more about him. Now, he feels thoroughly stress-free. His disabled sister has helped him a lot throughout his entire journey. His sister was associated with disabled federation and she was known to Swarnima Madam who used to run a program called “Saathi Sanga Maan Ka Kura”. Swarnima took the significant role at that time to arrange the meeting between Sudip’s sister and Bhumika Sharestha. Bhumika shared the address and contact details of that organization which was in Lazimpat. In this way, Sudip met with Durga didi in that organization. Sudip was then guided by her. She directed Sudip and taught him computer as well providing an opportunity to participate in different programs organized by the community. Sudip by nature since his childhood was not shy. He was the president of locally formed Child Club in his village.

But Sudip after joining the organization only he came to realize that he has to work for the sexual and gender minorities community and for his identity. Sometimes he thought he would not have enjoyed his rights and dignity if he had not come out of the closet from his village.

Sudip did not confront with the direct affect caused by COVID-19 pandemic. He was paid for his work he continued at that time. He did not face any problems from his house owner though he used to ask Sudip to pay the rent on time. But many community members he knows were in trouble. They lost their jobs and thus earning too. They were likely to face problems for regular health checkup and medication due to the lockdown. Many of the community members like Sudip are taking hormone and most of them have undergone surgery. But during the COVID-19, many

who were taking hormone injection could not visit hospital. Those who takes regular hormone, they are likely to face unprecedented situation. They might face irritability, anger and can be impatient.

Many of those who were suffered from transmitted disease like HIV, could not receive a medicine called ART. The drug is very much essential. There are chances to get infection by the virus if that is not taken even for a day. Police administration were also seen irresponsible at that time. They used to intervene us to buy such medicine and hormone form the hospital. We all know that safety health protocols should be taken during COVID-19 but who will understand the dying situation for not receiving medicine on time? Who will comprehend all those problems? It was really tough time during lockdown.

After observing all these hurdles, though Sudip was safe but he became sleepless and anxious. He decided to provide relief packages to the community members who were actually in disturbance. A huge amount was needed for this. Sudip has great concern but lacks money. He went everywhere asking for help. He also met with a private secretary of a minister, but no-one helped him. Then, he reached to a youth activist and young politician Ranju Darshana and Sudip requested her to help in relief distribution.

Sudip received assistance from Ranju Darshana with a relief package for around 65 people. The package included mandatory things such as food items, salt, oil, gas, hormone injection, sanitary pads, noodle etc. They distributed the relief to the members of the community which helped them at least for a month to use. This was the first relief package distributed during COVID-29 outbreak. Sudip feels fortunate that he became able to help the needy community members.

Now, Sudip has undergone surgery. That is why he is called Sudip otherwise he used to be called by another name before. However, Sudip and his community friends are facing complications in reality. There is provision to get gender preferred citizenship but that is insufficient. After undergone surgery only, one can obtain the citizenship as per their choice. According to Sudip, this provision cannot be applicable to all. All cannot afford for the sex change surgery. The issue is connected to human right along with the identity that many may not be interested in the surgery. It is forceful condition to undergo surgery for a citizenship.

Sudip is now 29 years old. He has wish to adopt a child but here also problem is seen in identity issue. He strongly advocates for the legalization of same

sex marriage, so that only identity is formed. Marriage can be done after identity only. Child can be adopted only after marriage is registered. Sudip has also desire to nourish child spending time with them. He really wishes to be called as a father. But this is not possible due to the existing laws. Sudip feels bad for it. He believes that there is much more to be done. There is another problem with the citizenship that is one can change the sex but not the name. How is this possible? It is really contradictory. Taking his example, he was biologically born as a female. He undergone surgery for sex change. As per that, sex is introduced in citizenship, but the name is same as before. He believes that the citizenship certificate seems as a cartoon if the name is not changed there. Sudip also questions that who wish to carry such citizenship.



## STORY-7

SURAJ KHATRI

# Who believes that life is short to waste on grudges ...

He is now 20 years old. He lives in Thankot. He lives in a rent home with his husband. He likes to introduce himself as other woman putting in such a category that is not included both in man's and in woman's group. But biologically he was born as a male. His name is Suraj Khatri. Suraj has completed his SLC. Then, she studied in college for some days but could not continue his study. He left college. He works as a makeup artist.

