



RANGEEN
KHIDKI



QUEERAVAN

by Rangeen Khidki Foundation





RANGEEN KHIDKI

Rangeen Khidki Foundation is a youth-led feminist organisation dedicated towards building intersectional, rights-based interventions through capacity-building and life-skills development. With gender justice at our core, we work with rural and urban adolescents, stakeholders and communities to challenge systemic inequalities and reimagine inclusive futures.

Through our work on Gender, Leadership, and Sexual- Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and driven by passionate young professionals, we engage with diverse identities, creating spaces where young people, especially those on the margins, can reclaim agency, build solidarity, and lead change. We strive to reshape narratives where equity is not just talked about but actively practiced and experienced.



Project Priyo is an initiative by Rangeen Khidki Foundation that celebrates, illustrates, and amplifies the lived realities of queer and trans individuals navigating intersections of gender, sexuality, caste, class, religion, and marginalization.

Rooted in the power of storytelling as a tool for social change, Project Priyo provides a platform where voices that are often unheard are centered, honored, and amplified. With a queer-feminist and intersectional approach, Project Priyo leverages digital storytelling and community engagement to dismantle structural inequalities and bring forth authentic narratives of resilience, struggle, and joy.



I'm Shoi, your co-passenger on this brilliant adventure! I'm a **Dalit, queer, non-binary person** who loves to paint, travel, and tell stories. Growing up, I didn't see much queer representation in books or on screen, especially stories about people with multiple marginalizations like mine.



I remember feeling like there was a piece missing in the stories I read and the shows I watched. I wanted to see characters who looked like me, who felt like me, who lived lives as complex as my own. So, I decided to hit the road in my **Queeravan** to meet queer folks all over India and share their incredible stories with you.





Queerness is often misunderstood and seen as a Western idea, but it's been around forever! **Queer people have existed across different classes, castes, races, and places.** Throughout history and across cultures, queer people have always existed, living their lives and contributing to their communities.

From ancient civilizations to modern societies, evidence of queer identities can be found in historical texts, folklore, and art. **It's not new, and it's certainly not just a Western thing.** Sadly, many of us are still punished or stereotyped for being ourselves.

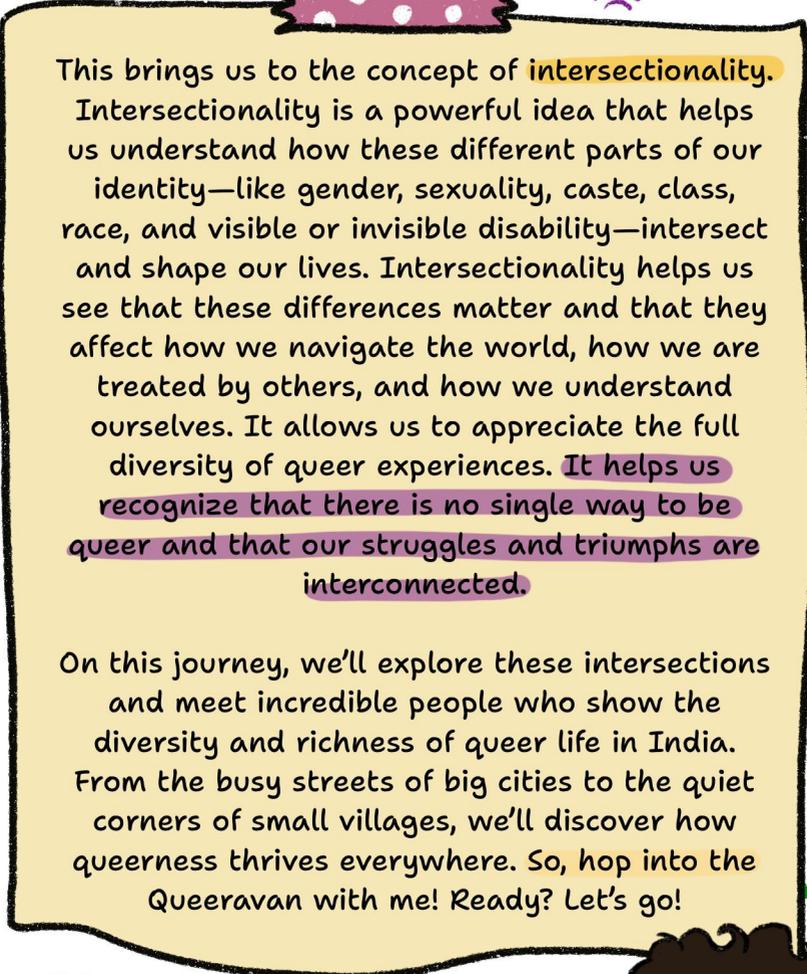
We face discrimination and violence, and our identities are often erased or ignored. But despite these challenges, we're here, and **we've always been here, we persist, carving out spaces of love, resilience, and resistance.**





