

The background features a series of horizontal stripes in shades of magenta, orange, and blue. A jagged, torn-paper-like line runs diagonally across the image, separating the top stripes from the bottom ones. The central area is a light pinkish-white with faint, thin, curved lines radiating from the center.

A LIFE- CHANGING HURRICANE

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A LIFE— Changing Hurricane

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FOREWORD

I am thrilled to get the opportunity to write a foreword to **"A LIFE-CHANGING HURRICANE"**, a story book containing various actual experiences of lesbian, bisexual and queer women of the gender and sexual minority group.

The women's movement in Nepal has a hundred-year old history. However, lesbian women began raising their voices only in 1990, after the multi-party system took over, and it became an organized group only in 2002. That same year, the Mitini Support Group was formed. After which, our organization Mitini Nepal was formally launched in 2006. As easy as it was to form the organization, it was just as hard to register the organization. The same-sex relationship that wasn't accepted by the family and society wasn't accepted by the state either.

At a time (2002) when homosexuality was yet to be decriminalized, I, Laxmi Ghalan (the founder and president of Mitini Nepal), and my partner Meera Bajracharya came out as the first lesbian couple of Nepal. While trying to raise our voice for the recognition and acceptance of lesbian and bisexual women, we faced all kinds of gender-based violence from our own friends and families as well as the society. When you think about it, more than two decades have already passed since the movement of gender and sexual minority group first began in Nepal. By recognizing the term "gender and sexual minority" for the first time in BS 2072, the Constitution of Nepal secured the identity of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women to some extent. However, the issue of LBQ women was not given a priority even in community movements and feminist movements,

and the voices of LBQ women activists were suppressed by the mainstream community movements. Due to the lack of support from the community, LBQ women still face a variety of challenges. The fact that there is still no proper statistics available for women belonging to this community is indeed a sad aspect. Therefore, for the first time in the history of Nepal, Mitini Nepal has published a story book with the aim of documenting the stories of LBQ women and using the story book as a medium for advocacy on their rights and issues. We are also ecstatic to release this story book on the occasion of Homsexual Visibility Day 2025. There is a need in the women's movement to raise the issues of lesbian, bisexual and queer women as well with equal priority.

Mitini Nepal would like to thank from the bottom of our hearts all the people from the gender and sexual minority group, executive board members, employees, volunteers, and well-wishers, who have supported us in preparing and publishing this story book. We would also like to ask everyone to show their support for the rights, justice and empowerment of this community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laxmi Ghalan', with a horizontal line underneath.

Laxmi Ghalan
President
Mitini Nepal

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From Suffering to Suffering

● **Ritaa Sada**



'Life is a mixture of happiness and sorrow.' A lot of people write or utter this line. However, this line does not apply to my 36 years of life. In these 36 years, I have not known what happiness is. To begin with, I am Ritaa Sada. My surname makes it clear that I belong to the Dalit community. Sada is a surname of the Musahar caste. The Musahar caste is considered the Dalit of Dalits. The caste I was born is still living in extreme despair, extreme poverty, and extreme illiteracy. I am not only poor due to economic deprivation, I am also neglected due to social hatred and discrimination.

Economic prosperity doesn't matter much. Because one can also live on a modest income. Many people are poor, but their lives are happy. Poverty is one thing, respect and co-existence are another. People need both of these things.

In Nepal, women are already neglected to begin with. Dalits are neglected as well. The caste which is considered the lowest even among Dalits is even more neglected. And Madhesis are neglected as well. And the extent to which sexual and gender minorities are victims of neglect can only be known by those who have experienced it. That is why I said that there is no such word as "happiness" in the dictionary of my life. Women, Madhesis, Dalits, sexual minorities, all these adjectives apply to



me. No character burdened by the weight of these tags can live in this society with their heads held high. Nevertheless, I am still living—or rather I should say still breathing.

Besides women, Madhesis, Dalits, and sexual minorities, another tag linked to my identity is that of a 'single woman'. If one had to accuse someone of witchcraft in the village, it would be against the poorest Dalits and disadvantaged women of this society.

Because it is easy to commit atrocities against those belonging to such a group, as there is no one to speak up for them even if one commits atrocities on them. It is not that times have not changed. They have changed a little. But how much has changed, you have to go and ask those who have experienced it. The discrimination prevalent in society is not visible to outside eyes. Discrimination does not appear in any physical form or special voice.

Even if we look at it geographically, I come from a region which is more backward than other regions of Nepal. I was born in Siraha of Madhesh. Siraha covers a large portion of Madhesh. Madhesh lacks education and awareness. Poverty is also equally prevalent there. However, given the fact that Nepal itself is a poor country and has not been able to develop socially, it would not be right to focus on Siraha alone. However, if I or my family had been born and raised in Kathmandu, the society in Kathmandu would have been more respectful to us. In Kathmandu, people often do not care much about others. Who did what? What is she doing? Not much curiosity. It is a human nature to be curious about other people's affairs. But in big cities, small things are not given any attention to.

The environment in which I was born was one in which it was believed that girls should not be educated. Even then, some

conscious people would educate their girls. If studying and writing for the Musahar caste is difficult now, it was even more difficult back then. Instead of school, I started doing household chores. My childhood got over taking care of my siblings.

I was 15 years old at around 1961. The country was shaken by the violent rebellion of the Maoists.

Nobody knew who would die when. Many people were killed every day. Children became orphans. Many were snatched from mothers' arms. The Maoist rebels used to force the youth of the village to join the People's Liberation Army.

They took me too, saying that I too had to go to war. Being mired in poverty, I thought that joining the Maoists would do something good. The Maoist leaders used to say that this war would end discrimination against Madhesi, women, and Dalits. Their words left a deep impression on my young mind. It really seemed that after this war, a new dawn would arrive. The injustices of society would end and everyone would be treated equally. It looked as if the good days of the poor would arrive again.

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I began to buy into what the leaders were saying, and I joined the People's Liberation Army. When I was in the People's Liberation Army, there was no choice between living and dying. I had to walk with my life in my hands. If the army saw me, they would not stop; they would just point their rifles and shoot. Today one place, tomorrow another. Even my own home began to feel unfamiliar. Many people had already come to know that I had joined the Maoists. The informers had already informed

the government about me. Even going home would have been risky for me. When they said that all kinds of discrimination would end, I too became a part of the Maoist cadre. I joined the army. We had joined the people's war for revolution. As per the party's instructions, we had to go to Sindhuli. In Sindhuli, I met a friend named Manish (Sarita) Yadav from Saptari. He was a woman. But his mannerisms were like those of a man. Short hair, wearing shirts and pants, and his physiques and style were like that of a man. I only learned much later that such people are called trans men. We both belonged to the Madhesi community. Our conversations grew stronger. Since we shared the same language and culture, we became close. We talked about



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all kinds of things, including happiness and sorrow, family, society, and war. We never knew when we fell in love with each other during such conversations.

Soon after the people's war, the people's peace movement began in Nepal. Four years had passed since we joined the Maoists. After the Maoists signed a peace agreement with the government, things became easier for us. We started walking around with confidence. Fear began to disappear.

However, our relationship could not remain a secret within the People's Liberation Army. The commander had come to know about such a relationship.

He called us both and reminded us that 'a soldier who is marching for revolution should focus on revolution, not love.' But neither war nor revolution can stop love. After our relationship continued, the commander of the Maoist People's Liberation Army threw us out by saying, 'Unnatural relationships are not acceptable. If you want to stay in such a relationship, get out from here.'

