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Queering Philanthropy, Evolving Identities

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ABSTRACT

HIV-focussed funding has shaped the queer movement in India, its priorities, and the articulation of queer identities in some fundamental ways. With the legal and policy landscapes becoming increasingly favourable for queer identities, new funders, especially corporate funders, have come forward to extend their support. This study examines the responses from the community in the wake of these changes. These responses are likely to have a far-reaching impact on the queer community's ongoing struggle for human rights and dignity, how queer identities are articulated by the community and how they are understood by funders and the larger society.

Keywords: Queer movement, identities, CSR

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1. INTRODUCTION

The story of queer people in India has, so far, been written and lived along the fault lines and margins of Indian history, but now the search for our own moment of assertion is gaining momentum' (Narrain and Bhan 2005, 2). The momentum that the editors of this anthology of queer voices refer to marks the beginning of what one could call the 'queer movement' in India. Amidst an adverse political and legal landscape in the mid-1980s, conversations on same-sex love, sexuality, and diverse gender identities were slowly but steadily gathering steam. There were two major developments that brought conversations on queer issues to public and policy consciousness. The first was the HIV/AIDS epidemic which started in the mid-1980s. And, the other was the legal battle against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (which criminalized homosexual sex), starting with a petition filed in the Delhi High Court in 1994 and culminating in 2018 with the Supreme Court of India declaring criminalisation of consensual sex between same-sex adults as unconstitutional.

By the early 1990s, the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in India brought with it multinational donors interested in designing and implementing public health interventions. This not only shaped the priorities of queer organisations and collectives[2], it also influenced articulation of queer identities.[3] The identity groups that were at the highest risk of HIV, such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women, remained prominent, and most of the work done by queer-led organisations focussed on the needs of these identity groups.[4] This donor-driven mobilisation and building of the queer movement in India resulted in relatively poor visibility of lesbian, bisexual women, and transmasculine persons (LBT) in the movement and limited discussions on the needs of identity groups that stood at the intersections of caste, class, and ethnicity (CREA 2006). Legal and policy developments in the past ten years have opened up new facets for the movement, paving the way for many new funders. Corporates, who were initially reluctant to associate themselves with the queer community in India, have started becoming more amenable towards supporting queer-led organisations or launching diversity and inclusion programmes in India focussed on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

[2]Queer collectives refer to informal groups of queer individuals which, unlike queer organisations, are not registered legal entities.

[3]Queer identities, whether articulated or not, encompass 'a multiplicity of desires and identities, each and all of which question the naturalness, the rightness and the inevitability of heterosexuality' (Narrain and Bhan 2005, 3). The authors further proclaim that this formation of identities which emerges out of understanding and accepting one's sexuality is pivotal to an 'act of political resistance' since these identities 'have given a space to many same-sex desiring people to name their desires, as well as putting a face to the queer movement. The shared sense of common identity, and the emergence of increasingly visible communities that openly name themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, kothi, hijra and transgendered, has in effect become the foundation of a young queer movement' (Narrain and Bhan 2005, 15)A plethora of identities come under the rubric of queer in India. While men and women attracted to the same gender or both genders in urban India identify as being lesbian, gay, and bisexual, there are multiple traditional and regional terms as well to describe non-normative gender and sexual identities. For example, non-English speaking male members of the community in certain regions coming from low-middle income and working-class backgrounds and with feminine gender expression identified themselves as *kothis*.
The most common identities that are solely based on gender identity and expression are those that come under the transgender umbrella. While transfeminine and transmasculine people in urban India often identify themselves as transgender women/trans women and transgender men/trans men, there are multiple indigenous gender-diverse identities as well such as hijras, kinnar, thirunangai, mangalmukhi, jogti, jogappa, nupi maanbi, nupi maanba, etc.

[4]As a result of HIV interventions, MSM also evolved from being a purely behavioural term to an identity several men identify with. Nevertheless, MSM and, more recently, women who have sex with women (WSW) have been commonly used terms mainly in public health discourses as a behavioural category (Young and Myer 2005).

HIV-driven funding resulted in a rather reductionist articulation of queer identities. It was also pivotal in reshaping the priorities of most queer-led organisations in a manner that gave prominence to certain causes and identity groups, but obscured others. In the wake of new philanthropic entities emerging, the questions that now arise are which community needs and identity groups will take prominence, which identity articulations will be deemed valid, and which ones will get obscured? This study critically analyses the impact that the interplay of global funding and corporate philanthropy, in the context of the changing politico-legal environment in India, has had on the country's queer movement and the formation of queer identities. It traces the changes in priorities of queer organisations and articulation of queer identities in the context of new types of funders emerging in the milieu of support available for queer issues.

Research questions: The study investigates the following research questions:

1) How has global funding shaped/influenced the creation and deployment of identities in the Indian queer movement?

2) How is the rise of corporate philanthropy in India changing advocacy strategies and priorities of queer community-based organisations, as well as the articulation and deployment of identities?

3) How are community-based organisations negotiating the question of rights of queer people and unmet needs in the context of this changing landscape of philanthropy?