Every individual experiences queerness uniquely. Your journey as a queer person can be influenced by where you live, your caste, class, race, disability, and more. These different aspects of our identity shape how we see the world and how the world sees

us.



This brings us to the concept of **intersectionality**. Intersectionality is a powerful idea that helps us understand how these different parts of our identity—like gender, sexuality, caste, class, race, and visible or invisible disability—intersect and shape our lives. Intersectionality helps us see that these differences matter and that they affect how we navigate the world, how we are treated by others, and how we understand ourselves. It allows us to appreciate the full diversity of queer experiences. **It helps us recognize that there is no single way to be queer and that our struggles and triumphs are interconnected.**

On this journey, we'll explore these intersections and meet incredible people who show the diversity and richness of queer life in India. From the busy streets of big cities to the quiet corners of small villages, we'll discover how queerness thrives everywhere. So, hop into the Queeravan with me! Ready? Let's go!



Meet Neel!

A trans man from Nadia, West Bengal who loves to watch Uttam Kumar movies and humm old bengali songs. Neel's early life was marked by little autonomy—married at just 14, his childhood slipped away before he even had a chance to claim it.

But moving to Maharashtra after marriage opened a door he never expected. As he grew older, Neel began to explore his identity, piecing together the truth that had always been within him. And in this journey, he found an unlikely source of support—his then “husband,” who didn’t just accept Neel’s truth but encouraged him to embrace it.

With time, Neel built his independence, secured a job, and eventually took the step of processing his divorce. He returned to Bengal, hoping for acceptance but home was no longer the safe space he had imagined as his family rejected him, and the pain of that loss weighed heavy. Refusing to let rejection define him, he packed his dreams and moved to Kolkata, determined to build a life where he could live openly, unapologetically, and on his own terms.



hello!

A hand holding a pink tablet with a white screen. The screen displays two paragraphs of text. The top paragraph is highlighted in blue. The background is yellow with white circles.

Neel never expected that a simple Facebook message would change his life—but that's exactly what happened when he met P. Their initial conversations were effortless, filled with shared thoughts, late-night chats, and an emotional connection that deepened with every passing day. What started as friendship soon blossomed into something more—something Neel hadn't quite experienced before.

Then came the big moment: their first in-person meeting at Badculla station. Neel was nervous but excited, his heart racing as he waited to see P for the first time. And when he did? It was pure magic. P was stunning, and Neel couldn't stop admiring her.



Neel and P had built a quiet life together in Kolkata, filled with love, resilience, and the hope of a future on their own terms. Despite the disapproval of their families, they had created a space where they could truly be themselves. But life had other plans.

One sudden day, their world was shattered. P's family arrived unannounced, storming into their home with force and fury. There was no discussion, no room for negotiation—just anger, threats, and an ultimatum. Neel and P were helpless against the intrusion, their love dismissed as something shameful, something to be erased.

What followed was devastating. Neel and P faced abuse—verbal, emotional, and physical—at the hands of those who refused to accept their truth. And then, the unthinkable happened. Without her consent, without a chance to resist, P was taken away.