We both got out. We started making a living together. We had joined the Maoists with the hope of a big change. When we left, our hands were empty, our minds were empty. We had nothing with us, nothing at all.

Meanwhile, the family's financial situation was also shaky. In Manish's house, I was treated as a daughter-in-law. Even in the village, I was called bhauju, buhari. After some time, Manish got a job. The job that Manish got made it easier to manage our daily life. We built a small house near his parents' house and started living there.

Upon mutual agreement, we decided to have a child. We adopted the test tube baby technique and had a child. Now, there is three of us. I gave birth to a daughter from my womb. After some time, Manish's work contract ended. Then there was no new contract. A daughter had been born at home. To run the family, we both started working as wage laborers.

Just then the Corona epidemic started. Manish had gone to his parents' house in Saptari. I was in Siraha. Life was inconvenient during Corona. Due to the lockdown, I was stuck in Siraha and Manish in Saptari. One day I received a call. I was told on the phone: Manish is no longer in this world. He took his own life.

Manish was my breath. He was my soul. He was the root of our family of three. I had spent very crucial times of my life with him. He was the father of my daughter. Manish was everything. But now he was no longer there. I was devastated. It was as if I was trapped in darkness. For me, day and night, hunger and sleep, nothing happened. I was feeling nothing except despair and

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restlessness. God took away my only support too.

After Manish's death, my daughter's health too began to deteriorate. People blamed me for Manish's death. They blamed me for my daughter's illness as well. They spewed out abusive words. Unable to listen to their words, I went to live with my parents. The relationship with my parents also did not work well. Then I went to live at my sister's place.

I don't have a citizenship yet. As a husband, Manish couldn't get me a citizenship. Everyone in my family has a citizenship. They didn't want to make one for me. They would always come up with some excuses when I asked them to do so. As I was involved in the Maoist rebellion, I am a capable speaker. I can present my issues well. People say I am smart. But what will I do with this smartness when I don't even have a citizenship with me? My husband is gone. I got no wealth. The party that did underground politics for four years kicked me out empty-handed.

Now my daughter is seven years old. She is studying in grade 2. Since I don't have a citizenship, I haven't even been able to register my daughter's birth. What places have I been victimized, ignored, despised and humiliated from? If I count, it ends up like this: from the society, from the party, from my family, from the state, from my relatives. From every direction.





Undisclosed Love

• **Samjhana
Biswakarma**

White walls all around the house. Red clay tiles in the background. Thatched roof. Such a house reflects Nepali society. Nowadays, such houses are no longer built. But I was born in such a house as the eldest daughter. My little sister was born after me. And then, there were four of us. It wouldn't be wrong to call our family of four small and happy.

I never used to talk much since childhood. I was the kind that would not make friends easily. Or I should say, I was an introvert. Was I afraid of my father? What it was, I am not sure. The word 'father' would never come out of my mouth.

I was a very understanding daughter since childhood. My sister was the playful kind. I was both surprised and envious of her ability to express her thoughts and make her own decisions. As for me, I felt crushed by the expectations attached to my role.

I had just given my grade 12 exam. During that time, there was a lockdown due to the Corona pandemic. After the pandemic, I was supposed to continue my studies. However, I didn't feel like studying. It had only been 2-3 weeks since the lockdown had been lifted. Suddenly, I didn't feel like living in Sarlahi. I was obsessed with Kathmandu. Kathmandu is a city for dreamers.

Sarlahi is small. Kathmandu is big. There are many things in Kathmandu that aren't in Sarlahi. There are many opportunities there. Many have tried their luck by going to Kathmandu. Once someone becomes popular in Kathmandu, they become popular all over the country. But the people who are known in other parts of Nepal aren't recognized in Kathmandu. Even the regions nearby don't recognize them at times.

For new opportunities, new places, new excitement, I too started making Kathmandu my destination. One day, I told my parents, 'Now I will go to Kathmandu.' Both my parents were surprised to hear it. I had not completed my 12th grade. I was still a child. I had not reached adulthood. When their daughter told them that she was going to Kathmandu, they must have thought, 'No, what will she do if she goes to Kathmandu? Who will take care of her?'

I would often tell them that I was going to Kathmandu. They would say, 'Do whatever else you want, just don't talk about going to Kathmandu.' I felt like I had grown up. In the eyes of parents, children will always remain children. This issue was creating a conflict in my home.

My parents had, however, sent my sister to Kathmandu for her studies. She used to work as well. I said, 'It will be easier for my sister after I go there. We two sisters will live together and



work.' My mother would say, 'What are you going to do?' I didn't have a specific plan in mind. And I had no answer to give to my mother. But I did not stop insisting and being stubborn. Finally, to my happiness, my parents changed their stance. I set foot in Kathmandu. I was so happy that my feet did not touch the ground.

My sister also helped me find a job. I had to give an interview for a new job. The first interview was a bit tough. There was no reason to be afraid. However, it seems there are no people in the world who aren't afraid of interviews. I got selected on my first interview itself. I got a job and started working as well.

I got a job right away after moving to the new place. I made new friends. It's not just about getting a job, you also have to be good at the work you have been given. You have to work hard for this. In school and college, you are taught bookish things. But in real life, that knowledge from books is not very useful. Real life is different.



I had a female friend on social media. At first, I would talk to them like a normal woman or friend. 'What's unusual about friendship between girls? Friendship between people of the

opposite sex, however, is not possible,' I would think to myself and made them a friend. We would talk on Messenger. We didn't meet. The conversation would go well. Then, one day, we decided to meet. A few days later, we met.

We both listened to each other. We understood each other's feelings. We parted with the promise to meet from time to time. As time passed, our meetings started to increase. They was like a coconut. Tough on the outside, soft on the inside. Or compassionate. Even though they looked tough, they heart was soft. In truth, people who talk tough on the outside are often soft and kind on the inside. Those who talk smooth on the outside are dangerous.

Although I didn't ask, they said they were from the 'LGBT' community. I found it unusual. What is it? What happens there? I would wonder. And then they would disappear. Some of the things they said would enter my mind, some would just pass through. In my understanding, it seemed that women who don't menstruate were called 'LGBT'.

Talking to them, meeting them, and hanging out with them were all going on. One day they proposed to me. I was very confused. I didn't even know myself. How could I accept or reject their proposal? I asked them to give me some time. They didn't pressure me.

Waves of emotions were playing in my head. I liked everything about them. If I hadn't had special feelings for them, things wouldn't have progressed like it did. What is liking everything about them if not love? I thought a lot. And I passed on the good news to them that my reply was 'yes'.

After a long time, the news of my love affair with them reached my home. My parents started ordering me to return from Kathmandu anyhow. Despite the pressure from my family, I remained obstinate. It



had been a long time since I had met my family.

One day, my mother said, 'Father is returning from abroad.' My mother also came to Kathmandu. And we reached the airport to pick up my father. Father arrived from abroad. We daughters were happy. A father's arrival is a joy. On top of that, when the family is united, it is another joy. The next day, my parents asked me to go to Sarlahi. I insisted

on not going. They tried to convince me. They scolded me. They threatened me. But I kept telling them that I won't go to Sarlahi. Then my father raised hands on me. I got scared and returned home.