The next section looks at the current state of knowledge with respect to the rise of queer movement in India, its initial phase, and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the movement. It also examines literature on correlation between identities, especially collective identities, and new social movements, in the context of the articulation of queer identities in India. The third section outlines the research methodology, describing the sample studied and explaining the data collection and analysis techniques used. It also provides a rationale for following a constructivist grounded theory approach in data collection and analysis. The section on key findings and discussion is organised to elaborate the work done by queer community-based organisations and groups in India; identity groups and community needs that are catered to by current funding sources; and needs that remain unmet and unsupported. It examines changes in the political and legal landscape in India and the corresponding changes in funding entities. It also presents findings on changes in the articulation of identities that have emerged over the years alongside changes in the philanthropic landscape. The final section reflects upon how gradual shifts in the priorities of civil society organisations (CSOs), newer identity articulations, and coming to the fore of hitherto obscure identities have taken place with changes in funding.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Queer movement in India: The queer movement in India, as we know it today, began to gain momentum in the mid-1980s when several authors and film-makers started 'coming out' through their works. The publication of literary work on queer issues evoked public outcry and resistance (SAATHII; Vanita and Kidwai 2001; Kole 2007). The 1996 film *Fire* by Deepa Mehta created a storm of controversies and brought the conversation on female sexuality into the public imagination for the first time (*Nazariya* 2020; Sharma, 2006).

Some view the initial assertion of queer identities as a Western import. Kole (2007, 4) argues that most of the authors who asserted their queer identities were born and brought up in the West amidst 'well-established gay and lesbian communities, with a tradition of organized resistance and therefore … greater sexual and artistic freedom'. Tellis (2012, 150) dismisses the claim of it being a movement at all, where 'the word "queer" [has travelled] from the streets of New York' and got appropriated 'in the elite spaces of an upper class and upper caste set of people in India'. These arguments also hold merit for most NGOs and civil society organisations implementing HIV interventions who directly imported strategies for community mobilisation from donor countries (Kole 2007). Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the emergence of collectives of lesbian and bisexual women in the '90s. This emergence was not donor-driven and was not necessarily comprised of urban, English-speaking feminists. Lesbian and bisexual women, in individual capacities or through formal or informal collectives like Sappho for Equality in Kolkata and Vikalp in Baroda, were reaching out to others within the community through helpline numbers. Anonymous mails from individuals across India, dealing with issues around gender expression and sexuality and seeking psychosocial and emotional support, were sent to post box numbers of these collectives *(Nazariya 2020)*.

The emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Indian subcontinent in the late 1980s was followed by globalisation-aided trade liberalisation resulting the Indian economy opening up to foreign direct investment in 1991. These twin developments influenced the queer movement in some fundamental ways. The opening up of the economy as part of the IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programme also opened up the development landscape in India to multinational donors who had a mandate of working on HIV/AIDS. This marked a shift in the process of queer mobilisation. Individual efforts of assertion of queer identity and demand for spaces in all walks of life were gradually, over the next few decades, overshadowed by an overwhelming emergence of donor-driven queer organisations in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Kole 2007; Cohen 2005). For instance, under the Pehchān project funded by the Global Fund, 207 community-based organisations (CBOs) in 17 Indian states were nurtured from October 2010 to May 2016. These organisations largely focussed on those sections of queer population that were the most vulnerable to HIV on account of their sexual behaviour, like men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender persons and hijras. These sections became target populations for huge international funding (The Humsafar Trust 2018).

Role of HIV funding in shaping the Indian queer movement and queer identities: Kole (2007) argues that an HIV-focussed, donor-driven agenda shaped what constituted the 'queer movement' in the country by introducing programme strategies in the form of queer film festivals, gay pride parades, queer chatrooms, queer advertising, queer films, queer networks and support groups being imported from the donor countries and implemented as tools for advocacy. Several identity-based classifications were instrumented in the 1990s and early 2000s by 'two competing networks' (led by The Humsafar Trust and Naz Foundation, respectively). One of the networks projected the identities of '*kothi*' and '*panthi*' as the defining feature of same sex desires for South Asian males. *Kothi* referred to the effeminate men who desired the more masculine counterparts, '*panth*i'. The other network 'located multiple subtypes of kothis within a complex grid of identifications and practices that included gay men and refused gender as the dominant structuring axis defining men's desire for sex with men' (Cohen 2005,270). The classifications came into being out of the need to offer potential donors a unique set of identities, practices, and imaginaries which was deemed more 'authentic' than others.

These new articulations of queer identities resulted in a shift from the 'official wisdom among legislatures and bureaucrats … that India lacked homosexuals' to research and resources for prevention being targeted towards 'the more politically and epidemiologically viable category of MSM' (Cohen 2005, 283). This also resulted in the creation of a '*kothi–panthi*' identity binarism,[5] which not only seemed unambiguous but also convenient for structuring interventions around the same (Cohen 2005, 284). Several researchers, presented the '*kothi–panthi*' identity construct as an assertion against the totalizing binarism of straight and gay identities, which was culturally more relevant to the South Asian HIV/AIDS prevention context (Reddy 2005 and 2001; Khan 1999; NAZ Project-Humsafar Trust 1995). However, Cohen argues that these concepts, while indeed assertive, posed a threat of counter-binarism, which was not only reductionist, but also exclusionary. Since the advocacy for queer rights was largely informed by donor-led HIV/AIDS programmes, certain groups and identities were excluded or included based on their 'epidemiological viab[ility]' and suitability for interventions around HIV/AIDS (Cohen 2005, 283). On the one hand, the initially excluded hijras, the transgender community of India, were included in the Indian queer movement, with the advent of HIV/AIDS prevention funding and programmes, but, on the other hand, this framework radically separated gay-identified men from the interventions targeting MSM (Cohen 2005) and rendered the lesbian and bisexual women and transmasculine persons completely invisible with the 'NGO-isation' of the queer movement (Bhattacharya 2014).