After P was forcibly taken away, he tried everything—calls, messages, desperate attempts to reach out through mutual contacts. But there was nothing. Silence. It was as if she had vanished overnight, erased from his life by those who refused to accept their love. Then, the truth hit him like a storm. P hadn't just been taken home—she had been forcibly enrolled in a mental health institution, subjected to conversion therapy.



What is conversion therapy?

Conversion therapy is a harmful and unscientific practice that falsely claims to "cure" queer and trans identities through forced counseling, psychological abuse, electroshock therapy, and even physical violence. Though banned by India's National Medical Commission in 2022 and denounced by courts, it continues in secret, often enforced by families, religious institutions, and unethical practitioners. Survivors endure severe trauma, leaving lasting scars on their mental and emotional well-being.

Neel knows change doesn't come easily, but he refuses to accept a world where love is a crime and identities are erased. He speaks out, fights back, and stands tall—not just for himself, but for every queer and trans person forced to hide, suffer, or conform. His journey is far from over. But through every battle, every heartbreak, Neel holds onto hope—that one day, no one will have to fight for the right to simply exist.





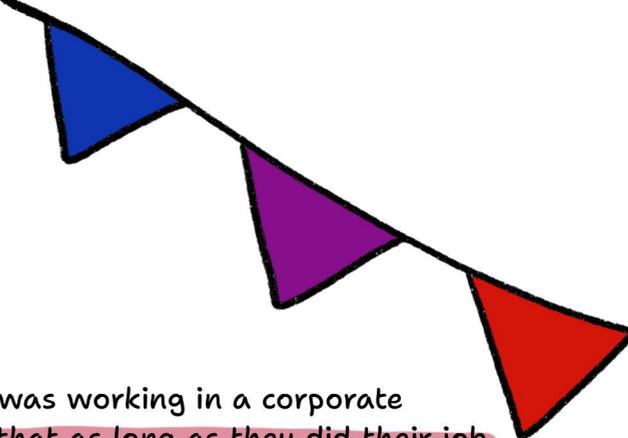
Hey hey! After a long journey we are here in Kerala to meet Rino!

Rino is a non-binary queer person from Kochi, Kerala, a software engineer with a deep love for gardening and painting nails—two things that bring them immense joy.

Someday, they hope to open their own nail salon, a space where self-expression has no limits and everyone is free to embrace beauty beyond gender norms.



Rino effortlessly balances masculinity and femininity, expressing themselves in ways that defy the rigid binaries imposed by society. Whether it's through fashion, accessories, or the simple act of painting their nails, Rino embodies a freedom that many still struggle to claim. But this self-expression hasn't come without challenges—each step outside the binary means pushing back against deeply ingrained norms, questioning expectations, and resisting the pressures to conform.



For a while, Rino was working in a corporate environment, believing that as long as they did their job well, their identity wouldn't matter. Things seemed fine—until they took an active role in organizing Kerala Pride. Excited and proud of their work in the queer community, Rino shared their involvement in a workplace meeting. Then, without warning or proper explanation, they were let go.



The sudden job loss made one thing painfully clear: queer and trans people are still systematically discriminated against in workplaces, denied access to opportunities, and forced to fight for basic professional security.

Beyond outright job loss, countless barriers prevent queer and trans individuals from even accessing opportunities in the first place. Many are filtered out through biased hiring practices, where recruiters favor cisgender and heterosexual candidates, often citing "culture fit" as a coded excuse. For those who do get hired, the workplace can be a minefield—rigid gender norms, lack of inclusive policies, and the looming threat of discrimination make it nearly impossible to thrive. Employers may subtly sideline them from promotions, exclude them from leadership roles, or deny them critical networking opportunities. The stigma is so pervasive that many queer and trans professionals feel pressured to conceal their identities just to survive, navigating a system designed to keep them invisible and disposable.



