



Queers Quotient

Rainbow High-Q

Queer Quest - Inaugural Edition - Volume 1, May 2024



Cover Artwork by Ayushi Sharma

Sneak Peek

Editor's Note

In Conversation
with Santa
Khurai

Poems by Ashish
Kumar Singh

Artwork by
Ayushi Sharma

Artwork by
Radhika
Chaudhary

In Spotlight-
Queer Campus
Bangalore

Call for
Submissions

About us





Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the vibrant and dazzling world of Queers Quotient! As the editor of our inaugural edition, it fills me with immense pride and joy to present to you the very first issue of what we hope will become your go-to source for all things queer and fabulous.

Queers Quotient is more than just a magazine; it's a celebration of the incredible diversity, creativity, and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community. Our mission is to amplify voices that deserve to be heard, showcase talents that deserve to be seen, and share stories that deserve to be told. Whether you're here to discover stunning artwork, powerful poetry, or inspiring personal journeys, we promise there's something for everyone within these pages.

This first edition, aptly named "**Queer Quest**," is a testament to the power of authenticity and the beauty of self-expression. We've gathered a remarkable group of writers, artists, and creators who have poured their hearts and souls into their work. From vibrant illustrations to soul-stirring poetry, each piece is a reflection of the multifaceted queer experience.

We are also honored to feature an exclusive interview with Santa Khurai, a Meitei: Nupi Maanbi (transgender woman), gender-rights activist, writer, and artist from Manipur, India. Her story is a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience within the queer community, and her work continues to inspire many.

A special shoutout goes to Queer Campus Bangalore, one of our featured community groups, for creating a safe and inclusive space for queer individuals to connect, share, and grow. Their story is a shining example of the impact that dedicated community spaces can have on the lives of LGBTQ+ people.

As we embark on this exciting journey together, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of Queer Quotient. Engage with the content, share your thoughts, and, most importantly, let your own light shine. This magazine is for you, by you, and because of you.

Thank you for joining us on this adventure. Let's quest onward, loud and proud!

With love and pride,
Sanam,
Editor,
Queers Quotient



A leaf from the life of the Yellow Sparrow



In Conversation with

Santa Khurai

She/Her

Interviewed on: 23/03/2023

Santa Khurai is a gender-rights activist, writer, and artist from Manipur, India. She is a member of the Indigenous community of Manipur, the Meitei people. She is the secretary of the All Manipur Nupi Maanbi Association (AMANA)

Growing up in a home with no support from her parents, Khurai set up the first beauty salon run by a trans person in Manipur in the 1990s in order to support herself. She has been working on gender and sexual minorities rights issues for the last twenty years. Under the aegis of the Manipur State Commission for Women, Khurai played an instrumental role in setting up Manipur's first Transgender Women's Grievance Cell, which works to eradicate structural and institutionalised discrimination against trans women and help them access and navigate the judicial and law enforcement systems in Manipur.





Your memoir, "The Yellow Sparrow: Memoir of a Transgender," has received widespread acclaim for its powerful narrative. What inspired you to share your personal journey with the world through this memoir?

I had been very lonely in the past. People suggested that I maintain a notebook with photographs that could travel from school to school, and where one could write their hobbies, names and a message for the owner. Later on, I tried to maintain a diary, and began to note down what happened on each date. This became a hobby.

When I came out as a girl there was no one in Manipur like me, with a girlish face who behaved like a girl. I was very lonely at that time, and started gathering information, trying to get information related to identity and failed to get that. I came across a book on beauty parlors in the 1990s and found a chapter mentioning various identities, including trans sexuals. "Gay" was the common term used, not lesbians. I had studied in a Catholic boys school, some of my classmates were and called me "gay". When I went through that book, I got some knowledge and realized that I did not fit into that category.



Later on, I joined activism in the trans-national mobilization movement, but became lonely because of my background. There were barriers, people did not consider it important to discuss issues like ethnic identity and the political position of Manipur. This made me lonely and unfit. Every forum where I was trying to convey the ground reality that trans people face, other people were not able to digest it because of their unfamiliarity. In mainland India, people can understand casteism, but native identities are less understood, which includes how conflict has affected our community. People are not able to understand and that it stands as a barrier.



Talking about it every time made me exhausted. So I wrote it down so that the book travels across people, they can easily relate and it derives a meaningful connection. I know that I published the memoir at an early age, and it is a tiny fragment of my journey, but it is a beginning towards queer and trans unification.