Impact of the struggle against Section 377: The other defining aspect of the Indian queer movement has been the struggle against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which criminalised all forms of non-penovaginal, penetrative, non-procreative sex and, by corollary, resulted in the criminalisation of homosexual sex and persecution of the entire queer community (Bhaskaran 2002; PUCL-K 2001). The struggle against Section 377 also witnessed a strategic articulation and deployment of collective queer identities (see Melucci 1989) to create visibility of queer issues and communities. There had been other brief moments in the Indian context

[5]In the mid-1990s, kothi was adopted as a sexual identity in the HIV/AIDS intervention discourse (Cohen 2005) along with the behavioural identity of men who have sex with men (MSM). Panthi was the identity given by kothis to their more masculine partners. The kothi–panthi binary became one of the cornerstones of designing HIV interventions, and panthi, which was not an identity one would self-identify as, became one as the HIV interventions strengthened.

when various identity groups had come together under a collective queer identity to attain a common goal. Community protests, conferences and workshops that resulted from the ban of the film Fire constituted one such moment. Various identity groups, otherwise disparate, also came together following the arrest of HIV activists in Lucknow, in July 2000 (LABIA 2013). However, none of these matched the magnitude and duration of the struggle against Section 377, engaging the efforts and consciousness of most queer organisations and individuals across various identity groups.

Articulation of collective identities has been deemed crucial for collective socio-political action by many scholars in recent decades (Melucci 1989; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Poletta and Jasper 2001; Fominaya 2010). Melucci (1989) describes contemporary social movements in terms of collective action in which individual actors involved collectively produce meanings; communicate and negotiate on goals, means, and the environment; and arrive at a collective identity. This genesis of collective identity happens through a discursive process of tensions, contradictions, and negotiations across a multiplicity of groups that are essentially fragmented and come together only in response to specific issues. However, collective identity articulation is also accompanied with a selective erasure of diverse and intersectional lived experiences (Ward 2008). Not only did Section 377 primarily impact gay men, the struggle against Section 377 only gave visibility and limelight to the issues of gay men, collectively presented as 'queer issues'. While most identity groups, even those systemically invisibilised, unequivocally supported striking down Section 377, it is argued that selective focus on the issue erased several other identities and multi-faceted lived experiences (Radhakrishnan 2019).

Recent legal and policy developments: Legal developments in the past decade have created the biggest dent so far in the hegemonic control of HIV programmes on the queer movement in India. The NALSA judgement of 2014, which recognised the rights of transgender communities and the right to self-affirmation of gender identity (NALSA v. Union of India, 2014), and the judgement on Section 377 in 2018, which decriminalised consensual sex among same-gender adults and put an end to the threat of legal persecution of gender and sexual minorities (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018), were landmark judgments for the queer movement in India. These judgements were followed by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act that came into effect in 2019 (and subsequent Rules in 2020) to operationalise the NALSA judgment and formulate concrete plans for the welfare of transgender persons in several sectors (e.g., education, health, workplace). In 2021, the Madras High Court Justice N. Anand Venkatesh, in another seminal judgment, prohibited conversion therapy. The verdict also provided directives for the sensitization of society and various organs of the State, including law enforcement and the judiciary, to address prejudices against the LGBTQIA+ community. Suggestions for changes in curricula of schools and universities were also made in this judgement so that students could develop a rational understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community (S Sushma v. Commissioner of Police 2021).

These legal and policy developments encouraged multinational companies in India to more openly support queer issues, in line with the diversity, inclusion, and CSR mandates of their global counterparts (Venugopalan 2019). Community organisations and leaders also started advocating for inclusion of queer communities in various walks of lives, including workplaces. One such example is evident in a document developed by 29 individuals, representing different identity groups, which focussed on creating inclusive workplaces for queer people and an idea of inclusion which is led by the community. This document titled, 'LGBTQ+ inclusion in Workplaces: Community Aspirations' says, 'LGBTQ+ movement in the country has come a long way from a time when employers were hesitant to even talk about LGBTQ+ issues to a stage when communities are being actively approached for jobs. Recruitment targets for hiring LGBTQ+ candidates are being set up by start-ups and large enterprises, Indian and multinational companies alike … It is important that at this juncture community voices are heard and taken into account, for it would have far-reaching consequences and would determine if the efforts made by companies, intermediaries and community-based organisations culminate into a mere exercise of tokenism or a true inclusion revolution.' (The Humsafar Trust 2020, 4).

Gaps in the existing literature: While quite a few scholars have analysed the impact of HIV-related funding on the queer movement in India, the role of emerging CSR philanthropy still needs to be examined. The current literature focusses primarily on the interrelationships between international funding organisations and queer community-based organisations in India. However, it is difficult to draw clear analogies between these interrelationships and the engagement that is emerging between corporates and queer-led organisations.

Also, there is dearth of literature that looks at organisational priorities and advocacy conducted by queer-led organisations from the lens of changing landscape of philanthropy. Furthermore, there is a complete absence of literature that examines changes that have come in articulation of queer identities in India and any potential impact of funding on these changes. By situating the role of identity in the queer movement in India and looking at advocacy and organisational priorities in tandem with articulation and internalisation of identities, it is possible to see beyond static goals and strategies and donor agendas and understand the cultural and political change inherent in these developments.

3. METHODOLOGY USED; LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I have been part of The Humsafar Trust, one of the oldest queer organisations in India, for almost a decade and have worked closely with several queer organisations in different parts of the country. The study was designed with an acknowledgment of the bias that my association with the movement and my lived experiences carry. Hence, while this study aimed to draw extensively from the theoretical frameworks governing global philanthropy and the formation of civil associations, it followed a constructivist grounded theory approach in data collection and analysis to seek meanings that emerge from the vantage points of both the researcher and the respondents. It enabled me to take into account the 'beliefs and ideologies' of the respondents along with 'situations and structures' which have been focussed upon in previous studies (Charmaz 2000,525), in tandem with my own dialogic engagement with the study participants and the larger movement itself.