Rino's skills, experience, and dedication didn't change—but the moment their queerness became visible, they were deemed disposable. This is the harsh reality for many queer and trans individuals in corporate spaces, where bias often hides behind vague policies and silent exclusions.



Through all the struggles, Rino found love, solidarity, and home in the queer community. They discovered that love is more than just romantic partnerships—it is the act of standing together, uplifting each other, and creating spaces where everyone belongs. Their friends and chosen family became their anchor, proving that even in a world that often shuts its doors, there is always a way to build new ones.

Rino refuses to give up. They continue to dream, to create, and to fight for a world where self-expression doesn't come at the cost of livelihood. They are proof that queerness is not just about identity—it is about resilience, defiance, and the unbreakable strength of community.



For our next stop, we are here in the city of dreams, Mumbai to meet Vinnie.

Vinnie (she/they) is a trans non-binary person from the Adivasi community, navigating life in Mumbai while working in a broking company. Beyond their professional role, they actively engage with their company's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, pushing for a more inclusive workplace. But Vinnie's journey to self-acceptance and advocacy has been far from easy.



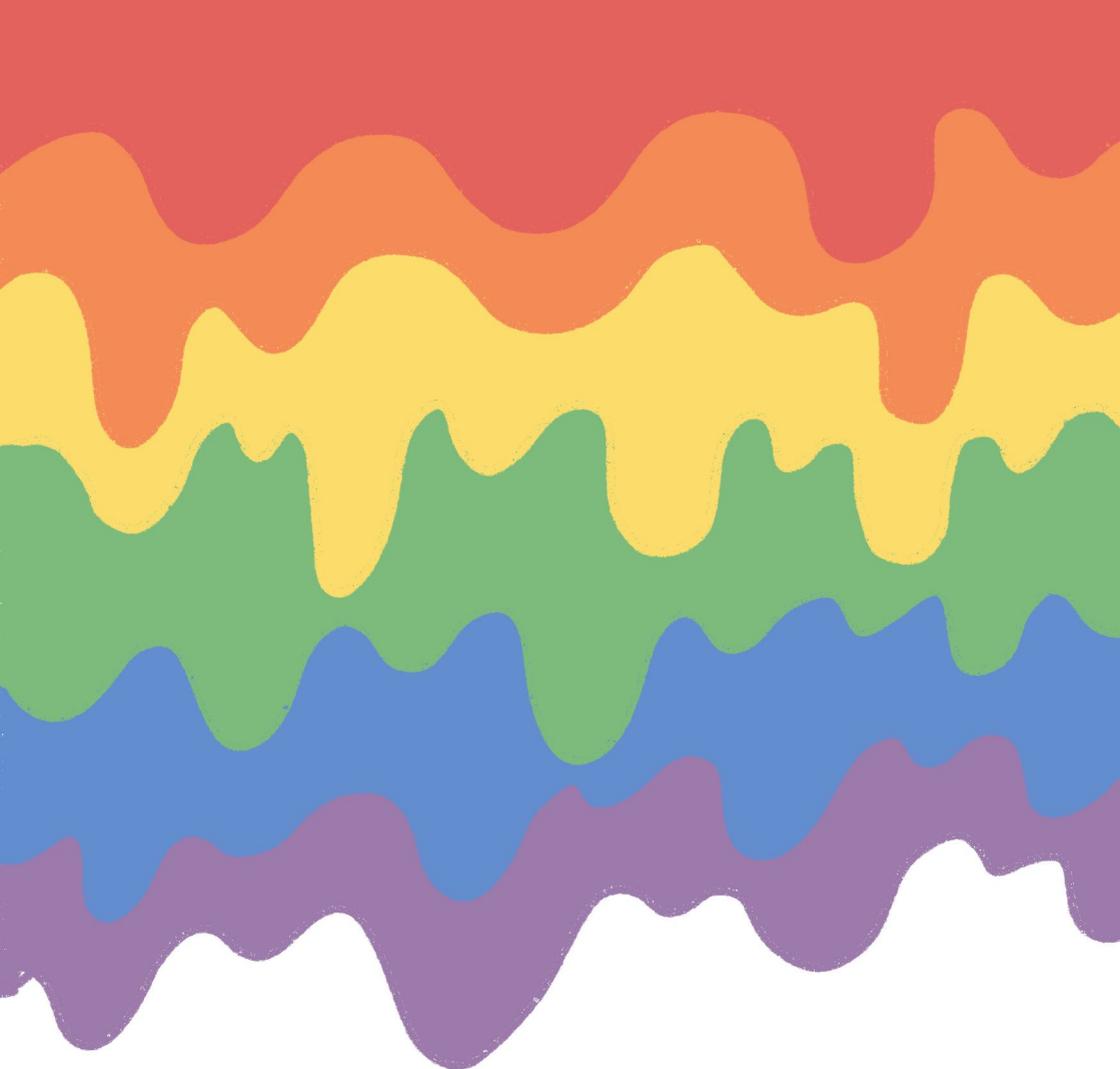
For as long as Vinnie can remember, discrimination was a part of their daily life. One particular memory stands out—during a parent-teacher meeting in school, a classmate loudly shouted “Chakka” in front of their parents. That moment was just one of many. The bullying didn't stop at name-calling; it was an everyday reality, sometimes escalating to physical violence.