***“Love yourselves
- if you can’t
accept yourself
how can you love
somebody else.”***

It talks about diversity and inclusion, but in reality it does not work, only the privileged people have benefits. But there are other queer and trans people from different backgrounds who face those challenges. So I have left this memoir as a legacy for the queer and trans people of this generation.

Your resilience and courage in embracing your true self amidst Manipur societal caste system, can you share some insights into the challenges you faced and how you overcame them?

There are a lot of challenges faced by people from Manipur. Though the book was first launched in Delhi and I have been traveling with it, only a handful of people are aware. In Manipur, people talk about the book but they do not buy it. I wish that universities in Manipur could refer to this book for their students and other people who want to do research on trans and queer diversity.

This book will work as a reference document for starting groundwork, as there is limited literature available on these topics in India. I would probably be the first person who produced this memoir and this is a challenge because for queer and trans people, it is difficult to push books to sell in the market because of prevailing stereotypes - because it is all about being broken, experiencing betrayal and deception.





My book is a different narrative, it is about social organization, happy and sad moments, body language, celebration and pride for being different. The book tells all that, and a lot more truths about the moments cherished and celebrated, which is different from cis people. Why don't we nurture that and tell these stories to the cis people, let them understand we survive, we celebrate! That is included in the memoirs, and I so far did not get any backlash. But the market wave is still uncertain and I wish it goes well, I hope it travels across the world. The book has been considered by the University of California at Santa Barbara at the Department of Feminist Studies - they have taken it up.

Your journey as a transgender individual in Manipur, particularly amidst ongoing violence and socio-political complexities, offers a unique perspective. How do you see your experiences contributing to broader conversations about peace activism and social justice in Manipur?

For me, activism is in my blood. There is no achievement - success is a strange concept. There is a long way to go, not just for Manipur but for the entire nation.

We are oppressed and the advocacy I am doing is a very tiny part of what as citizens of India deserve to receive, but have been deprived. There are educated people in queer and trans community but their rightful entitlements have been deprived, like blood donation. There is no inclusive vision for transgenders, their vote bank is not considered. So far what I have done is nothing, there is a lot more I would like to achieve. I want to see an equal society, within the queer and trans community. If not between you and me, then we can't become friends. Equality is what I want to see in the near future, then everything else will sustain. When there is equality, legislation will be amended, and new laws and programs in favor of trans people will be implemented.

As a writer, activist, and advocate for peace, what message do you hope readers take away from your memoir and your ongoing efforts to promote understanding, acceptance, and peace in Manipur and beyond?

My message is to have conversations, find avenues and recognize differences - accept them instead of rejecting them.





Listen to people's stories, like this interview is happening because you want to know my story. If something happens to me, you are there, your friends are there, that network supports you, a lot of human connections build up. It is not necessary that we will always be correct, or wrong. Mental health can get deteriorated, this is the reason why I have a very critical point of view towards the community.

I see this trans and queer community from two perspectives - as a community and as a movement. As a community, we have a lot of difference in opinions on ideology and sociocultural aspects. But in a movement, we keep that aside, we come together and move towards a common goal - equality and assertion for rights. What I experience is that people hardly understand the requirements of coming together, they are into 'I', but 'we' and 'us' are not there. For example, in a project you are given instructions for deliverables, so you will network with available resources to get the work done. But at the same time, human connection is important.

Yesterday, Malen Thongam completed one month of her hunger strike. It's not about people from outside the country, but within Manipur there is less support from within the community, this is disappointing.

We all deserve to have a peaceful life, why should we all not show solidarity? I feel obliged to protect all my people and I wish all people had this commitment. Queer and trans is not a movement, for me it is a life. No matter whether it is Delhi or Mumbai, though I can't physically participate, I socially involve myself, sharing speaks volumes to show the world that we are not alone.

Your dedication to peace activism and advocating for marginalized communities is truly inspiring. How do you feel about Malen Thongam's hunger strike? Do you think there will be an impact at the ground level?

I don't believe the Government will respond to her. But, we have lost a lot in this conflict and nothing has been done so far. In front of us, many young people came with guns and were pelting stones, the aggression is instilling fear - people have different ways of protesting against such violence. She was really hurt because of the violent conflict. So, she had decided to contribute and intervene in this to spread the message across.





She decided to undergo this hunger strike, but was lodged under serious acts (attempt to suicide, Sections 153 and 505), but when it was challenged before the Judicial Magistrate, she got bail. Still she continued because she is committed to bring peace to Manipur. She will continue till death until the Government responds. She has a simple request - that the PM should visit Manipur and help end this conflict because the youth have lost education and the number of armed forces deployed here is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population, so it is not good for the people. So she is doing this, but I don't think there will be any response. But I know she won't give up, it has motivated trans people from across the world to come together and support her.