Sample: Seven leading queer organisations in the country (Details in Appendix 1) were studied. Historical records of advocacy events and strategies of these organisations were reviewed in order to understand how their advocacy priorities and strategies have changed with different philanthropic entities. Five of these organisations were selected based on the fact that they had been in operation for at least 15 years so that a comprehensive account of changes, if any, in their priorities and advocacy strategies could be analysed. One of the remaining two was selected by virtue of being the only queer collective in South Asia working with queer Muslim youth. The other organisation was selected because it is an exclusively transgender-led organisation working for more than 10 years. Another criterion for selection was organisational reach, defined by periodic contact with queer individuals through multiple physical and online forums aimed at mobilisation for advocacy activities or providing services at any given point in time. All the selected organisations had a reach of at least 1,500 queer individuals. The organisations were also selected considering the identity groups they represented and representation of other identity intersections based on religion, caste, region, language, etc.

A total of 23 queer activists affiliated with these seven organisations were contacted, of which 10 representatives from four of these organisations were available for in-depth interviews. These representatives were individuals involved in fundraising and project management in their respective organisations. In certain cases, multiple participants from the same organisation were also selected to ensure representation of different identity groups. The sample for in-depth interviews also included nine queer individuals who were not associated with any organisation or group, but who have been advocating for queer rights for at least 10 years.

Data Collection and Analysis: The following methods of data collection were employed:

- Ten in-depth interviews of representatives from queer organisations on what changes in priorities and strategies have occurred for the movement with changes in the philanthropic and legal-political landscape.
- Nine in-depth interviews of queer individuals not associated with any organisation or group, but who have been advocating for queer rights, on the correlation and disconnect, if any, between advocacy interventions undertaken by organisations and urgent and emergent needs of the community.

Data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously in an iterative process. An open coding of historical records of advocacy events and strategies of the seven selected queer organisations was done to arrive at the first set of themes. Two in-depth interview guides (Appendices 2 and 3) were designed based on the initial thematic categorisations. Analysis and subsequent data collection involved constant engagement with the codes and refining the thematic categorisations to arrive at a conceptual model.

In order to be reflexive about my own position in relation to research questions, participants and the queer movement, I maintained a detailed journal of my insights, reactions, and sentiments throughout data collection and analysis. I re-visited the journal iteratively to facilitate data interpretation, thematic categorisations, and continuous theorising to develop the conceptual model.

Ethical Considerations: Considering the fact that queer individuals in India often face harassment on account of their sexuality and gender identity, strict confidentiality was maintained in data collection and research publication. Any names mentioned in the report are with due consent of the respective participants. Due care has been taken to remove any identifiers from the comments of participants who wished to remain anonymous. Pronouns used to refer to the participants while presenting their responses or direct comments are their preferred pronouns as mentioned by them in the consent form.

4. KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Work done by community-led groups and organisations working on queer rights in India: Work done by the seven community-led organisations in the sample was first analysed based on a review of data available in the public domain. This analysis was substantiated with responses from in-depth interviews of study participants working on various projects.

The activities conducted by queer-led community groups and organisations in India can broadly be categorised into two: 1) **provision of services** pertaining to the urgent and emergent needs of the community, aimed at their 'welfare' and 'inclusion'; and 2) **critique of existing human rights and development discourses** by looking at them through the lens of sexuality and gender.

Provision of services: This has predominantly included health-related interventions like HIV/STI prevention and treatment programmes, projects and services on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and interventions to address violence faced by queer communities. It has also included creating sensitisation and awareness on issues and challenges faced by the communities, among various key stakeholders. (Key stakeholders, in this study, refer to policy makers, healthcare providers, educators, law enforcement agencies, judiciary, employers, and the larger society). With increasing interest among employers in hiring queer, especially transgender, people, a lot of welfare related activities are focussed on skilling and employment.

Critique of existing human rights and development discourses: This category included advocacy for legal reforms to ensure basic human rights for the queer community, like the right to health, livelihood, education, marriage, adoption, inheritance, etc. and the struggle against persecution of communities under the law, especially of those who are socio-economically more vulnerable like sex workers, transgender persons, and so on. It has also included forming alliances with other marginalised and oppressed groups and creating content on highlighting the intersectionality of caste, class, religion, region, language, etc., which add further layers of vulnerabilities within queer communities.

These are definitely not neat categorisations, and there are elements of both critique and service provision in not only an organisation's overall mandate, but also in the individual activities undertaken. However, these categorisations help assess and appraise the priorities of community-based organisations in the context of the funders who support their work. One of the questions for queer organisations is whether to emphasize their differences from the cis-gender and heterosexual majority or their similarities with the majority at a certain point in time. Bernstein (1997, 532) argues that this is a strategic decision. Those with a stronger organisational infrastructure and access to political decision-makers tend to suppress rather than emphasise their differences from the majority. In the Indian context, both strong organisational infrastructure and access to polity have a direct correlation with availability and eligibility for funding. Most of the organisations in the sample studied have been well funded. They challenge 'the dominant culture's perception' of the queer community only 'by playing on uncontroversial themes' (Bernstein 1997, 538) like public health and violence. These organisations remained focussed on articulating

their identities for the 'education' of key stakeholders. Since the majority of funders mandate working on welfare and some form of service delivery, organisations tend to focus more on those activities. Activities that actively critique existing power structures are directly or indirectly dissuaded by most funding agencies. This has resulted in most organisations steering clear of them. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funders conduct a detailed background check along with a negative media search for involvement in any anti-government activity, as shared by one of the participants who is the Programme Manager of a CSR-funded project. They stated, 'There was a cursory mention of our organisation in an anti-CAA/NRC protest in a news article and we were asked to provide evidence negating our alleged involvement. We had to submit the public statement we had put up on social media during the incident, categorically denying our involvement in the protests.'

Representatives from two organisations out of the seven organisations studied cited examples of activities where they made a conscious choice to pursue advocacy that did not align with their funders' mandates and even carried the risk of antagonising both funding agencies and the government. One such example was staging protests against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019. The act had caused widespread discontent amongst the transgender communities because of clauses that directly or indirectly circumvented transgender persons' right to equality and self-identification. Activities in the overall body of work done by the rest of the organisations did not consciously offer 'critique' by confronting 'the values, categories, and practices of the dominant culture' ((Bernstein 1997, 538).

Which community needs and identity groups are catered to by existing funding?

Between 2008 and 2021, 82 per cent of the funded activities conducted by the sample organisations were directly or indirectly focussed on HIV interventions for men who have sex with men and transgender women. Only 18 per cent was focussed on rights-based advocacy (advocacy activities primarily included community mobilisation and legal advocacy against Section 377 and sensitisation of key stakeholders on gender and sexuality). Specifically, for example, between 2008 and 2020, 78 per cent of the funded activities conducted by The Humsafar Trust, one of the oldest registered LGBTQ+ organisations in the country, have been focussed on HIV interventions; 97 per cent of the activities conducted by Payana, a community-based organisation based in Bengaluru, were centred on HIV prevention and treatment programmes under the aegis of National AIDS Control Organisation. Advocacy activities conducted in this duration by these two organisations have also focussed primarily on HIV and Section 377.

Shruta Rawat, Research Manager at The Humsafar Trust, shares that organisations do continuously make attempts to club the issues of rights and other health needs beyond HIV, in their HIV-focussed advocacy initiatives. In the past 10 years, health interventions have gradually become more holistic. Earlier, while the focus was more on HIV and some STIs, now other health issues like diabetes, hypertension, mental health are also being taken into consideration while designing and implementing projects. Health has also been the primary focus of interventions conducted for lesbian and bisexual women. A senior lesbian activist remarks, '...women's

reproductive health, nutrition, sex ratio have always been closely monitored by the state'. As a result, as part of the larger interventions on reproductive health for women in general or health interventions in the context of violence, programmes designed for lesbian and bisexual women also tend to focus on health.

The major sources of funding for HIV interventions in India have been the Indian government, official and independent aid agencies supported by other governments like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Department for International Development (DFID), United Nations agencies like the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and international NGOs like FHI-360, the Bill and Mellinda Gates Foundation, Avert Society, PATH, and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). However, with LGBTQ+ friendly judgements and legislations, newer philanthropic entities like corporates have also come forward to support queer organisations or collectives. These entities are however focussed on livelihoods rather than health. They offer support for building capacities of queer communities: for instance, support in getting ready for a job through trainings on corporate communication, interview skills and resume building, assistance in finding a job through job fairs, and even conducting targeted recruitment drives. Many big companies allocate a portion of their diversity and inclusion budgets towards hiring queer people, particularly transgender persons. Corporates are also interested in supporting visibility events, especially during the Pride Month. However, most participants felt that the support received from corporates is not based on an ethos of equity or inclusion; on the contrary, it is either to fulfil a PR goal or driven by a misguided sense of righteousness. As LGBTQ+ activist and filmmaker Sonal Giani says, 'The narrative is still very "holier than thou". It is not a very empowering narrative.'

Another key need for the queer movement that has garnered considerable support is creating content for visibility of queer issues. An increasing amount of funding is becoming available for individual filmmakers to produce queer-themed documentaries and films. There are a greater number of LGBTQ+-themed TV shows available on OTT platforms and in mainstream media.

Unmet needs and invisible identities:

Needs of lesbian and bisexual women: Lesbian, bisexual women and transmasculine persons have for a long time been a marginalised section within the marginalised queer community. While women's health has been a priority in the government's agenda, it has always been from the perspective of disease and not 'personhood', as expressed by a feminist activist. She remarks, 'Lesbian relationships were considered non-productive relationships and, hence, there was no possibility of receiving funds for organisations working for them.' Some situate the root cause of this exclusion in a hetero-patriarchal understanding of family. As a senior lesbian feminist activist says, 'State puts in a lot of funds for the 'family'. But family is defined in a heteropatriarchal manner which is actually at the heart of the problem. A queer couple running away from home or staying together is also a unit in itself, but is not recognised so. And this discrimination is often not acknowledged because the archaic definitions of family are internalised.'

In terms of unmet needs of lesbian and bisexual women, respondents talked about support on fertility needs, addressing marriage pressures faced as women get older, the need for social security in the absence of conventional family support, and legal protection. Some also talked about lack of peer support groups and queer affirmative counsellors for young lesbian and bisexual women, which makes coming out difficult for them. Three of the six lesbian and bisexual activists interviewed for this study expressed that visibility was the most urgent need for lesbian and bisexual women. While, the 2014 NALSA judgement has resulted in an incremental improvement in the inclusion of transmasculine people in policy spaces and dialogues, lesbian and bisexual women continue to remain largely invisible in most conversations on LGBTQ+ rights and welfare. However, a few respondents also talked about some funding that has started coming in for small visibility projects. These projects are not necessarily undertaken by large non-profits, but by individuals or informal groups.

Lack of structural and institutional support: Service-delivery projects designed for those assigned female at birth (AFAB) do not take into account structural inadequacies that make accessing services difficult. These structural inadequacies also stem from a lack of understanding amongst key stakeholders on several aspects of gender and sexuality. Rawat says, '...even if there is funding available to address the crisis [faced by AFAB individuals], our existing structures are not conducive to support whatever crisis interventions that we do. For example, if I have to link someone who is AFAB and has faced violence, into existing shelter homes, the fact that they are lesbian, bisexual, queer women means that they are vulnerable to discrimination, stigmatisation within those spaces. If I have funding to address the "crisis", it doesn't necessarily mean that the funding will be optimally utilised because I cannot rope my communities into an existing structure and it is impractical for me to have a parallel structure for my communities only because that's not sustainable. If I open up a shelter home for lesbian, bisexual women, how long do I keep seeking funding for? ...[U]nless there is a buy-in within existing structures to take it ahead, communities are not going to really receive any benefit in the longer run.' Lack of sensitization of existing institutions also impacts older LGBTQ+ individuals. A senior gay activist states that 'it is almost like getting back into the closet since the existing support system (old-age homes etc.) are not sensitised.'

The structural barriers also manifest in the case of realisation of welfare measures on the ground. A case in point is the process of legal transition for transgender persons to their preferred name and gender identity. Although the process has been outlined in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019) and Rules (2020), officials who implement the process are not sensitised on gender and sexuality and challenges faced by transgender persons. Furthermore, the absence of transgender persons in the offices of these government departments to help transgender applicants navigate through the processes creates further barriers.

Legal recognition and rights: One of the most urgent needs of queer communities, as expressed by most of the participants, is legal rights: the right to legal recognition of marriage, adoption rights, right against discrimination, and so on. Vivek Anand, CEO of The Humsafar Trust, says, '...one issue that is really close to my heart and for which there is no funding available anywhere is to make sure that this young gay couple who is part of my family of choice, gets married. I might be personally against the institution of marriage, this couple might reject the idea of marriage altogether, but the fact that the option of getting legally married is not even available to them is outright unacceptable.'

Most queer-led organisations are unwilling to take up projects that might show them as anti-government. There is a fear of their FCRA[6] getting revoked or health interventions, which are primarily funded under government programmes, being shut down. Organisations restrict themselves to conducting sensitisations of key stakeholders on legal rights and challenges faced by the communities, but do not venture into active legal advocacy involving Public Interest Litigations (PILs) seeking legislative reforms or filing Right to Information (RTI) applications demanding clarifications on government actions promised under recent judgements and legislations. There are some international funding organisations that support activities focussed on legal reforms. However, respondents say that such support has been dwindling in recent years. Corporate funders who have emerged in the recent years and have been providing support to queer organisations, are particularly wary of being seen as supporting advocacy that can be potentially perceived as anti-government.

Other unmet needs: Identity groups that have received relatively greater support and visibility also face the issue of a rather parochial understanding of their needs. For example, for transgender communities, while there is support available for HIV-related interventions, there is no support for gender-affirming surgeries. Until recently, gender-affirming surgeries had been categorised as elective procedures under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, a scheme aimed at addressing the healthcare needs of economically weaker sections of society. One of the study participants mentions that this changed only after an 'accidental advocacy' in a community consultation where a government official working with the National Health Authority was present. In the said consultation, community members asserted that gender-affirming surgeries were one of the basic human rights for transgender persons.

[6]FCRA expands to Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. The act regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution by individuals, associations, and companies. Its latest amendment in 2020 has received widespread criticism on account of being used as a tool by the Indian government to repress voices of dissent among civil society organisations (CSOs) in India.

Similarly for gay men, a disproportionate emphasis is laid on HIV. One of the participants says that HIV is definitely the biggest concern, but considerable work needs to be done on intimate partner violence and non-acceptance from family, for which there is scarcely any support available. Some respondents also pointed out the lack of support available for sustainability of community-led organisations and continuation of work earmarked under a particular grant. This leads to a rather myopic vision amongst organisations in terms of programme objectives and activities pitched and finally conducted under a particular project. Chandini Gagana, Founder of Payana remarks, 'The only funding available right now is for HIV. There is very limited funding available to work on rights and organisational development. Once the HIV funding stops, organisations will not be able to survive. It is important to strengthen both the activism and the organisation. The road to realisation of rights is a long one.'

About 96% of the respondents felt that the funding that is available for queer issues does not reach those who need it the most. Some felt that most of the large-scale projects run for queer communities in India were not designed in a participatory manner. Funding that has traditionally come in has already been earmarked for activities decided without consultation with the community and, hence, is utilised for populations or issues that do not qualify as the most urgent needs of the community. It was also shared that most funders have identified a few organisations who fulfil the FCRA and other legal requirements and limit their support to them. One of the participants suggested that there should be an open call for projects and ideas and, in case the selected organisations do not fulfil the legal requirements, a fiscal partner should be identified and supported accordingly.

Changes in funding dynamics on queer movement and identities: Apart from the struggle against Section 377 which brought some diverse identity groups together, collectivisation of queer groups and identities for the attainment of common goals, like advocacy for policy change, has barely been witnessed. Some respondents, particularly those leading lesbian and bisexual women's groups, expressed their disappointment with both HIV-related funding as well as organisations which benefitted from it. A lesbian activist from Kolkata says, 'HIV-related funding killed the movement in a big way. Pre-HIV, organisations were doing new and fresh things. But now everything is dictated by NACO [National AIDS Control Organisation]. Bigger organisations still have the capability to do new things, but smaller NGOs do not have the bandwidth or capacity. The funding structure also limits their growth and capacity to venture into other aspects of queer lives.' Some other participants differed, stating that it is the bigger organisations where scope for innovation has become limited due to the funding structure or diktats from HIV-focussed funders. One lesbian activist states, 'Funders typically only fund the same big organisations again and again. So, the scope for innovative initiatives gets limited by design since larger organisations prefer to strengthen their existing projects or only certain identity groups.' Most respondents believed that community-based organisations were divided because there has been a limited pool of funding available to them. Because of HIV-focussed funding and the politics that it engendered, enabling certain organisations, identity groups, and causes acquire visibility at the cost of others. The larger queer community and the movement itself remains fractured, preventing diverse identity groups from working together.

Queer issues have received unprecedented visibility in the past decade owing to significant changes in legal and policy landscapes in India. This has also resulted in a corresponding increase in funding opportunities from various entities for a diverse set of needs. While most respondents found this increase in visibility and support for queer identity groups and their needs a welcome development, all of them unequivocally stressed the fact that funders, especially corporate funders, need to understand the heterogeneity and diversity within queer communities better. This lack of understanding of the various identity groups within the LGBTQ+ spectrum and their specific needs and vulnerabilities results in disproportionate allocation of funding and resources. With the advent of corporate funding, newer organisations and issues are being supported. However, strategic collective identity deployment still seems to elude queer movement in India. A reason for this, as one of the respondents mentions, has been lack of adequate focus on intersectionality by both major funders and leading queer organisations. They also state that this has resulted in intersectional movements getting detached from leading community-based organisations in India over the years.

The impact of corporate funding on the articulation and formulation of queer identities in India still remains to be seen. HIV-related programmes resulted in the creation of a set of identities that were indigenous, yet reductionist and aimed to align with the ethos of donor countries and agencies. There appears to be a similar apprehension regarding the new corporate funders emerging in the milieu. As Giani remarks, 'the support that is becoming available is for a certain kind of a queer person. The narrative that is being built is the narrative of a certain kind of queer person that corporates want to support. Even the recruitment drives are meant for a certain kind of person that they want to hire. It is not the reality of the majority of queer persons who need support for these hiring drives. And community groups are not able to negotiate the space in favour of the person who would probably need these inclusion drives the most.' The larger goal for corporates is to be inclusive, but they still do not have enough queer people at the decision-making level to arrive at a more holistic understanding of queer identities and issues.

5. CONCLUSION

When it started gaining momentum in the late 1980s, the queer movement in India held the promise of new and, indeed, radical dialogues on love, relationships, family structures, and the realisation of human potential. In the four decades since then, the world seems to have moved at a snail's pace towards fulfilling that promise. HIV-focussed funding continues to drive some of the major actors of the movement, prioritising those sections of the queer community who are at the highest risk of HIV. Articulation and deployment of collective identities has not only been reductionist, but has also resulted in the erasure of certain identity groups from policy and funding dialogues. Changing funding landscapes in tandem with changing legal and policy situations has not resulted in the inclusion of these groups in the conversations, but instead the creation of a different kind of invisibilisation.

With CSR funding gradually becoming available for queer organisations, new identity groups and their needs have certainly gained visibility. Transgender identities have received the maximum emphasis in this regard, particularly with respect to their skilling and employability. Coincidentally, transgender identities have been the focus of most government programmes as well. This shift in the funding landscape from purely HIV-focussed funding for MSM and transgender women to skilling and livelihoods of transgender persons has brought new needs and new identities (for instance, transmasculine people) into focus. However, this shift has also meant the further invisibilisation of already neglected sections of the queer community like lesbian and bisexual women and queer identities that are at the intersections of caste, religion, and ethnicity. Since a huge component of the movement has aimed at 'education' rather than 'critique', issues that are core to the invisibilised identities—like challenging notions of the family—have remained on the fringes of funding and policy dialogues. There still remain eclectic voices that offer a critique of archaic, heteropatriarchal structures, institutions, and attitudes. These vestiges of the initial queer assertion of early '80s, before it was transmutated by funding dynamics, draw their staying power from unmet needs and invisibilised identities.

Way Forward: Since I have personally known most of the study participants and have, in certain cases, witnessed the incidents mentioned in the interviews, I chose a constructivist grounded theory approach so that I could systematically analyse my own biases through an iterative process of data collection and analysis. While our experiences in a defined socio-political paradigm do not have separate ontological realities, the study is limited by boundaries of any other study employing construction of meanings by its participants (in this case the researcher, too, being a co-participant). It will be interesting to see the results that come from the perspective of someone who is not part of the movement or does not have first-hand knowledge of many of the developments in the past decade. Also, since the study was designed (considering the scope and time available) to capture perspectives of people who have been or continue to be key actors in the queer movement, a deeper enquiry into power dynamics within organisations and understanding the various undercurrents of the movement that align with these dynamics would offer interesting insights into identity formation and articulation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

1. The Humsafar Trust: The Humsafar Trust (HST) is the oldest registered community-based organisation in India working on LGBTQ+ rights since 1994. The primary areas of work undertaken by HST have been HIV/STI and holistic health interventions, policy advocacy, and community mobilisation for equal rights, capacity building of emerging community-based organisations and research into health and human rights of the community. The primary reason for selecting HST is that it represents all the major identity groups in the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

2. Vikalp: Vikalp was founded in 1996 to combat domestic violence and discrimination against women in Gujarat. Vikalp evolved at the intersection of class, caste, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation, intervening in the everyday lives of marginalized women and LBT (lesbian, bisexual women and transmasculine persons) people. The organization aims to carry these struggles/articulations forward to influence policies and build stronger campaigns for just laws. The organization has an all-female Board of Trustees and supports the following issues: women's justice, sexuality, economic empowerment, mobilisation of community groups. Vikalp is one of the oldest organisations working for LBT people in a context dominated by HIV and HIV 'risk groups' of gay men and transgender women.

3. Payana: Payana is a community-based organisation working for the empowerment of the sexuality minorities in Karnataka since 2009. It has been implementing HIV interventions in Bengaluru Urban, Chitradurga, and Ramangara respectively with support from the Karnataka State Aids Prevention. It also works with 23 community-based organisations (CBOs) from 23 districts of Karnataka and is affiliated to a state-level federation (SARATHYA). The society works closely with the state-level federation and supports in building the capacity of the federation along with its affiliated member organisations. Over the years, it has reached out to over 18,000 people from the community. The reason for selecting Payana is that it is predominantly focussed on transgender rights.