This kind of casual yet deeply harmful discrimination is an experience many queer and trans people endure—constantly being made to feel different, unwelcome, or unsafe in spaces that should nurture them.

For a long time, Vinnie struggled with the exclusionary world they lived in. The need for acceptance was so strong that they felt compelled to take whatever form of intimacy or affection came their way—even when it carried undertones of violence, discrimination, or disrespect.

But over time, Vinnie challenged this belief. They realized they deserved more than just tolerance—they deserved respect, dignity, and love that didn't come with conditions or harm. Learning to set boundaries and demand better for themselves became an essential part of their journey.



As an Adivasi trans non-binary person, Vinnie understands firsthand how caste, gender, and sexuality intersect, creating additional barriers. Discrimination doesn't exist in isolation—it shapes access to education, employment, financial stability, and overall well-being. The challenges faced by queer-trans individuals from marginalized caste backgrounds are often overlooked, making it even harder to find support and opportunities.

dignity
for all of
us!



Despite these struggles, Vinnie refuses to be silenced. They actively stand up for themselves and others, challenging normative structures that work against queer and trans people. Whether in corporate spaces, social settings, or public discourse, they advocate for intersectional justice, ensuring that no part of their identity is erased or ignored. Vinnie's story is one of resistance, self-reclamation, and an unwavering commitment to challenging systems of oppression. Through every battle, they continue to push for a world where no one has to fight for the right to exist with dignity.





After another long and beautiful journey, we arrive in Varanasi to meet Neeti. Neeti is a fun-loving, non-binary person. They grew up in Ghazipur, about 80 km from Banaras, in a family of three sisters, a younger brother, and their parents.

In 2004, they moved to Banaras for higher studies, balancing education with social work. Over the years, they became deeply involved in movements for marginalized communities.

Caste shaped Neeti's world in ways they only fully realized later. In school, upper-caste girls were seen as smarter and more desirable, while OBC girls like them were conditioned to believe they weren't "enough." Even within queer spaces, caste hierarchies persisted—privileged voices dominated, and the struggles of caste-oppressed queer individuals were often overlooked.

Their relationships were no exception. Their ex-girlfriend came from a Brahmin family where caste purity was strictly maintained. Though their partner opposed these norms, Neeti couldn't ignore how caste dictated everything—from who could eat from certain plates to how they were perceived. Love, they realized, didn't erase caste—it only exposed it further.



For Neeti and many others, Banaras' Assi Ghat became a rare space of freedom. Unlike other parts of the city, it allowed queer and trans people to exist more openly —holding hands, expressing themselves, and finding moments of peace. Nearby ghats were even more liberating, offering spaces where one could sit, smoke, and simply be.