Your journey reflects the transformative power of authenticity and resilience. What advice would you give to individuals facing similar challenges in embracing their true selves and advocating for their rights?

Be true to yourself, don't try to become somebody else, it will suffocate you. Don't get into external influences, there are a lot of challenges. You may be treated as crazy but that craziness is the beauty of you, you need to be true to yourself.

Every transition takes time, and is vulnerable, but the world requires transition. It may take time but be true, and courageous, reach out to people and talk to those who are on your side and will sit down and listen to your story. Cut out toxic people, like dieting requires. Make your circle small, and be with supportive people.

As India approaches the election year, how do you perceive the evolving role of queer individuals in shaping political discourse and advocating for their rights? What do you see as some key priorities for the LGBTQ+ community in terms of policy change and representation in government?

If we want to bring change, then we should have proper representation. In politics, we should try to find a space and stand for elections. One individual from each state should be part of the political process. I advocate reservation for trans people, and for other identities in the spectrum, we can work together. Unless you are holding power, you can't do anything. Holding power and how it is executed, we should be power holders.





Unlike a biased system which exists currently, we understand people's position and situation. We somehow can come up with ideal ways of treating people - queer people and others. If India is being led by trans people, then there will definitely be change for the entire nation. Leaders should have sensible ways to look at people and understand what is India and re-establish the beautiful ideas of secularism, where diversity is embraced and queer persons can see India in a different point of view. That India will then be the best place to live.

In the face of adversity and opposition, how do you maintain hope and resilience as an activist, and what advice would you give to others who may feel discouraged in their advocacy efforts?

I will continue writing, and keep telling stories. Manipur is an oppressed state and it is complicated. In a short period of time, we won't be able to have the entire conversation around the complexity here. So, what I can do is advocate for peace and social justice, in my capacity. Beyond that I leave it to God - who knows what will happen tomorrow, it is a volatile society.

The focus on decolonization, not from the British empire, but from freeing ourselves as queer and trans persons by advocating for our people and by bringing peace to society and country, that should be prioritized. For Manipur, I will continue doing this.

Many people want me to stand for elections but I don't want to go into that. But my father told me politicians lie and have no love and care, it is a power game. Power influences and induces toxicity, they lose their mind. I want to stay simple, keep a low profile and do things. I dream of establishing a library, for children to come in and read the *right* books. I dream about owning small land in Manipur with a cottage for queer and trans people where they can find solace, stay and enjoy.

Love yourselves - if you can't accept yourself how can you love somebody else. I hope that I can inspire thousands of people like how people look up to me. I accept my body and commit to bringing change in society and so I have strong self integrity that can help back other people.





Ashish Kumar Singh

He/Him

Ashish Kumar Singh (he/him) is a queer Indian poet whose work has appeared in The Bombay Literary Magazine, Chestnut Review, Fourteen Poems, Cutleaf Journal, Atlanta Review and elsewhere. Currently, he lives in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

Twitter: @Ashish_stJude

Instagram: @ashish_the_reade





If It Ends On A Happy Note, It's A Love Poem

otherwise an elegy would be more suitable. At 3 am I'm still awake while night sleeps curled up outside my garden, waiting for the morning to show up. At the age of 17, one remains in the process of learning about the ambiguous nature of young love as love happens to them. It's like assembling a jigsaw puzzle with no idea about the final image. This is what the phrase figure it along the way must be made for —jump first and then decide whether to pull the strings of the parachute or not. Since last week, I have been loving this boy in secret and now I want to surprise him with my confession like spring surprises the bare trees into bloom. Since last week, I have been admiring my own face in the mirror, trying to see what a face in love looks like. Once, during a visit to the city fair, a palmist had declared pray and it would be granted, and I swear, I still have
his name on my breath.





Accident

Listen, the sun hasn't even set
and birds have already stopped singing.

I say "I have to return home by seven"
and we start to undress, his eyes

lingering on my shivering body before
they return to the window

where the world gets cold like rice
on my mother's plate. We delay

but it's not hesitation. We have seen
enough videos to know where best

to place a knife. It is what language
refuses to utter, it is shame that lingers



even before the action. He says
"turn around" and now I am facing

a wall that has been coloured
and washed many times.