4. The Queer Muslim Project: The Queer Muslim Project is South Asia's largest virtual network of queer, Muslim and allied individuals, with a growing global community of over 32,000 people. They use art, culture, media, and storytelling to challenge harmful stereotypes and norms, build power and visibility of underserved LGBTQIA+ communities, and enable them to shape their own narratives. Their key focus areas

include digital advocacy, creative training programmes, online safety and well-being, and feminist and Queer-affirming approaches to faith.

5: Sappho for Equality: Sappho for Equality, established in October 2003, is one of the oldest registered organization in eastern India that works for the rights and social justice of sexually marginalized women and transmen (female to male trans persons). It uniquely works to create bridges between the so-called normative and non-normative populations in our society and positions gender-sexuality within existing development discourses.

6. Sangini (India) Trust: Sangini Trust is an LBT community-based organisation based in New Delhi. It works for women attracted to women and individuals (assigned female at birth) dealing with their gender identity. They provide 24/7 emergency response services to LBT individuals whose human rights are being violated. They were set up in 1997, under the umbrella of the Naz Foundation (India) Trust. They are the oldest non- governmental organization in India to reach out to LBT and provide them with support. All their services are provided for and by the LBT community.

7. Sangama: Sangama was founded in 1999. It has been working to bring gender identity, sexual orientation, sex work, and urban poverty into the realm of public debate and link it to the discourse on development, human rights, and socio-economic justice. They believe in integrating non-homophobic heterosexuals and social activists in the movement for sexual rights. They also work with other social movements and believe in building alliances for a larger struggle for equality, justice, and freedom.

APPENDIX 2

INFORMED CONSENT SHEET FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Background and Outcomes of the Study

The study is being undertaken towards the fulfilment of research fellowship conducted by Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP) Ashoka University. It aims to analyse the impact of an interplay of global funding and corporate philanthropy on India's queer movement and formation of queer identities. The study will review historiographical records of advocacy events and understand various strategies employed by queer organisations to address urgent and emergent needs of the community. This will contribute to the understanding of how advocacy priorities and strategies have changed for the movement under different philanthropic entities.

There will be no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, information shared by you will enable understanding advocacy needs and priorities of the queer movement better.

What will happen during the interview?

- Interviews will proceed after consent is first obtained.
- The interview will be audio recorded which will then be transcribed and translated for analyses.
- Each interview may last from 45 to 60 minutes.
- The participant is free to stop answering the questions and discontinue their participation at any point of time.
- The participant's name will not be linked to their statements in the study report or any other publication or article based on the study unless they explicitly offer their consent to do so.
- If they offer their consent that any views, opinions, or sentiments expressed by them during the course of the interview are duly attributed to them, it will be done so with their preferred names and pronouns.
- All electronic data will be stored in password-protected devices and the hard copies will be stored in locked cupboards.
- All hard copies of the data (transcripts) will be destroyed after three years of the study and the audio-files will be destroyed after one year of the interview.

- If the participant chooses to share any sensitive information around their gender identity, sexual orientation, occupation, health status, or any other such issue, it will be kept strictly confidential, unless they expressly indicate otherwise.
- The participants waive no legal rights by participating in this study.

If you have any questions at any time regarding your rights as a participant in the study and want to talk to someone not involved in the conduct of the study, then you may contact the study leaders_____

Participant's statement of informed consent and signatures
I confirm that I have been explained the purpose of the study in the language I know, I have understood the same and had all my questions answered. I understand the aforementioned terms of participation and agree to give my free consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant Signature of Investigator

Date and place:

Tick as appropriate:

☐ I wish what I say to remain anonymous

☐ I want my preferred name _____ and my preferred pronouns_____ to be linked to my comments

APPENDIX 3

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background Information

Preferred Name _____
Native State_____
Current Residence_____
Organisation Affiliated with _____
Designation_____
Preferred Pronouns_____

1. Kindly tell me something about your work

- Which identity groups does your organisation work with?
- What are the major activities/projects undertaken by your organisation?
-What are the major responsibilities handled by you within the organisation?

2. What, according to you, have been the most urgent needs of the communities/ identity groups you work with?

- Have you/your organisation conducted a formal research or situation analysis to understand these needs?

3. What have been the funding sources for the organisation since its inception?

- Where are these entities based (domestic/foreign funding)?

4. Which of the needs mentioned by you earlier have been addressed under funding available over the years?

- Elaborate on the type of activities supported by specific funders.
- Do these activities address the community needs adequately?
- Have there been instances where urgent community needs do not align with the funder's mandate? If yes, how have you negotiated such situations.
- Which community needs remain unaddressed by funding available to the organisation?

5. How does the organisation cater to community needs not covered under available funding sources?

- Do you have a network of volunteers within or outside the community?
- Do you conduct advocacy with government for addressing unfunded or under-funded community needs? If yes, what has been the outcome of such advocacy?
- Do you undertake steps towards creating more visibility and awareness on unfunded or under-funded community needs?

6. What are the ways in which the organisation articulates individual and collective identities?

- How do different funders understand the different identity groups?
- Are there any gaps in their understanding of queer identities and the ground reality? If yes, please elaborate.
- Does the articulation of identities in grant proposals or conversations differ for different funders?

7. Have there been changes in the articulation of identities over the years?

- Are these changes concurrent with or related to changes in which communities self-identify?
- Is there any relation between these changes?

8. Is there any correlation between changes in articulation of identities and changes in sources or nature of funding? If, yes, what is that?

- Are these changes in any way shaped by the manner in which funders understand different identities?

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