Suraj believes that his life has been changed drastically whenever he compares it to the past years. When Suraj entered ho his adolescence or when he was 13 years old, slowly he came to realize that he is passionate about boys. He became attracted with boys. He was amazed observing himself. Suraj started to question himself with a curiosity thinking what is happening to him? Why he does not like girls? Why his other friends are fascinated about girls? Some of them have fallen in love with girls. But why his interests, aspirations and feelings are different? He was struggling inside with his identity. However, he did not share anything about his condition to anyone



else. He was really afraid of his own behavior that time. Sometimes, he also thought to share all these to others. But how to tell? What to tell? He really lacked courage to tell about him with them. During that time, Suraj experienced sudden change in his behavior which was not normal. People started to notice his bodily expression and other activities. He was unknown to it. But his mother gradually notices it that was happening to Suraj. She has found her son's behavior unusual. Once, Suraj mother asked him about this. Then Suraj shared everything to his mom.

Suraj told his mother that he likes boys and is fond of using lipstick and sometimes female attire too. It gives him happiness. Then Suraj mother for a while could not believe and was looking at him as if he is cheating her. His mother was really confused in that situation. After that she responded to Suraj saying there is no worry as it is his life and what matters is his happiness.

Then, Suraj became very excited as he was sure that his mother will not listen and accept him easily. Suraj then assumed his mother the best mother ever in the world. He embraced his mother. Afterwards, Suraj moved to his own way. He then shared the changes he has observed to one of his close friends in school. His that friend did not respond anything negative but many of his friends started to make him a fun after knowing about Suraj. They just reacted calling Suraj with creepy words. They also humiliated Suraj summoning him 'gay' and asked him not to come closer to them. They also used to make fun of Suraj and imitate him in a way that was really embarrassing.

However, Suraj did not take it otherwise. He just used to ignore all of them. Suraj was known to that fact that it is not good to be attentive towards the saying of such people and thus he neglected them. It was the time when he was at college where there was one of

his close friends. Suraj used to tell everything to him. His that friend also calmly used to listen him. He also used to visit Suraj rent house and help to drop him. He was very helpful and caring. Suraj slowly became impressed by his behavior. He started to love him one-sided. Suraj was also sure that even his friend also likes him. One day, Suraj asked his friend that he also likes him. Then, his friend replied him that he does not like him in a way he is thinking. He also responded Suraj that he is his close friend.

After listening to him Suraj could not handle himself as if he was about to fall on his way. He was devastated



by his statement. He was quite sad. Suraj later tried to console himself thinking that he has made mistake to understand his friend who was not the same like him. Everyone's happiness matter after all. No-one may have the same thought as others. Suraj then did not share such to anyone else. Instead, he also believed that he will get a partner soon who can understand him well. But he lacked interest to continue his study. Thus, he abandoned college while he was studying in grade eleven.

What to do after discontinuing the study? There was pile of problems before Suraj. Now he realized that he must work. But what kind of work to do? Suraj has not completed his study. It was difficult to get any work. After all, something must be done to survive. Then, he started to look for a job.

Not only in college, Suraj was disregarded by his own community. He was familiar with the indifference, offense and dislike by the people with whom he asked for a job. But many of them also used to pay attention to him. They behaved him decently telling Suraj that they do not have any work that he is looking for. Many of them used to ask his age, identity and citizenship. Suraj has no citizenship and in fact he does not have citizenship now also. He was genuinely in a very complex situation to introduce him as a gay. He did not get job in many places he looked for. Suraj through his experience learned that there used to be one terrible person among two.

Once Suraj met with an artist named Uma Devi. She is an actress in Nepal. She did not ignore Suraj. She gave him choreographer work. After that Suraj commenced to work there. He learned how to work and even involved working there. Hence Uma Devi supported Suraj and he also did not face any difficulties for work since then. After some time, Suraj also opened

a beauty parlor and attended into different make-up classes. He also started to teach make-up courses to the practitioners. Though Suraj was busy in his work and he did not hamper to anyone, people continued talking about him unnecessarily. He also used to listen sometimes to his own neighbors holding rubbish conversations about him. Suraj also could not stop himself making attempts to persuade such people. He just used to tell them what if people like him will born in their home in future. He also tried to convince them that such people with different identity are natural. Many people also have listened trying to understand him, but many remained silent. Whatever they feel inside, they have executed proper behavior after all.