Shivers change to soft rain as his sweat
pelts my back. In our final moment,

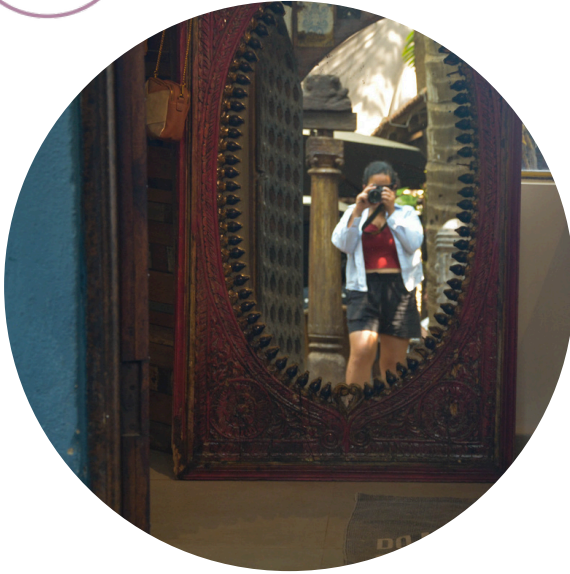
he kisses my nape and I thank
the Gods because I've been told

this tenderness is rare. Afterwards,
we lay still and look up at the water

stained ceiling, our bodies
like carcasses on the highway, hit

and ignored until it stinks. Somewhere
in the distance, an ambulance
passes us by.





Ayushi Sharma

She/Her

Ayushi, a devoted and unabashed romantic, has always felt the ebb and flow of love in her veins. However, it wasn't until recently that she fully discovered her identity as a passionate sapphic. With this newfound clarity, the love poems she once penned for her ex-best friend have taken on a whole new meaning.

With her Instagram handle, @petrichorandpoetryy, Ayushi embarked on her poetic journey during her college years. Poetry became her sanctuary, a sacred space where she could pour out the torrent of emotions that constantly swelled within her. Her verses have since spanned a diverse spectrum, exploring themes of love, friendship, grief, and heartbreak.





Radhika Chaudhary (Radzi)

They/Them

Radzi (They/Them) is a 22 year old illustrator and visual artist from Jaipur, who usually love to express their emotions through their artwork. These artworks come from personal experience of being a queer and neurodivergent individual in a desi household. Few mediums that they love to use are making Zines, comics and analogue paints with acrylic paints and oil pastels! Radzi always perceived themselves as a silly clown like a jester, carrying a sketchbook and wearing clothes with paint stains and very funky colourful makeup.

Instagram- @sillybillycircus, @aliloldmeee







In the Spotlight

Queer Campus Bangalore

Where Every Shade Shines Bright



Meet **Mohammad**, they work as a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Officer with Youth Voices Count and serve as a research consultant with iHEAR (at Sangath Bhopal) VaccinEquity 2.0. In addition to their professional roles, Mohammed dedicates their time to running and facilitating various youth-led safe spaces, including Queer Campus Bangalore and Intersex Human Rights India Allies. They are passionate about advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, SRHR, HIV/AIDS awareness, and disease control, reflecting a commitment to promoting inclusivity and public health.



Mohammad (They/Them),
*Co-advisor and facilitator,
QC Bangalore.*

The Kaleidoscopic Journey

Born in 2011 from the vibrant minds of Anurag, Riya, and Akash, QC emerged as a haven of acceptance and joy amidst Bangalore's bustling streets. Fueled by a shared dream of a more inclusive world, QC quickly became a beacon of hope for the city's queer community.

Stories That Bind Us

Step into a world where every story matters and every voice is heard. QC's gatherings, from cozy picnics to lively potlucks, are more than just events – they're moments of connection and celebration. Here, friendships blossom, and shared experiences weave the fabric of our beautiful community.

Youth Power, Infinite Impact

Discover the electrifying energy of QC's age criteria, where youthfulness meets empowerment. With a focus on ages 18-30, QC ignites the flames of passion and possibility in young hearts. It's not just a group – it's a movement of bold ideas and boundless dreams.

From Hurdles to High Fives

Journey through QC's highs and lows, from overcoming controversies to celebrating triumphs. Whether hosting the legendary QC Carnival or empowering leaders through capacity-building programs, QC continues to blaze trails and make waves. It's a testament to our resilience, our spirit, and our unwavering commitment to progress.



In the Spotlight

Queer Campus Bangalore

Where Every Shade Shines Bright



A Future Full of Promise

Join us as we look ahead with hearts full of hope and eyes shining bright. Guided by the visionary leadership of co-admin and facilitator Mohommad Ali, QC is on a mission to build a world where everyone can thrive. Together, let's dream big, stand tall, and create a future that's as colorful as our collective imagination.