After about 16-17 days of reaching home, I went to my mother's elder sister's house in Hetauda. I ran away from there and came to Kathmandu to meet my partner. At that time, we didn't have a penny. We didn't have a place to stay. We didn't have a plan for what to do next. After coming to Kathmandu, we took refuge in Mitini Nepal.

At that time, Mitini Nepal was running a program called 'Gaurab Mahina'. We also participated in that program. We saw other couples like us. I felt relieved. I felt that we were not the only couple; there were others. We filed a petition in Mitini Nepal requesting them to 'take the initiative for the right to live together'. Mitini Nepal gave us some advice on the rights of same-sex couples. Their advice brought us relief. But due to family problems, it was not easy to maintain our relationship. I was afraid that they would forcibly separate us. Mitini Nepal kept us in a shelter for two weeks. After some time, both of us got the opportunity to join and work for Mitini Nepal. Thereafter, we worked hard and began making a place for ourselves in our new life.

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The Relationship That Dare Not Speak Its Name

● Sheetal Thapa

A true story of my life.

The love between two women.

A love that didn't break even when there were no rights for us, no law for us.

A love that didn't care about anything besides hoping to be together forever.

I used to make my living running a beauty parlor in Bara, Jitpur. One day, a man suddenly came to the house where I was staying. Although he behaved like a man, he was a woman. He appeared like a man with his neatly cut hair and men's dress, but from his voice it was clear that he was a woman. He asked me, 'Is there a room available in this house, sister?'

I said, 'I will call the house owner. You can talk to her yourself.' Aunt came. They had a conversation. Aunt told him, 'The room will be available only in a week' and went upstairs. Then the two of us started talking about ourselves.

He revealed that he was in urgent need of a room. Since I was a woman, I offered to share my room with him for a week. We decided to stay together. After living together for a week, our

love blossomed.

Later, he got himself a separate room. We started living in his room sometimes and at mine at other times. Just like this, we spent a year together. And then, in 2016, Mitini Nepal called me from Kathmandu to participate in the Homophobia Day program.

He asked me, 'Are you going too?' I said, 'Yes'. I was going to Kathmandu with him for the first time. I was also a bit nervous. But I saw many other couples like us at the program and I felt good. I got to know brother Laxmi Ghalan and sister Sarita K.C., along with other friends and sisters.

We had fun. We all went back to our respective houses with the promise that we would meet up and talk on the phone. After some time, his family got transferred from Jitpur to Rupandehi. It was difficult for us to be apart from each other. Love seems to grow stronger with distance.

We had promised to be together in good times as well as bad times throughout our lives. So I decided to sell the shop and move in with him. We also got a room there, and introduced him to the neighbors by saying, 'We are sisters'.

A few years passed like this. It was the time of Corona. One day, he suddenly had difficulty breathing. I took him to the hospital. It





took 30 minutes to get to the hospital. Those 30 minutes felt like 2 hours to me. Seeing him in a state of shock, I could not control myself. I had no choice but to look after him alone.

We reached the hospital and met the doctor. The doctor started giving him oxygen. The doctors there then advised us to take him to another private hospital. We put him in an ambulance and headed to the other hospital. I started to panic more as I saw him. All kinds of thoughts started filling my head. Was he going to leave me? What would I do if I become alone? Several such negative thoughts arose.

We arrived at the hospital. Additional treatment started immediately in the emergency room. I also went in with him. The doctor looked at me and asked who he was. I thought for a moment. I wanted to say, 'I am his wife,' but since Nepal's law does not guarantee any rights for a couple like us, I was forced to say, 'I am his friend.'

I told the doctor that I had been living with him for 5 years. What did he think? Is he recovering? When I asked him, the doctor said, 'He will recover, don't worry. But please inform his home,' and left. I went to him. Should we inform his house? I asked. He said, 'No, I am fine.' After a few days of treatment, he began recovering. Four days passed in the hospital, taking care of him, talking to him, and sometimes clicking pictures.

On the day he was discharged from the hospital, we returned home with his medicines. He was given leave from work until he was fully recovered. We spent time sitting in the room and looking at the pictures and doing various other things.

After a few months, he was transferred from Bhairahawa, Rupandehi to Mahendrapur, Nawalparasi. There too we used to introduce ourselves as sisters, and occasionally as friends.

We did not live openly. Many couples from our community lost their jobs when they revealed their identity. I had heard that we would not be able to get rooms in different places. For that reason as well we would hide our identities and relationships as we did not want such tough days to enter our lives.

I, sometimes, regret the fact that we were not able to reveal our identities. Now we have been living together for 8 years. We have bought a land near my family's place and built a house. We have vowed not to give up and to keep struggling come what may. We have also been discussing how we both can become financially secure in the future.

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No More Kiran in Shree

● Shree Maya Gurung



I first met Kiran at my own house. He was a friend of my neighbor. I too was a friend of my neighbor. Later, the friend of my friend became my friend too.

Kiran often used to frequent my neighbor friend's house. That's how I got to know him. When a boy comes to a girl's place, people become a bit curious. When a girl comes to a girl's place, they aren't that curious. For this reason, his coming to my place or me going to his did not become a matter of special interest for the most part. People show curiosity only when they come to know that the girl and boy are in a special relationship. When that happens, their curiosity touches the sky, as if there has been a big accident or something.

My conversations and meetings with Kiran started to become thicker. It was due to some emotional connection as well. We would feel the same way about things. Our desires and interests also began to match. How long could it take to fall in love once our desire for each other increases?

The distance between Kiran and my house was about an hour. When two hearts become one, that one hour distance becomes one minute. But when they become distant, that one hour distance cannot be reached even in a day.

We had already started getting closer. There were talks of feelings and love. Now there was a desire on both side to make the relationship formal. One day, we tacitly agreed to be in a relationship. There was no formal announcement. It was not expressed openly in words. However, we had begun living together.

Both of us suggested going to Nepalgunj. After reaching Nepalgunj, we got in touch with the Nilhira Society. We joined the Nepalgunj branch of this society and started working there. At first, Kiran worked there. Later, I was put in Kiran's place. And Kiran started working in a bicycle store. Even though it was small job, there was no problem at all in running our lives when both of us started working.

Around 1977, the Corona pandemic spread all over the world. People would debate whether Corona would enter Nepal or not. Some said that people would die after getting Corona. Some claimed that only 2-3% would die, and most of them would survive. However, this pandemic took many lives. It scared a lot of people.

While we were debating whether Corona would enter Nepal or not, it entered. People started getting sick. Radio and television started reporting the number of people who had lost their lives due to Corona. Hearing such numbers used to scare me. While trying to guard myself from Corona, Kiran got a high fever one day. The fever would subside for a few





hours after taking the medicine. When the medicine stopped working, the fever would rise again. Gradually, he started coughing. The cough felt as though his lungs were coming out.

We took him to the hospital for treatment. Three days after he was taken to the hospital, Corona took him away from us forever.

Due to the lockdown, no one from Kiran's house could come to his funeral. Kiran's brother's daughter, son-in-law, son and daughter came. My friends and I also performed his funeral together.

Corona had not only taken away Kiran. It had taken away my happiness. It had taken away Kiran's family's happiness. It had also taken away her dreams and hopes. I also showed symptoms of Corona while I was sitting for Kiran's *kiriya*. It also affected me during the time of mourning. What is life, after all? If a person is destined to live, they will live anyway. If a person is destined to die, they will die anyway. My fate did not let me die. It did not let Kiran live.