Suraj was alone. He was feeling restless as if he needs someone to whom he can share anything that is in his mind. But it was not easy for a people like him. He has already confronted with such situation when he failed to understand his own friend. Then Suraj went in search of such videos that addresses the marriage between persons like him. He encountered with the marriage video of Anupam and Roshan. He also noticed some more videos. He was really inspired by these videos to come out of the closet and to disclose his identity. He begun to imagine as if he also has such a partner. Afterwards he identified himself through facebook. He clearly mentioned there that he is gay. One day, a friend request came into Suraj facebook account. He accepted that request. Suraj started to talk with his that friend. Both of them used to talk very nicely. At that time, Suraj also worked as a waiter. His that friend once asked to Suraj that is he gay?

Then Suraj replied to him without hesitation that he is a gay. Suraj that friend also was a gay. Even gay has different roles as said top and bottom. Top means to fulfill male roles and bottom means to fulfill female

roles. Suraj was a gay who fulfills bottom roles and his that friend was gay who fulfills bottom roles. After knowing this all, Suraj wrote to him that he is also gay. He may have partner.

Then Suraj that friend responded to him that he does not have any friend. All have cheated him and abandoned him after couple of days coming into the relation.

Suraj also said him that he also does not need such, but he wants faithful partner who is loyal forever. It is acceptable to spent life with minimum requirements, but companionship should be lifelong.

Suraj that friend also liked his saying. Then after gradually they fall in love with each other. After two years getting to know everything they married. They became life partner. They have married with gusto. Journalists have been also invited to their marriage. However, many in Thankot may not like this. They used to talk about Suraj and his partner indirectly behind the fence. When Suraj came to know about this, again he tried to assure people not to make fun of them as they are also human and have the same feelings. Many of them understood and remained silent. Suraj believes that today half of the people in Thankot understand them with good manner.

Suraj also had faced the bitter experience of COVID-19 pandemic last year. He does not want to recall that deadly virus. Hi choreography work was completely disturbed by corona that time. His beauty parlor too shut down for a long period. There was not any way to income. Suraj husband too also had involved working in a company. Even that works also they lost. His partner also became unemployed. There was the same love and feelings for each other between Suraj and his husband, but they were jobless. They

**Life is once, how much suffering?  
Either the government says you  
are not our citizen.**

faced extremely hard time. They worked harder even for a small job. They spent many nights with empty stomach. Once for around three weeks, they had only water to survive. They were hopeful that the lockdown will be over one day thinking that they had only water for many days. But the lockdown was extended again and again. However, they succeeded to live.

Suraj requested his mother to send some money. But almost banks were also shut down even IME was also closed. Suraj mother could not sent him a money despite her will. Once they encountered with a message of distributing relief packages in Thankot. They have also visited the place for almost second times but every time they were sent back with nothing in their hands. Suraj was never known to the fact that willingly they have not been provided relief or genuinely the relief was over. Thankfully, some stores provided them few stuffs in credit. They survived themselves with that stuffs. They could not pay for the rent for around six months. The houseowner was also struggling difficult time. He did not have other proper way of income. Though he did not tell anything. Initially, he remained silent for the first three months but then said Suraj and his partner to pay for the rent when they can manage slowly.

Later on, Suraj mother also managed to send some money to them through IME. He used that money to pay for the house rent and in the store. Now gradually



when the lockdown was made easier, Suraj also went back to open his parlor. Even make up classes have been operated. But his choreography work has not been started properly. Though, now they have earned some, there is not poor condition as they have faced before during the lockdown. They are spending their daily life quite in simple way.

In fact, Suraj now also has been surrounded by many obstacles. He is carrying such a problem while walking. These problems have not ignored Suraj in each step even when he tries to sleep. In this way, problems and complications have become his shadow in Suraj life. Thus, Suraj tries to smile in front of people even he is in trouble.

Suraj does not have citizenship. No-one is benefited with the facilities provided by the state if there is no citizenship. There is no individual identity without citizenship. Suraj want to issue the citizenship from his husband name. He believes that one day law will provide him with such citizenship. He is awaiting for this since long but till now he has not got citizenship. The law has not legalized their married relation. If their

marriage is not legalized, then there is no possibility to issue a citizenship. They believe that they can look for other respected work if they have citizenship. They could have family acceptable to the society. They could become parents by adopting a child legally. Suraj has beautiful dream to see his complete family.