Cheers to Queer Campus Bangalore

Raise your glasses to Queer Campus Bangalore – a place where diversity dances, and love knows no bounds. Here's to many more years of laughter, learning, and love. Together, we'll continue to paint the world with every shade of the rainbow.

Testimonials

Manoj (He/Him)

"QC is such a warm and safe space to spend time and meet new people. I think no other queer space has made me as comfortable and welcome as QC."

Atlas (He/Him)

"To me, Queer campus provides a safe space to be able to interact and form meaningful connections with other queer people and feel comfortable being myself. Qc events and meetups provide me a space where I can just feel comfortable and safe amongst other queer people."

Pallavi (She/Her)

"My experience in QC was good, I met a lot of people like me. The people were very welcoming, made sure I was comfortable and not awkward. I started QC to meet more people like me, but I found a family. I can be me, and not afraid of judgement."

Rajesh (He/Him)

"The first I heard about a QC picnic was from a friend, and I thought it's going to be boring, obviously. I mean, picnic in Cubbon, I couldn't expect anything else. But I was so wrong, I have met the most amazing people from these meet-ups. Games, chatter and laughter throughout the picnic. The facilitators do an incredible job in making sure everyone is comfortable and things go smooth.



An escape from a busy and sometimes frustrating campus/office life...!! I have made a lot of new friends, thanks to QC."



Reader's Submissions - Call to Action

Queerly Beloved!

At Queers Quotient we're all about celebrating your incredible talent, and we can't wait to see what you bring to the table. Stay updated on the theme of the magazine via social media pages and the website. The theme for the next edition is **Pride!** Share with us what pride means to you in your unique way. Here's how you can contribute your magic:

- **Original Write-up:** Whether it's a story that's been itching to be told or an essay/review that's burning in your mind, we want it! Submit it our way in Doc or PDF format. Stories can run up to 4 pages, while essays/reviews should be 500-750 words.
- **Poems:** Let your creativity flow freely in up to 4 pages of poetic wonder.
- **Art:** Got a masterpiece that's dying to be showcased? We're all ears (eyes?!). Submit one page of your artwork in both PNG and PDF formats.
- **Translation:** If you're sharing a translated work, make sure you've got the original writer's stamp of approval with a No Objection Certificate (NOC). We've gotta keep everything above board, you know?

And hey, we'd love to get to know you a little better and feature you on our socials and website! Feel free to send over a picture, your name, preferred pronouns, and a short bio. But don't sweat it if you wanna keep things mysterious – anonymity is totally cool too.

Submission deadline: 15 June 2024, 11:59 p.m.

Copyrights:

Queers Quotient Magazine won't be laying any claim to your genius – all the rights stay with you.

Got any questions?

If you've got any burning questions or just wanna chat about your ideas, hit us up anytime. We're here to make sure your work gets the love and recognition it deserves.

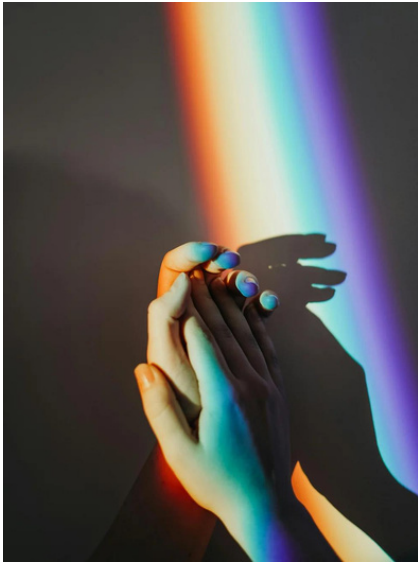
Send in your submissions at queersquotient@gmail.com or upload to this Google form by scanning the QR Code.



**Scan this QR to
send us your work!**



About Us



Mission Statement

At Queers Quotient, our mission is to celebrate, empower, and amplify the diverse voices and talents within the LGBTQ+ community. We strive to provide a vibrant platform for queer writers, artists, and creators to share their stories, experiences, and expressions, fostering a sense of belonging and community. Through our digital magazine and online presence, we aim to educate, inspire, and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights, while honouring and preserving queer history and culture. We are committed to creating a space where everyone can embrace their true selves, learn, grow, and thrive.

Vision Statement

Queers Quotient envisions a world where LGBTQ+ voices are heard, valued, and celebrated without exception. We aspire to be the leading destination for queer representation, creativity, and connection, sparking conversations and promoting understanding across all spectrums of gender and sexuality. Our commitment to authenticity, solidarity, and empowerment drives us to uplift and elevate the queer community to new heights of visibility, acceptance, and pride.





Cover Artwork by Ayushi Sharma