We were living together in our ups and downs. We were like two wheels of a chariot. God took away one wheel, and now I am alone. I am incomplete, lacking.

We had built a small house with our hard work. It has not been long since we started living in that house. Now there is the house, but he is not there. Only his memories remain in the house. I remember the moments spent with him. He left this world on 26th of Baisakh, 78. Looking back, three years have passed. But even now, it seems as if he is alive. It seems as if he has only gone out for a few years.

When he was taking his last breath at Bheri Hospital, Mitini Nepal contributed Rs. 25,000 for his treatment. He passed away during the treatment. I carried out his death rites with that 25,000 rupees. I prayed to God that his soul rest in peace. If indeed God exists somewhere, he will give him peace in the afterlife.

After his death, his family members did not take me with them while registering his death. They also took all the money I had. I could not even claim Kiran's property because I was in a homosexual relationship. The separation from Kiran caused me a lot of mental stress. I became a victim of mental anxiety and stress. I felt like I was alone in a sea of sorrow.

Time does not remain constant. When it rains, it pours. Slowly, I am learning to get hold of myself. Friends from my community also kept comforting me and giving support. Somehow, I am finally standing again. Believing that life is a struggle, I keep dragging myself.

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Small World

● Sita Rana

My mother passed away when I was only two years old. I understood only much later that my mother had passed away. I could only make out what she looked like after looking at her photo. I can only imagine how my mother's face looked now after looking at the photo. What kind of mother was she? How would she have said? I don't know. A mother is a mother. Nothing in the world compares to a mother's love. I, however, never got to experience a mother's love.

How hard it must have been for her to know that she was leaving her dear ones? How much she must have cried at having to leave her young children? I can barely say anything about it. But a mother is a mother. But a mother's is a mother. And, as long as I live, my mother will always be dear to me. Who else will remember her besides her children?

After my mother passed away, my father remarried. He must have been compelled to do so. It was not just about feeding the children. Even though there may be many things in the house, without a mother, the main thing is missing. There is a lack of a mother's love. After my mother passed away, my brother and I became orphans. Orphans without a mother. My brother must have missed my mother more than I did. As I grew older, I also understood well that my mother was no longer in this world.

I saw the love that other mothers gave to their children. Who would give us that kind of love?

I don't know if other people understood that my brother and I didn't have a mother's shelter over us. But my grandmother's sister understood a bit. She was a single woman.

Motherless me was adopted by my grandmother's sister (or let's just say grandmother). She let me stay with her. She gave me the love that I was supposed to receive from my mother and father. She too must have thought, 'Who does this little girl have?' Until I was 14-15, I stayed under the care of my grandmother.

I wonder what happened to my heart one day. What happened to it I myself don't know. I felt like going back to my own house. I wanted to tell my grandmother about it. She looked toward me and asked, 'What is it that you are merely signaling with your head but not telling me?' Then I told her, 'I feel like going home.' My grandmother stopped for a moment and then said, 'If you feeling like going back to your house, you should. Do you even need to ask for permission to go to your own house?'

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I saw a strange boy in Birendranagar. Call it coincidence or fate. I met him. We talked. I was surprised to find out later that the person I thought was a boy was actually a girl. In fact, he was a 'trans man'.

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At first I was happy and then I felt sad. Leaving grandma made me sad. I was happy to go to my house. I went home. I started living with my stepmother and her siblings. There wasn't anything that bad at home. But maybe it's because I didn't have my own mother, I felt like I lacked something. Something was missing. My aunt's house was also near my house. My aunt loved me very much. My aunt's elder daughter used to study in Surkhet. We had gone to Birendranagar to give money to her. In actuality, I had begun living in my aunt's house more than in mine. That must be why

she took me too to Birendranagar along with her.

I saw a strange boy in Birendranagar. Call it coincidence or fate. I met him. We talked. I was surprised to find out later that the person I thought was a boy was actually a girl. In fact, he was a 'trans man'. We had a brief conversation. Nothing special happened.

I never thought that that brief conversation would be so significant in my life, that meeting would turn out to be the starting point of a new life. How could I even think so? Hundreds of people meet and separate in life in such a manner all the time. How many people meet once and never meet again. Who can keep track of them? Even though he looks like a boy, he is still Sheela Gurung. Why did I keep calling him a boy? But, I, Sita Rana, was not like him.

We met and left immediately. We kept in touch. At that time, we didn't have mobile phones. We did not have access to email, internet, or social media as well. We used to communicate only through letters sent by post. Even after reading the letter that was written 15 days ago, it felt like I was listening to him speak

directly in front of me. This process went on for two years. While exchanging our feelings through letters, I didn't realize that two years had passed. Where should we keep meeting to understand each other's feelings? After reading each other's letters, it seemed like we were both made for each other.

We met after four years. By that time, I had already become aware of the fact that I was a sexual and gender minority. We were confident that we had found a compatible partner in each other. Then we decided to live together. I started living in his house. We both worked. After both of us worked, it was not difficult to make a living. We managed to earn some money by giving tuition to children. However, since this job was not sustainable and the monotonous work was not fun, we decided to go to Nepalgunj. After that, our base became Nepalgunj. My partner Sheela got involved in small jobs. I started learning sewing. Later, I turned it into a profession. However, my health stopped supporting me. After falling ill repeatedly, I could no longer work. I had to rest at home. We opened a grocery store to stay home for a while. Soon after, there was a lockdown due to the Corona epidemic. Due to that lockdown, normal business also came to a still. Gradually, the grocery business started to suffer losses. Investments sank.

Then, one day, I got the opportunity to work as a focal person for 'Elder Citizen Project' at Mitini Nepal for two years. In the course of my work, I had to travel to different cities in the country. This also gave me the opportunity to get to know many other sisters like myself.

Right now, in my family, I have my sister's son as well. Me, my partner Sheela, and the kid have built a small family. I am also realizing that having a little kid has made our family a little brighter.





Ease – Unease

● Sukumaya Magar

Three decades of life. Or let's say 30 years. This is a very long time. One can't imagine how much the world changes in 30 years. Today, we are living in 2025. Try recalling the world 30 years ago. The internet was barely known. Mobile phones were just an imagination. Nobody could have imagined the kind of power that social media has today. Innumerable things have happened in these 30 years.

Thirty years is in fact a really long time. In 30 years, a person is born, educated, starts their career, and gives birth to another generation like them. It is an era, really. In Nepal, two entire systems changed from 46 BS to 63 BS. This too happened in the span of 30 years. Hence, 30 years is not a joke.

I met my partner when I was 20. We lived together for 30 years. When I was 50, my partner passed away. I am 54 now. My emotional relationship with the person I spent 30 years with did not get any legal recognition. We just lived together. The house, family, and society were aware of it. The family had approved it. However, the law did not recognize it. All the wealth and love we had accumulated together vanished with his death. Now I have just his memories. I remember every single moment spent

with him during those 30 years. I have all the joys and sorrows I shared with him. But I don't have him. Only his memories remain.

People say that laws are made to make our life better. But turns out the same laws play with our emotions as well. People who have eyes and conscience write laws, but after writing them, the law itself seems to shut its conscience; its eyes get blindfolded.

I met him in a textile factory in Chitwan when I was 18. We used to work together in the factory.