Next there is another serious dilemma. The problem can be invisible for many people but for those who have faced such is very complicated. There is no meaning of such marriage until it is protected by the law. If any dispute occurs between husband and wife or they wish to be apart or there comes any property issues, then it is not possible to overcome such. It is because they do not have any evidence or a citizenship and even their marriage is not registered. This may ruin their life and leads to depression. Suraj believes that life is short and is for once. It is not acceptable to spent life full of stress. He also assumes that state must address their rights and treats them equally otherwise it has to tell that they are not its citizens. Despite all these problems, Suraj is so optimistic towards life and his such confident is really inspiring.

# The new language of gender: Neither him, nor her but 'them'

Their name is Aashis Thapa. They belong to Chhetri family. Aashis is now 23 years old. Their permanent resident is Okhaldhunga but Aashis was born and grown up in Kathmandu. When they were 21, they went to Australia for master's degree in social work. Currently they live in Melbourne. They assume that they are a bit confused regarding their gender identity. Thus, they state that they are not determined about their exact identity. They do not decide any conventional gender role to be a component of them. Their gender expression is likely to women but there is also contradiction. They discerned themselves as a cisgender man, but they have also the blend of female characteristics. So, they like to identity themselves as gender non-conforming whose gender identity is not determined. They believe in gender neutrality. Their fashion too does not make any sense that identifies their gender identity. They do not like to express themselves as a gay. Thus, they like to present themselves as a homosexual queer. Queer itself has given them a sense of belonging in the community



while gender queer has provided them with an identity though not special. They have confronted with many ups and downs in their life during a short span. That situation is full of fascination, attention, curiosity, sorrow, sadness and hope.

Since their childhood, Aashis was known to the fact that they were different than another male child. Their feelings and emotions were also totally different. Their many friends used to talk about girls and want to get close to them but Aashis had reverse nature.

Their friends used to make fun of them due to their different behavior and bodily expression at school. Aashis when entered to their adolescence, their gender experience was also changing. During that time, people tried to call them gay making worthless gossips.

When Aashis was in grade seven, one of their teachers insulted him so badly. The incident destroyed them in a way that they do not want to go school again. They stopped talk to anybody else due to the incident. When Aashis was in grade 8,9 and 10, even their seniors offended them physically. Some boys from grade 10 hit them terribly when they were in grade 8. They were completely devastated by that incident. Then, they started to be more attentive towards their study. They truly struggled for their study. There was a sort of revenge inside them. After making endless effort in study, many in their school started to recognize Aashis. They admired and acknowledged them.

Aashis when they were studying in grade 9 conducted study and research on homosexual. During that time, they came to know that they are not gay but comes under the category of gender neutrality. They were continuing meeting secretly to another male. But they were not ready to come out of the closet. As they remember their past and because they are student

of social work, Aashis believes that they have to be careful regarding the concept and terminologies. They are much benefited by their education that they are aware of the laws and its provision. Thus, they can speak about this matter as they are familiar with the facilities and concerns.

When Aashis was 18 years old, they have shared about their identity to one of the close friends for the first time. Aashis brings smile on their face when recalling past memories. They are amazed remembering that moment when they were telling about them to their friend. That moment was very concerned and emotional indeed.

Aashis when they were in school used to tell about their condition privately to other boys. They were in a relationship with a boy when they were in their 16. At that time their partner was 10 years older than them. That boy was not so much excited towards life. He had not any aspirations and was not serious about his life. He was in fact not in a committed relationship with Aashis as he has betrayed them. Aashis found his such behavior very unusual. For that reason, Aashis did not carry on the relationship with him. Aashis had also some female friends. Once, Aashis and their close female friend had gone to Chandragiri to visit. They used to explore many places together during their college life. The day when they visited to Chandragiri, Aashis expressed everything that was hidden inside of them. They shared their identity that they are gay. Their that friend did not believe Aashis. She reacted to them as if they are not serious. Aashis then said to her why she is behaving strangely. Aashis getting emotional that time, suddenly tears fall down from their eyes. After that she told Aashis to forgive her for her reaction and also console them saying not to be panic.

She tried to make the situation normal. Finally, Aashis was convinced by her thoughtful words. They feel



lucky themselves to get such an amazing friend like her. She gradually started to notice their behavior and expression and concluded that Aashis was speaking the truth. Aashis has shared about their identity to their two friends when he was drunk. However, their reaction was dramatically awesome. Anyways, Aashis was motivated by their response. But the thing is not related to two people only. Most of the people did not have positive attitude towards them. Aashis was still struggling inside which many times has made them helpless. They also attempted to commit suicide when they were 20 years old. But thankfully Aashis was survived by their friends. Their friends also slapped them on their cheek for trying to do such bad deed.

Aashis was afraid of the situation that they would have to either die or alive when they come to disclose their identity in society. There was a moral complication for them to come out of the closet when they had detained themselves. But now they are unlocked. After one and half years they came to Australia, Aashis now has started to talk about them openly. Initially, Aashis used to live in Sydney. Aashis has their own sister in Melbourne.

They then shifted to Melbourne thinking that it will be easy for them to stay with their own sister. Aashis lives with their sister in the same house. Despite of living many years together, Aashis did not tell anything about their identity to their sister. Sometimes to know about their sister's reaction, Aashis used to behave like female and also do makeup. Then their sister reaction used to be unacceptable for doing such. Aashis became discouraged after listening to their sister, and they could not tell anything.

Aashis faced severe situation during lockdown. At that time, they self-analyzed themselves thinking about regret, awareness and even for suicide. They used to question themselves either they have to commit suicide or come



**Within this community too many people are doing good, socially useful, inspiring and respectable work. His contribution should be openly appreciated by all.**

out of that situation? How to come out? Such thinking roamed into their mind in the initial days of lockdown. They used to think such for many days. They found themselves entirely lonely among people. They were very emotional at that time. They do not want to ignore such feelings they had encountered that time. Those moments were very important for them. After being much depressed, they finally talked with their parents.

They shared everything about them to their parents during the lockdown. Their one of the close friends used to support them. She also became engaged to her own life. It is normal in foreign country. They have to live calmly while living in Australia with their sister. Between the lockdown, one day Aashis shared about them to their sister. As their relationship with family was not so much formal, it became easy for them to be opened. However, that moment was completely emotional. One day, Aashis told to their parents that they like boy not girls. They also shared that their emotions, feelings and thinking too are same as girls. When Aashis was telling such, there created complete peace between them that was really awkward.

Breaking the prolonged quietness, their father told Aashis to pay attention in their career. At the same time their mother suddenly questioned them as how their genitalia changed and how they will reproduce? She regrets more knowing all about her son. Then after Aashis convinced their mother peacefully. She cried and even Aashis also cried. Later, they started to post their feelings in Facebook. Their mother used to respond them about their makeup. She just asked them what they have done while Aashis tried to convince her saying it is only camera effect. Their parents love them very much but afraid of the society reaction. On the other hand, Aashis is also scared of female than male. They believe that mostly girls reacted very fast. There have been many attempts to break the complex male dominated stereotypes. Aashis used to think about people's reaction when they were in Nepal. After being disclosed to their parents, once they also shared everything to their sister. She also supported Aashis. It can be said that the Bollywood movies have set the concept of an ideal family in people's mentality. People in search of that ideal dream sometimes forget reality. Australia has different ambience than Nepal. Here gays are very proud of their identity. People here

have many levels to accept. However, feelings of toxic manhood remain everywhere. Whatever, Australia has totally different surroundings than Nepal. Because of the strong law and that law is fully implemented, people here do not dare anyone to say anything. People may find themselves in trouble if they insult and damage the prestige and dignity of others.

What Aashis has learned from their own experience is that it is difficult to live double life. One is obliged to bear misbehave if they wish to live be themselves. When Aashih was in Nepal, they attempted a lot to fit them into the society. They tried to present themselves in that way which was acceptable to society. In particular, they used to express masculine characteristics exhibiting male voice and bodily expression. They were carrying such behavior because Aashis thought that by doing so, society will not get any chance to question their identity. But Aashis was struggling inside as they could not express themselves. On that note, lockdown became another reason to make the situation even more complicated.

Talking about Australia, the society is not completely homophobic. The ancestors of the people in this country are different. It has been made by the fusion of people from numerous cultures. Although those who observe Islamic religion, people have to face strong homophobia as there is contradictory attitude of the Muslims towards homophobia. But those who are born in Australia have the practice to accept others with different identity. Once when Aashis was working in a restaurant, a lady told Aashis to visit doctor where they can help them to encounter with god. Then Aashis immediately reported about her to the manager. Afterwards, that lady was thrown away by the restaurant.

Aashis was struggling financially during lockdown. There was no work neither any source of income. They

could not ask to their parents at home as they were also combating the hard situation. Aashis was in a dilemma emotionally along with the financial hurdles. Their sister and her husband saving were pretty much fine than of Aashis. Then, Aashis obtained help for their sister and brother in-law. Australian government during that time has also provided relief. It was undoubtedly tough time. However, Aashis succeeded to manage with the support from their nearest ones. Maybe they could not stay long in Australia during lockdown if they were alone. Now also Aashis carries different works. They work in a restaurant and as a supervisor in a work related to social service. They believe that they must work hard to survive in foreign land. Being a student, one must be laborious. However, they know that hard work pays off. So, they work joyfully.

Aashis assumes that lockdown has affected them both in positive and negative way. It was the proper time for Aashis to disclose their gender identity to their parents, sister and brother in-law. The day was meaningful for Aashis as if the burden inside them was no more. But they were still struggling with the financial hardship. Though Aashis learned a lot from both perspectives.

Talking in the context of Nepal, still many things has to be done to introduce more inclusive policies. No-one can say when people's mindset will change. At first that vision must be changed. There is not proper and complete implementation of laws in Nepal. Even though people who have done wrong are not likely to punish and thus they are benefited to say or to do anything.



Aashis believes that there is step of crisis to identity. When one step is completed, then only one can think about what to be done in life, what to do and how to create effect in society. People in this community who are inspired properly can move towards right direction. On the next hand, those who are depressed, and only express anger can only proceed towards depression in society. Aashis is not satisfied with the behavior of some people in their community. Many people think that LGBTI community is only trend. There are few people

who really want to listen carefully and try to understand this community. Another thing that one should know is people who are visible in the society are likely to express their irritation and ego inside them furiously. Then, by observing the particular activity carried out by some groups, society by generalizing them takes the whole community the same. They just respond to the community in a rigid and forceful manner. They forget that what image is being created by their behavior. Let us take an example of Prabal Gurung and Parakram Rana. And next let us observe those who lives in Thamel and next who are sex workers or those who are involved in stealing.

People used to take examples of such and tried to ignore those who have done great deed. Such thoughts only help to make the patriarchal beliefs of society stronger that observes all individuals as in the same boat. Within the same community, many of them have been conducting generous act that is useful, inspiring and dignified to the society. Their contribution must be commended publicly by everyone.



A man with dark hair and a slight smile is standing outdoors in a grassy area with many white flowering trees in the background. He is wearing a green jacket over a dark shirt and dark pants. He is holding a small branch with white flowers in his right hand. A white car is partially visible behind him.

## STORY-9

BABURAM POUDEL

# Who struggles his entire life to live as he chooses...

Baburam Poudel is 49 years old. He was born in Nawalparasi. His family of nine children was culturally rich but economically poor. His mother was very loving and worked hard. From a young age, Babu wanted to help her, and be like her. They were very close.

Baburam was born a male child, but he identified much more with the women in his village. He was very fond of cooking, farming and cleaning with his sisters, aunties and mother's friends. He used to spend his leisure time with the women—dancing, singing and telling stories. His mother never questioned his closeness with her friends. She never told Baburam to go and play with his friends. She loved him very much and respected him as well.

During early childhood, Baburam found himself different to his friends. When he was 12 years old, he realised he was attracted to boys. At the same time his friends were mostly girls. It seemed safer that way. At that time, boys used to have male friends and girls had female friends in the village. But he himself was experiencing different feelings. A naturally curious



boy, he wanted to know why he thought and acted differently to other boys. He wondered about this a lot, but there was no one to ask about it. No-one in his village admitted to being homosexual. He didn't even know that homosexuality existed.

Of course, living in Nawalparasi, he didn't speak openly about his feelings, because he was afraid of being made fun of. Already he was teased because he was quite smart and his sensibilities were more feminine.

Baburam feared Nepali society's rejection for being homosexual. When he was very young, he was raped by his own brother. During this abuse, his brother called him homophobic slurs, which, at the time, Babu didn't understand. This started a terrible mistrust of people, which he still finds hard today. Baburam's mother told him not to go around his older brother. She knew that something was wrong.

For this and many, many other reasons, Baburam's childhood was a struggle. Fortunately, his mother believed in him. She also believed in the power of education. After completing his secondary school education in 1991, Babu had a strong desire to study, and started a degree in Science at college, but his family couldn't afford to continue to pay for tuition. Although Babu worked long hours at multiple jobs to help pay for it, he became too tired to focus on his study. Also, his wealthy grandparents on his father's side did not believe in educating the younger generations, for fear that the young ones would become smarter than the old ones. This was even more so for the women in his family. Fortunately, this has changed over the years.

Hospitality was a field in which Babu could both work and study at the same time, supporting himself financially to complete each course. He was eager to



**Fortunately, my mother believed in me. She also believed in the power of education**

learn and know new things. He gained experience in cleaning, reception, and preparing and serving food.

When Baburam was 22 years old, many of his peers in hospitality were moving to the Middle East in search of foreign employment. He thought to earn money by establishing himself in secure work in hospitality so that he could help his parents financially and set himself up to be independent. This move would also give him a chance to explore his sexuality away from the constraints of home.

Instead of this, he was cheated by a group pretending to be employment agents in Mumbai. They took nearly half of his money. Dejected, he lived in the slums of Mumbai for seven years. He did not contact his family during this time for fear of shame.

Soon after he moved into Marol slum, Babu became very sick. Though he didn't know it at the time, he was dying of malaria, typhoid and pneumonia. Thankfully, he had made one friend—a fellow Nepali—who was very sincere. He helped Baburam get to the hospital, where the doctor said that Baburam had about two hours left to live. Babu thought that maybe his time was not finished! But he would still have to face many hurdles in the days, months and years to come.

After this severe illness, Babu took a long time to recover. He was exhausted, depressed and alone, but needed to find employment quickly, because his money was running out, and he had no intention of shaming his family by going home without succeeding. He contemplated suicide many times, and turned to a number of religions for insight, including Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Hare Krishna and Christianity. These religions did not help him at all. In fact, they made Baburam feel more ashamed and alone, like there was something wrong with him.

During this time, he drew on the strength and love of his mother, who never gave up on anything. He began to find work. Soon he was working for 16 hours a day at three different jobs. With only four hours' sleep per night, he was exhausted but earning money.

One day, while he was cleaning the room of a hotel, he noticed a magazine with a cover of a well-dressed man and woman. He picked it up and started to flick through the pages, where he found an article about homosexuality. This got his attention! Finally, he learnt

a name for his experience. He quickly noted the helpful phone numbers and addresses at the bottom of the story then put the magazine away. **Many things happened after that.**

In Mumbai, Babu was able to explore the life of a closeted gay man by going to nightclubs and cruising. But these experiences were not for him. He wanted a long-term and loving relationship, not just a one-night stand.

Baburam got in touch with Hamsafar Trust and bought several copies of Bombay Dost. Through these connections, he also met an Australian man named Geoffrey Heaviside, who visited Asia and Africa frequently in his role of advocate for disadvantaged people. Geoffrey was the director of Brimbank Community Initiative (BCI), which is a not-for-profit organisation set up to affirm the dignity of all people and the right of every individual to play a meaningful role in society. BCI seeks to directly relieve the poverty, suffering, distress and misfortune of financially disadvantaged people, homeless people, people with disability, those experiencing domestic abuse, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with HIV, migrants, refugees, unemployed persons, LGBTQI+ people and others from minorities.

Baburam felt safe with Geoffrey and started to work with him as his translator when he was in India. After a while they formed a relationship. Finally, Babu was able to be himself. But only to his close gay friends. At that time, Babu was not comfortable telling his parents, even though they were caring and supportive. In hindsight, Babu believes that his mother knew about his sexuality all along, which is why she never insisted that he marry. He is grateful to this day.

Geoffrey insisted that in the 1990s, LGBTQI+ people needed to be emotionally and financially independent



of society, so he encouraged Baburam to gain formal education in hospitality. Doing this meant he could apply to emigrate as a skilled migrant. He returned to Nepal and achieved high grades at Pokhara University's Bachelor of Hotel Management, where he specialised in cooking. Graduating in 2005, he returned to Mumbai to work as a chef at the Hyatt Hotel.

Baburam migrated to Australia in 2007 and has lived there since then. He is an Australian citizen.

Australia was totally different to his experience in Nepal and India. Homosexuals stepped out and participated fully in life, even disclosing their identity to family, friends and the outside world. They seemed so happy. No-one can be completely happy when they are hiding their identity. **Thus, disclosing our truth is vital.**

Babu came out as gay in 2020. Until then, being silent made him feel safe, even though many people could pick his sexuality from his behaviour and attitudes. After his father and mother died (in 2014 and 2016), his best friend Geoffrey died of cancer in January 2020. At this time, Baburam felt completely alone.

At this time he decided to be brave and live his full life. In Australia, Babu has been to night clubs and even tried online dating to seek an understanding and trustworthy partner to spend his life with. Now Baburam is the head banquet chef at a restaurant in Melbourne's suburbs. He earns enough money to buy a house and be comfortable in Australia. He is also the director at BCI, the charity that Geoffrey established.

Babu is determined to continue the great work of his best friend, soul mate and mentor, Geoffrey, through BCI. He strives to help other disadvantaged people to live their full lives in safety and happiness.



The year 2020 was very tough due to the COVID pandemic. There was almost no work in hospitality. During such hard time, Baburam's motivation to move came through BCI, helping other people in this desperate time of need.

Fortunately, Babu did not face any financial burden at this time. He managed all of his expenses through drawing on his savings. As a citizen of Australia he also received some relief aid from the Australian Government. He was able to help some Nepali students who have different gender identity and were struggling to survive during covid lockdown. He is delighted to help others. Baburam believes that helping people lessens his own pain.

Much of this pain came from growing up in Nepal as a gay man. There is still no liberty in Nepal to step out freely with one's own identity. It may take time until everyone can say with honesty that Nepal is a progressive country; that people are free to live openly as LGBTQI+. But Baburam really want to see the changes soon! He wishes that no one in his Nepali community shall face any sadness or trouble through bigotry, misunderstanding or poor education.



**Mitini**  
NEPAL  
मितिनी नेपाल

## INTRODUCTION

Mitini Nepal (MN) is led and driven by community based organization for the rights of people who identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual and transgender. MN was established in 2006 with a vision to build a peaceful, prosperous society where sexual and gender minorities' community can live with self-esteem and dignity while enjoying human rights without any discrimination, violence, assault, and fear.

It was established by the first lesbian couple of Nepal Laxmi Ghalan & Meera Bajracharya. MN advocates for the access of political, legal, social, economic and educational rights of LBT people by strengthening coordination, collaboration, network and by developing mutual understanding among all concerned stakeholders as well as by capacitating excluded and vulnerable LBT individuals in order to create an egalitarian environment for sexual and gender minorities.

Mitini Nepal has been working in 3 provinces of Nepal with local communities and on a national level with the mission to improve the human rights and well-being of sexual and gender minorities in Nepal.

## MISSION

To advocate for the access of political, legal, social, economic and educational rights of LBT people by strengthening coordination, collaboration, network and by developing mutual understanding among all concerned stakeholders as well as by capacitating excluded and vulnerable LBT individuals in order to create an egalitarian environment for sexual and gender minorities.

# GOAL

A just society where LBT can live a dignified life with fruitful participation in public spheres, highly protected socially, economically, legally and politically.

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## OUR PROGRAMS

### 1. Lobby and Advocacy Program

We advocate for equal rights of LBT people through interaction with policymakers and government stakeholders, media and other members of civil society. We also organize discussion, seminars, workshops, rally, sit-ins, press meetings, etc.

### 2. Awareness and sensitization Program

We conduct awareness-raising programs to sensitize community on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) and LGBTI issues through street dramas, radio program, cultural programs, posters and pamphlets publications, orientation in academic institutions including schools and colleges, awareness raising programs for community service organizations (CSOs), parliamentarians, government stakeholders, community police and media.

### 3. Skill development programs

We provide skill development and income generating training to LBT and women for

marginalized and poor communities. Some of the income generation training are tailoring, weaving, driving, beautification training, coffee making, mushroom cultivation training, and candle making. We also sell products for fundraising.

### 4. Capacity development programs

We conduct capacity development programs such as leadership development, human rights, legal awareness and other training on sexual and gender rights.

### 5. Psychosocial and Legal counseling

We provide both psychosocial and legal counseling services to lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender.

### 6. Research and study

we conduct qualitative and quantitative research on LBT women's issues including challenges and also document their stories as narratives.







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मितिनी नेपाल

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Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender**

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