But safety was never guaranteed. Political shifts brought increased moral policing. Yet, Neeti and their community refused to disappear. Their presence at the ghats, especially at night, was an act of defiance.





For Neeti, love isn't about fitting into societal expectations. They have seen how heteronormative relationships impose rigid roles—one partner dominant, the other submissive. Many queer people reject these structures entirely, shaped by years of trauma and rejection. Love, for them, isn't about conformity—it's about freedom, choice, and finding spaces where they can be fully themselves.

And for Neeti, that freedom is worth everything.

Sumi is a trans woman who grew up in a small village near Tezpur, Assam, surrounded by childhood memories—playing under the open sky, twirling in her mother’s sarees, painting her nails with colors that made her feel whole. As a child, she didn’t have the words to describe herself, but she knew what felt right. **She knew what made her happy.**

But the world around her had already decided who she was allowed to be. In villages like hers, anyone who didn’t fit the mold was met with suspicion, cruelty, and, too often, violence. The moment her queerness became visible, everything changed. The stares became harsher, the whispers louder. People like Sumi were policed in every way possible—**through ridicule, exclusion, and, when all else failed, physical force.**



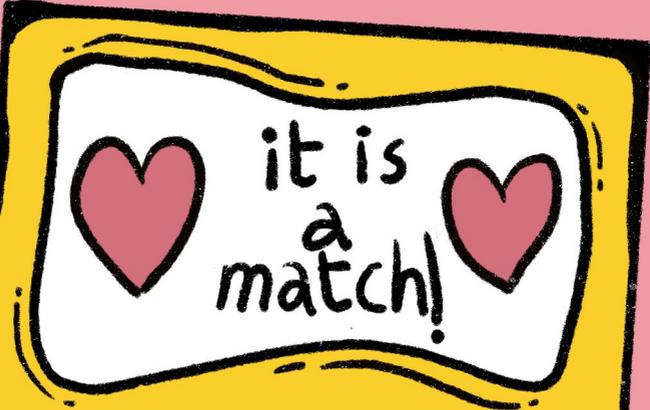


Her first experience with love ended in devastation. When the village discovered her relationship, a community meeting was called—not to discuss, not to understand, but to punish.

What followed was brutal. They didn't just shame her and her partner—they made an example out of them. Sumi could only watch as her partner was beaten, as his cries of pain were met with indifference, as their love was crushed beneath the weight of tradition and control. That day, she realized the terrifying truth: in their eyes, people like her were not meant to exist.

Across India, queer and trans people face brutal policing by families and communities. In many areas, being visibly queer often leads to forced marriages, social boycotts, and violent attacks. Many are expelled from their homes, left without safety or support. These punishments aren't about "protection" but about control—forcing queer and trans people into silence and conformity.