My house was in Devghat, Tanahun, Gandaki Province. The family was middle or lower middle class. Around the age of 20, I had come to realize that me, Sukumaya Magar, isn't like a "normal" woman. I wasn't attracted to men. I was attracted to women. I am not going to bother writing about the innumerable tidal waves of thoughts that played in my mind while I was learning about my sexuality.



My family couldn't digest the fact that we were getting closer. After turning 20, he and I built our own world. There were just the two of us in that world. We had taken our relationship forward; we had not taken away anyone's share. But people in the society used to try to belittle my partner and attack him with abusive words. They could not accept our relationship. We prioritized our own happiness, not other's. And we started living together.

Just living together wasn't sufficient. Life could not run without a source of income. We opened a small grocery store because we realized it required neither any special skills nor a large capital. The store was in Devghat. The store made us self-reliant. After becoming financially strong, we started supporting our family. When we had money, it felt like even those who had distanced themselves from us had come closer. That

proved how powerful money can be. As we became self-reliant, our family's approach toward us also became lenient. The pressure on us began to ease.

It started to feel like people were starting to readily accept our relationship, just like they do for other couples. I have not dwelled much on whether that was merely an illusion or a reality, or something else. But that was how we felt at that time.

Three years ago, my partner's health suddenly deteriorated. He had some serious issue in his liver. At first, it looked like a mere jaundice. Because the symptoms were similar to the symptoms seen in jaundice. Alas, turns out it wasn't a normal jaundice. This disease took my partner with it forever. I lost the friend who was with me for 30 years. For whom I had given up everything, that very person got jaundice. I didn't have anyone except him. But God didn't show any mercy on me for my situation. His heart didn't break when he left me alone. He took my partner away.

A life that was going pretty well suddenly became desolate. The bright world turned into darkness. I felt completely vacuous.

Those who were rubbing salt to my wound started raising their heads. My partner's family members started claiming all the property that was in my partner's name. They also claimed the money that was in my partner's bank account. They did not even leave the money that was in the joint account which he and I had opened together. I reminded them that he was my life partner.



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Our 30-year journey together was swept away by a single section of the law. There was no room for claims, no legal means of complaining. All that remained were the memories of those 30 years spent with him.

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However, the law did not buy this. The bank did not accept it. They said that there was no document to verify the relationship between the people who had opened the joint account. Due to this reason, I was treated like a friend or a business partner.

What one has witnessed with one's own eyes can still be proven false by the law. That's exactly what happened in my case. Everyone knew about our relationship. Everyone in the family and society knew about it. But when they said that this was not legal, everything was over. Our 30-year journey together was swept away by a single section of the law. There was no room for claims, no legal means of complaining. All that remained were the memories of those 30 years spent with him.

After taking my partner's property and cash, her family members distanced themselves from me. What did I mean to them? They were only interested in the property. After getting that, I became useless to them.

If our relationship had been legally recognized, I would be living as his wife even after his death. I could have claimed our joint property. However, the law does not recognize a same-sex couple like us. My story demonstrated that if you aren't able to legally manage the property you earned during your lifetime, it can end up becoming someone else's. I am hoping that those who read my story will take heed of such things.

After his death, I could not run the grocery store by myself. I started facing financial problems.

It is normal for a life to become shabby when the source of income dries up. I had financial problems on the one hand and, on top of that, complications started to arise in my health. Just at that time, I took refuge in Mitini Nepal. Mitini Nepal has been running the 'Senior Citizen Project'. I too participated in this program. Initially, I found it awkward to attend such programs organized by such organizations. Gradually, everything is getting easier now.

I think to myself: life is a mixture of ease and unease. What one considers ease or unease also depends on them.

The Slippers My Friend Left Behind

● Amrita



The story of my life like a story written by a fiction writer. If I think of telling my true story, I fear people will not believe it. If I keep silent, I feel the need to tell the truth.

One day the villagers in my village spread the rumor that I had eloped with a guy who was a year younger than me although I was just playing gatta (a Nepali game played with small stones) with him. I, Amrita, was merely 14 years old at that time. The guy I was playing gatta with was 13. Would we have dared to elope at that age?

Although I was born in Jhapa, I grew up in a beautiful village in Ilam. I was everyone's favorite at home. My family's financial condition was not that bad. It was better than most in the village. My parents had been fulfilling all my wishes and desires. Being able to fulfill your desires in childhood is also a matter of pride and privilege. Because in our country, most people's childhood is usually spent in sorrow and struggle. I used to go around calling myself a rich father's daughter. There is nothing unusual in a young mind going around uttering whatever its immature brain commands. My childhood was happy. I did not have to face poverty and suffering. But turns out life isn't always like that. Happiness and sadness happen to be two sides of the same coin. Sometimes there is happiness; sometimes, there is

sadness. It is like a circle game. Despite everything going just fine, an unimaginable incident occurred in my childhood. That incident changed the course of my life.

One day, I was returning home after playing with my friends. I had a childhood friend along with me. She had also come to my house with me. As soon as we reached home, she said, 'I've left my slippers behind at my friend's house. Let's go get it.' 'We have just arrived home. Are we to go back again?' I thought to myself. I told my mother that we are going back to get my friend's slippers. Without looking, she told us to go and come back soon. We both left the house to get the slippers. It was getting dark as we left the house. After going a little further, I realized that my friend was lying about the fact that she had left the slippers behind at her friend's house. It became apparent to me that she wanted to meet her boyfriend at a school in the mountain and needed me to go along with her. She was just using me as a crutch to meet her boyfriend. She was just using the slippers as an excuse to bring me along with her.

Her boyfriend also had brought a guy along with him. After the couple met, they left me and that guy alone and went somewhere out of sight. We had no idea where they had gone or reached. I and that guy were the only ones left behind at the school. It was getting dark. I didn't want to go home because I felt my friend might come back any moment. But I didn't want to stay either as it was getting darker and darker. I became anxious. My heart started to get restless. However, I had the mind of a child. His friend and I sat around playing gatta. There was no sign of our friends returning.

I felt my mother would shout at me, and if I don't return right away, I am going to be in deep trouble. So, I thought to myself, 'She tricked me into coming here. I'll go.' But if I am to go, this guy would be left alone here. Would he be able to sit alone here in this darkness? I felt a little pity for this 13-year-old kid.

It was past 8 pm. It was almost 9 o'clock. But they didn't return. Should we go and look for them? We should go, but where will we go? They hadn't informed us either. Neither do we know where they hang out. I was carrying my mobile. The ringing of

my mobile brought another chill to that quiet hill of the school. It was my mother who was calling. I picked up the phone shaking with fear. I was thinking my mother would ask where I was and why I hadn't come yet, but instead she threw a plethora of abuses at me. I couldn't understand half of the things she was saying. I just told her that my friend had disappeared and I would be returning immediately. She responded, 'You don't need to come home anymore. Just go to the house of the person you went out with.'

By the evening, rumors had spread around the village that I had eloped with the guy with whom I had played gatta just for a couple of hours. This rumor, which I could never even imagine in my life, had brought an earthquake in my house. It was as though I had fallen from a cliff. The 13-year-old boy's condition wasn't any better either. My mother hung up the phone angrily. At that moment, I was shattered.

If I am to return home now, my mother will kill me. If I don't, where else could I go? But even if I am to go home, they will tell me I have shamed them. I would be disgraced in the village as well. So I went to the house of that same 13-year-old boy. Why did I do this? How did I do it? I had no clue whether it was right or wrong. It just happened. Just as rumors had spread in my house that I had run away, rumors had spread in his house that their son had 'abducted Amrita'.

After we both reached his house, I was married according to social customs. I was taken into his house. This marriage was neither according to my wishes nor his. However, we ended up being husband and wife.

When I was 17, my daughter was born. The three years of marriage was merely like a formality. We weren't able to connect emotionally with



each other. I did not feel much affection for him. He wasn't very happy with me either.

The relationship started to get worse after the birth of our daughter, Mingsa. The verbal spats started to turn violent. When he started raising hands on me, I left that house and went back to my mother's place.

I had already been tagged as a daughter who had returned home after being incapable of running a household with the person she herself had chosen to marry. I knew things wouldn't be smooth at my mother's place either. After a while, it became hard to live there too.

Then my life took another turn. I ran away from Ilam and came to Kathmandu. I wanted to live independently.

I thought I would live independently. I tried to seek my freedom. However, the memory of my daughter began to haunt me. It was only when I had separated from my daughter that I realized that there is nothing greater for a mother than her child. If I love my daughter so much, does my mother also love me as much? Definitely, she must. You can doubt everything, but you cannot doubt a mother's love.

I have a mother; nevertheless, I am alone. I have a daughter; nevertheless, I am alone. Neither am I getting my mother's love nor am I being able to give love to my daughter. I got trapped in this endless abyss of life. Many things started playing on my mind. Pain started burning my heart. Despite everything, I was feeling empty. It was my parents' house; an incident turned it into a maternal house. I even had a house that is supposed to be my own house, but that too couldn't be mine. I have a mother, but no mother's love. I have a daughter, but she isn't with me.

The little girl who used to go around calling herself the daughter of a rich father has got sucked into the abyss of Kathmandu Valley today. The stress from this started to deteriorate my mental health. I started thinking that to live was harder than to die. I took 26 pills at once. But you are bound to stay alive if it is written in your fate to be so. If death is written, then no one can avoid it. I got treated. Gradually, the negative feelings in my

heart started to vanish. I started staying in touch with my family. The desire to live grew again. Me, Amrita—the muna of my life started to sprout again.

After some time, I got to hear that my daughter's father had also gone abroad. We don't talk, but if he loves his child, then my daughter will get the love of her father as well.

I had already known from the events that I needed a girl, not a boy, to add color to my life. I found a partner just like the one I had dreamed of. Gradually, we started talking. We began exchanging our feelings. We became intimate. This closeness got us to eventually become life partners. Now, it's been three years since we've been in a relationship.

He has supported me in all our joys and sorrows. I have received from him the love I had been looking for. However, I have not been able to reveal at home that he is my future life partner. After officially separating from my daughter's father, I have been able to live my life independently. Making full use of this freedom, I chose my husband. My daughter is now eight years old. She lives in her father's house. I bring her with me during her holidays. I drop her off at school when it resumes.

Life apparently cannot run just with love. The person I am love with is preparing to go abroad for foreign employment. Foreign employment has brought a lot of happiness to many families. It has also brought division. Our real test will be when he stays abroad. Despite the geographical distance, we are determined to stay emotionally close together for the rest of our lives.



Union – Separation

● Monica



I was merely three years old when my father left my mother. Leaving my mother meant leaving me as well. I wasn't fortunate enough to walk holding both my parents' fingers during childhood. Whether a family is wealthy or poor, if both mother and father have a healthy relationship and work hard together to run the family, that house is bound to be a heaven. However, after our father married another woman, my mother became lonesome. I, my mother, and my elder sister became isolated.

At that time, I did not understand that my father had ditched my mother. But gradually when I began to understand, I realized that our father's decision was fatal to us. Our home was in Sindhupalchowk. I was born there as well. After my father remarried, my mother took us to Bandipur. It was where my maternal home was. That is, my mother's ancestral home.

I started studying at my maternal uncle's house. My mother got a job at CMC Medical College in Chitwan. Gradually, my mother took me to Chitwan with her. As I moved from Sindhupalchowk to Bandipur and from Bandipur to Chitwan, my schools also changed. My friends changed. Initially, I would feel lonely

while going to a new school. You don't know anyone. And until children make friends, they experience a sort of mental stress as well. You don't make friends right away at school. It happens gradually. After that, school becomes enjoyable. For some, it is easy to make friends; for others, it is a little hard. In my case, it was a little harder.

Generally, girls find it difficult to talk to boys, and boys find it difficult to talk to girls. However, I found it difficult with both. Being a girl, I should have been comfortable talking to girls. But that was not the case. In reality, I had difficulty talking to girls as well. I would even find it odd when girls called me "Monica". I couldn't talk to them with the same ease with which other friends could. Many would even say that Monica Roka doesn't talk to anyone.

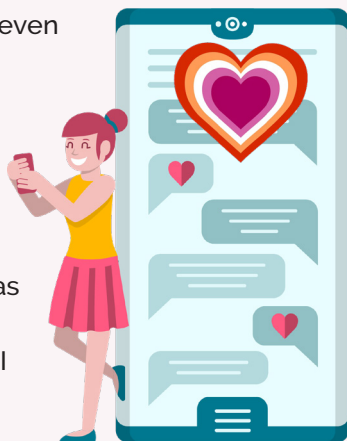
That's how my days were passing in Chitwan. For some reason, my mother decided to leave the job she was doing at the Chitwan Medical College and go to my maternal home in Bandipur. Then, I again returned to Bandipur with my mother.

The process of going from one place to another and again going back continued. Home, after all, is nothing but family. After my father remarried, our family fell apart. When I remember the struggle my mother had made for us, I feel sad. But I feel proud as well. Because if my mother and father had been together, if they had struggled together, perhaps life would have been too easy for my mother. But how can you change what is written in your fate?

That's how it was in our family. But personally, I had started to rebel within myself. Emotions which I hadn't wished for began to enter my life and I couldn't control them. My emotions started veering toward the opposite directions of what I had normally hoped for. I still wasn't comfortable talking to girls despite being a girl.

With a mobile phone in hand, you get so many things from all over the world! Mobile phones are a storehouse of innumerable

information, knowledge, news, and even depravation. I wasn't aware of that. Various stuff would appear on my mobile phone. I would look at them and be amazed. I felt that there must definitely be something remarkable if I being a girl find it difficult to talk to girls. I was not certain whether I was attracted to girls or not, but I was certain that I wasn't attracted to boys.



After getting a mobile phone, I too opened my account on various social media such as Facebook and TikTok. I posted my picture as well on social media. It was on such social media that I first came across a page of the LGBT community.

While looking at that page, I came to know that there are also lesbian women in the world. I also came to know that their feelings and interests are not like those of ordinary women. In general, ordinary women and lesbian women are the same. The only difference is that lesbian women are not crazy about boys. They don't desire them either. They are sexually attracted to girls. This is how I understood my sexuality.

I understood it; that's fine. But how do I make my mother understand? I searched for 'same-sex marriage' on TikTok. I showed it to my mother as well. 'Look, mother, marriage is happening between girls as well.' My mother replied, "What nonsense is this? Where do you get such unnecessary stuff from?"

My mother's response made it evident that for her homosexuality was "unnecessary stuff". I figured out that my mother did not believe in these things, nor did she like them. This put a big dent to my confidence. I thought that by showing such things and explaining them to my mother, I would be able to tell her about my sexuality. But my mother's reaction

threw cold water on my plan. I could no longer talk to my mother about my feelings. Even if it was merely for the sake of appeasing my mother, I would tell her, 'I will marry a boy.'

One day, I became friends with a 'trans man' on Facebook. He was a girl who had changed into a boy. We were becoming friends. At that time, I was suffering from mental stress due to our family's financial situation. We started communicating on Facebook Messenger. Even though our feelings and sexuality were the same, I was not able to talk to him openly. But he kept wanting to know about me.

Later, we became close. We connected with each other. Conversations started increasing. And we became true friends. Because of our feelings, friendship turned into love. We started loving each other and enjoying each other's company.



After a few months, he said he wanted to meet my mother. How could I say no? But how would my mother understand my friend? I was worried. My mother knew that I used to talk to him. But she wasn't aware that he was a trans man. My mother thought he was a boy. The day he was coming to our home, I informed about

him to my mother. Later, I also revealed to her that he was a trans man. He came to our home. He talked with my mother as well. Everything went smoothly. We chatted. Nothing strange or unnatural happened.

He was then introduced to other members at home. They chatted with each other. My mother has taken him quite normally. Due to family support, our relationship has been happy till now.

What is Written in Your Destiny

● Richa



These days, there are no development areas. There are provinces. There are no zones, there are only districts. Several villages have been converted into rural and urban municipalities. I was born in a rehabilitation of what was then Surdurpaschimanchal, Mahakali Zone, Kanchanpur District.

As a first-born, I grew up surrounded with love from my family. From childhood until youth, I stayed with my family and pursued my education.

While I was in school, I started liking a female friend from my class. I wasn't attracted to boys. No attractive young man could get my attention. He and I were in the same class and our houses were also close to each other.

I was attracted to him. But I was not sure whether his feelings were the same as mine. Coincidentally, he was also in love with a girl. In a way, a love triangle had formed here. I liked him, but he was already in a romantic relationship with someone else. I had met a girl who was exactly like me. But fate had played tricks on me in such a way that even though he was mine, I couldn't be with him.

As I was mustering up the courage to open my heart to him, he began moving away from me. I kept my feelings to myself. Neither could I tell him, nor could I forget him.

I would console myself by saying that this is what's written in my fate. We became close again at our school's sports events. During that time, the story had taken another turn. His girlfriend had already married a man.

He was mentally disturbed by the incident of his partner's marriage to someone else. He must have felt the pain of losing her. No matter how much he tried to forget, it was difficult to forget.

His partner's marriage was an unfortunate event for him. However, it became a necessary event that led to my new relationship with him. I know people shouldn't be selfish. I had never wished for their break up. The situation swerved in such a way that now I became closer to him.

I supported him when he was mentally fragile. I took care of him. I reminded him that life does not end when a relationship ends. I consoled him. I did everything within my power. The hurt he felt in his heart took time to heal. Tending to fresh wounds takes time. It does not heal instantly as you would want it to. But even if it does not heal, it gradually disappears. How can one always remember the same thing in the same way all the time? If this were the case, people would always be happy remembering one happiness in life. They would always be sad remembering one sadness. Whether it is happiness or sadness, people eventually become oblivious of it.

As his house was close to mine, I would go to see him. But I could not bring him to my house. Since my mother was a rather stern type, he too was afraid to come to my house.

There were also incidents when my mother would beat me and bring me back from his house. Such incidents frightened her. I too had fears. But I was her daughter, and I used to move ahead holding my bearings.

After some time, due to problems at home, he had to go to Dhangadi, Kailali. I was at home. He arrived at Dhangadhi. Time passed. One day, he returned home from Dhangadi. When he came, he brought a girl with him. After going to Dhangadi, I realized that he had changed not only his place of residence,

but his partner as well. This heart, which had been forced to endure suffering time and again, was once again broken into pieces.

Whenever I would miss him terribly and call him up, his partner would pick up the call. They would often quarrel because of my phone calls. After being aware of that, I lessened the frequency of calls. After a gap of 1-2 years, their relationship could not last. His partner married a man. As we were distant and he had started living with someone else, I began to face mental problems as well. My sister has a house in Dhangadi. I went there and I took training in sewing and cutting.

After his partner married a man, he had become lonely as well. He also had come to Dhangadi and started living there. Since we were in the same city, we met again. We started talking. After mutual agreement, we began living together.

In 2067 BS, I became an employee in the Nepal Police. Currently, we are living together in an apartment in Samakushi, Kathmandu. He also works in an NGO. It has been 18 years since we have been together. This is not a short time. When I think about it, I just can't believe it. It seemed impossible. But apparently I was written in his destiny and he was written in mine. Today, our community friends express their happiness upon seeing our relationship last this long.





Rich Creator, Poor Me



● Shivani

I am Shivani. Shivani means Durga. The source of Shiva's power. The source of gods' power. In my life, I have received not power, but only pain and sorrow. In my childhood, I lost my mother. In my old age, I lost my husband. Then, I lost my life partner. I suffered caste discrimination. I suffered communal discrimination. What is left to suffer now? I do not know how much more suffering the Creator wants to inflict on me. If that Creator has any compassion in his heart, he could show some mercy on me. It appears the Creator who only inflicts pain upon pain on me has no compassion in his heart.

Where is this merciless Creator? I have no idea. If he exists, I can say with certainty that this Creator does not have any compassion for me.

After my birth, the relationship between my father and mother began to crack. Perhaps my father was expecting that a son would be born. The Creator sent me as a daughter. Because my mother gave birth to a daughter, my father left her. I wouldn't even call it leaving her, it was more like inviting her death.

The divorce shattered my mother's heart. She became a mess. She could not cope with it. She became mentally ill. That illness took her life. Or should I say that the Creator approved of her death. I was seven years old when my mother ascended to heaven. After my mother's death, I became completely alone. My father was ignorant of his child's loneliness. He did not care

about me. He took me to my mother's house, or rather, to Mawali. You must know how dear maternal uncles' house is to the children! Sometimes, the nieces and nephews who visit their maternal uncle's house are referred to as the 'God of Bag.' Whether they are the 'God of Bag' or not is up to them.

I was brought up by my Mawali's grandmother. My grandmother must have cried so much after her daughter passed away.

Even if a person can endure everything, they cannot endure the separation of their children. My grandmother must have quenched the longing for her daughter by looking at my face.

I endured the separation of my mother in my childhood. I also endured the separation of my father while my father was alive. Even when he was a father, my maternal aunt raised me. That was fortunate for me in a way, but losing my father's shelter was a misfortune as well. I endured both fortune and misfortune. I also endured misbehavior from boys in my childhood. I was only 12 years old. Even at that time, boys showed sexual desire towards me. They tried to take advantage of me. Those who try to take advantage of young girls who have not entered puberty are they even human?

I was 13 and about to turn 14. Due to pressure from relatives, I got married to a 30-year-old man. I did not know much about puberty. What is love? What is lust? What is life? What do 14-year-olds know about such things? However, I got married. I became someone's wife, someone's daughter-in-law. I used to enjoy playing games. I ended up taking care of the house. My husband was 30 years old. Our feelings did not match. The

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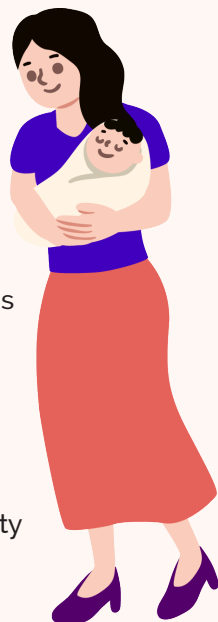
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essence of our conversations did not match. Husband and wife ought to complete each other. But we were incomplete in each other.

The world considers marriage as a moment of happiness. People celebrate marriage by blasting music and giving parties. My marriage was like a stunned silence. It was as if happiness had been taken away. It was as if someone had dragged me into an ocean of sorrow. I lost my mother at the age of 7. I got married at the age of 14. And within 3 years of that, I had to endure another blow. My husband passed away at the young age of 33. I was still a kid when my husband passed away. Just 17 years old. A human being's adult life begins after 18. My life reached its end before I turned 18. When my husband passed away, I was pregnant. A baby was growing in my womb. Or let's say, a life was growing in the womb of a baby girl.

My unborn child had become an orphan even before he saw the world. I was already a widow. There were two of us: me and my unborn child. But we were alone. What is another name for pain and suffering? When someone asks me that, I feel like saying, 'Shivani.' At that time, I suffered from stress. My mental state deteriorated. After a month, a son was born from my womb. After seeing my son's face, many of my sorrows disappeared. I realized how happy a mother's heart is when her child is in her arms. Many pains subsided with the birth of my son. The chains of past sorrows had settled in my mind like a strata. The arrival of my son eased them a little. I felt the happiness of being a mother.

No matter whatever sorrow it be, the face of my son gives me the courage to live. Having a child is a means of forgetting sorrow. When I was 19, my son also turned two years old. I began to gain some maturity. Some practicality also increased. To tell you the truth, other children who are of that age are considered



children. However, in my case, I had already experienced everything that a person could experience in life.

The arrival of a son not only brought happiness, but also responsibility. Raising children is not a joke. It requires knowledge and skills. But there are no institutes or schools that teach you how to raise children. In fact, children themselves are the school for mothers to learn to raise children.

A program on caste system was organized in my village. I too participated in it. At that event, I met a woman. I felt like she understood my feelings. I liked the essence and simplicity of her conversation. We became friends in no time. We started talking on the phone. We used to meet whenever we came to the village.

From her talks, I could tell that she wasn't into men. She preferred women, just like herself. But I was unaware of the fact that a woman could love a woman. I had no idea what I wanted or what was good for me. Because my destiny did not allow me to choose. I had no choice but to accept whatever the Creator threw at me. I never got to choose my happiness.

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from this community. Gradually, my sexuality began to open up. I came to know that I was a lesbian woman. Before this, I had never felt an attraction toward anyone, neither a man nor a woman. Women would not be close to me. The men I was close to were forced upon me. I had no crush on boys who used to tease me in my childhood. Now, when I think about it, it becomes quite evident that I was not attracted to men from the start.

This partner of mine and me: our age matched. Our feelings matched. A lot of other things began to work out as well. Time passed by. Our closeness increased as well. I wasn't aware that we had already fallen in love.

Discussions about living together began thereafter. I too had no one except my little son. She was also not in a condition to marry a man. So, we decided to live together.

After we started living together, the villagers came to know about our relationship. It was obvious that they would not treat us nicely. I used to be hurt by their discrimination. Sometimes, they would look down on and abuse us a little too much. We had not done any harm to them. Yet they would always be enraged by us. We did not lose our hearts. We stood firm with courage.

When I lived with her, it was as though my son too had found a father. A small family of three formed. The society outside did not like our relationship. Their behavior did not change.

One day, my friend had a stomach issue. The problem was a bit complicated. She got treatment in the hospital for a long time. A person's body gets sick; it gets better. That goes on. It goes on as long as there is life. In the hope that she might get better soon, a lot of time went by. Her stomach problem did not get better. It became the excuse for the same Creator to take her away from this world. The Creator took my mother at the age of 7. He took my husband at 17. Now, at 19, he took my life partner too. Over time, the Creator amassed a lot of wealth. By snatching all the invaluable gems I had, he made me a pauper. He, I guess, became wealthy.



Satyam Shivam Sundaram

• **Sudha Lama Tamang**

I have turned 19. I just crossed 18. Nepal's law considers people under the age of 18 as minors. In that sense, it's just been a year since I have become an adult. The law deems us adults after turning 18, but in the eyes of our parents, we remain children forever, no matter how old we are.

I, Sudha Lama, was born in Chitwan. When one reaches grade 8, they start entering adolescence. This is also the age when life changes its color. The restlessness of childhood goes away and the anxiety of youth begins. Physical organs change. Feelings change. Unusual feelings started developing in me as I was studying in grade 8. I became attracted to and interested in not boys but girls.

Did this happen because of some devastating event, mental trauma, etc. in my life? To be honest, there was nothing like that. Everything was pretty normal. But the feelings of my mind kept changing in unexpected ways. Other people's feelings change as well, but mine was a drastic one.

Well, now, who could I tell this to? I was sure that those who



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heard this strange thing of mine would mock me. What is this change happening in me? Why is it happening? Is this normal or abnormal? I myself didn't know anything about it.

Just at that time, I watched a movie. The movie was about homosexuality, where a romantic relationship between two women was shown. Love also has its own definition. The love that does not have lust, that love can be given to anyone: It is the love that parents have for their children and the children have for their parents. The lustful love that happens between lovers is also love but a different kind of love.

That film depicted lustful love between two women. The film showed that such a relationship could happen. However, I myself was not sure whether it could happen or not. Because in films, there are also fictional stories like Tilashmi that do not really happen and cannot happen as well. Such stories have no connection with real life. However, I gradually came to understand that homosexual relationships are natural, and that it could happen in human life.

One day, I met a trans man friend and his partner. He told me everything about his life story, his relationship with his partner

candidly. His words and the film's sentiment matched with each other. I was then convinced that the story of the film was based on a true story. I realized that the film was not based on fantasy, but on a real story.

The same trans man friend informed me that there are organizations that work for lesbian women. By this time, I had already come to know about my sexuality. But another question that arose in my mind was what if someone found out about my truth? Well, honestly, what has anybody got to do with my sexuality? It's none of their business.

I did not have any business with anyone, but I myself was getting restless. It's hard to hide what's in your heart; it's even harder to keep it hidden from others. Actually, these things aren't so difficult. I myself had imagined them as problematic.

Gradually, I started talking to female friends through TikTok. I started sharing my thoughts with friends from my own community. I also participated in the 'Pride Parade' with my female friends. There, I met many friends like me. I discovered that there are many friends who I can share my things with. In fact, I found a new family.

My friends got to know about my sexuality. However, I had to tell my family as well. Because once the family accepts it,



everything becomes easy. If they don't accept it, even simple things become tough.

I first told my mother about this. After listening to me, my mother cried. Tears fell from her eyes. She said, crying: 'You have been brainwashed by that community. They misled you. You are not like that. If this happens, they will take you away from us.'

What child wants to make their mother cry? But my mother cried. I tried to explain to her. When such things happen in other people's house, you might get it easily. It becomes much harder to digest when it happens in your own family.

It has been difficult to explain to my mother too. For a long time, my mother did not let me meet my friends, hoping that I would change the way she wanted. She did not even let me go out of the house. I could not even meet my partner.

Even now, I am still trying to make my mother understand. I have no idea when she will understand. But I hope, Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, my mother will get it one day.

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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.

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, an 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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