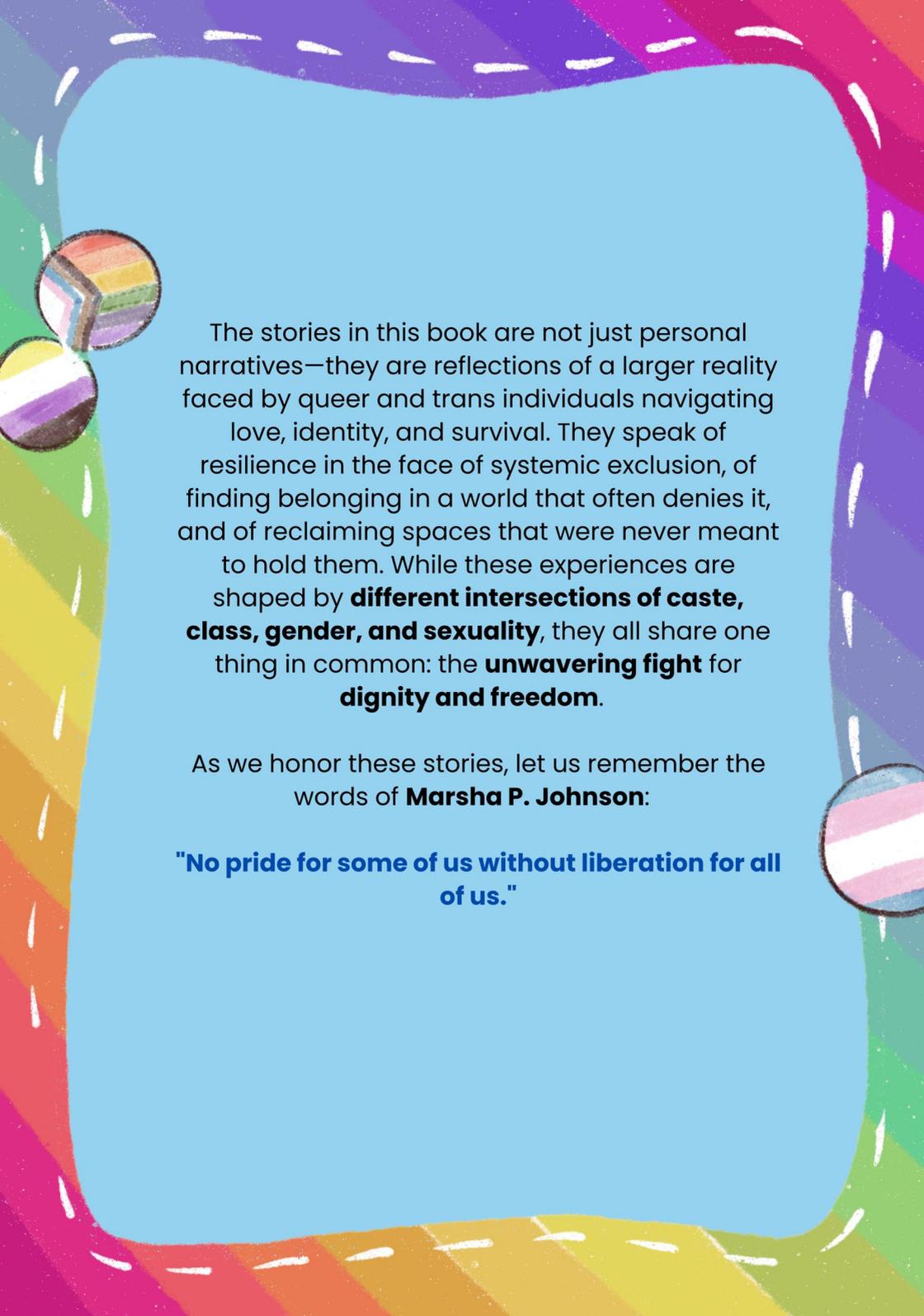




it is
a
match!

Seeking connection, Sumi turned to dating apps, only to face another kind of violence. Many apps erase trans people through rigid gender filters. When trans women are acknowledged, they are often fetishized, treated as fantasies rather than partners. Worse, some are lured into unsafe encounters, facing harassment or outing. Instead of safe spaces, these platforms become another reminder that trans people are only accepted on others' terms.

Yet, Sumi refuses to be erased. She sees trans people around her building love and joy on their own terms. If they can carve out spaces of belonging, so can she—because dignity isn't just something to receive, it's something to fight for.



The stories in this book are not just personal narratives—they are reflections of a larger reality faced by queer and trans individuals navigating love, identity, and survival. They speak of resilience in the face of systemic exclusion, of finding belonging in a world that often denies it, and of reclaiming spaces that were never meant to hold them. While these experiences are shaped by **different intersections of caste, class, gender, and sexuality**, they all share one thing in common: the **unwavering fight for dignity and freedom.**

As we honor these stories, let us remember the words of **Marsha P. Johnson**:

"No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us."

Credits

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A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported this project in ways big and small —through trust, solidarity, and unwavering belief in the power of storytelling. This work exists because of the communities that continue to resist, reclaim, and create spaces of love and liberation.



To know more about our work
scan the link below:

