

WHAT REALLY DO YOU CALL UNNATURAL?

The following is a reproduction of a letter Miss Radhika Sharma received from one of her brightest students years after they had last met:

26/06/2011

Dear Miss Radhika

I was twenty-one then. Finally on a bleak rainy Sunday I made up my mind and told my parents about it. They said nothing, obviously distressed. I could not bear the tense atmosphere and went out. I took a taxi to the beach. There I strolled along the shore for about an hour, my mind filled with a thousand thoughts but I could not concentrate on any.

My mobile phone beeped. A message: Come back. Please. We need to talk.

I decided to walk the whole way. Immersed in my own world I hardly noticed anything. I was three kilometers away. I stopped in front of a candy store, hesitated a while before going in to get a Dairy Milk. It always made me feel better. As I came out of the shop I heard a two-wheeler honking loudly and turned towards the sound.

It was Vaibhav. He lived in our apartment. He was a good sort of fellow. When he offered me a lift, I saw no harm in going with him. It was only evening and my feet were aching with all the walking that afternoon.

On the way I took out my phone and started reading the messages from Sonia.

As I read one after another I could feel warm tears singe the corner of my eyes. I was lost and when the bike jerked to a halt, I looked up, wiped the tears and said: What is this place?

We were in a narrow dark passage at the end of which was a tiny tin-roofed cabin. It was there that he raped me.

A month later my parents forcibly got me married to Vaibhav. Every night he tortured me till I ran away after many months. I have nowhere to go. My parents would surely send me back to him because they think no other man will ever have me. Why? What I had told my parents before going out that fateful day was: Mumma Papa I love Sonia. She loves me too. We intend to be together for the rest of our lives. Please understand. Please.

Sonia died in a road accident a few weeks ago. I think I did too.

I just wanted to tell somebody. Thank you. Take care of yourself.

Love

Neha

Neha committed suicide the next day.

The above is fiction. I made it up. But then is it not possible that it could be real? I believe there are horrifying stories about the so called **unnatural** people hidden all around us. A few days ago I read a moving account by a transgender where she bravely narrated her story. But not everyone does that. They keep it deep in their hearts for fear of prosecution. For fear of being rejected, ridiculed, tagged a 'freak'. Is this not blatant human rights violation? You allow people accused of murder, rape, arson, corruption sit in the Lower House and you would jail a perfectly honest man with sincere love in his heart for another man.

It was therefore a bright day, a truly beautiful day when the most powerful nation in the world made the decision. **26 June 2015** shall be remembered as the day the gay community won. Again. Back in 1989 Denmark had legalized 'registered partnerships' between homosexuals and in 2012 recognized gay marriage too. **Same-sex marriage** was first recognized by the **Netherlands** in 2001. Since then Belgium (2003), Spain and Canada (2005), South Africa (2006) and some other countries including the U.K. last year have allowed their citizens the right to love and live with the person they want, without discrimination.

Marriage. A **socially** or **ritually** recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws. Proponents of the **orthodox**

definition of marriage being ‘the coming together of a male and a female for **procreation**’ is not acceptable today. It was not earlier too but then people were not courageous enough to stand up for their rights. The sole aim of marriage is not producing offspring. Rather matrimony is an **instrument** that makes the **affections** between two persons **official**. It binds them together, intertwines their lives and serves to better their understanding of each other. Also many couples are unable to bear children so should they break their marriage? On the other hand in this world where infants especially girls are abandoned by seemingly ‘over-fertile’ parents, if a girl and her partner adopt it and raise the baby as their own child, by which argument does this seem not acceptable? A child needs **love** and **nurturing** and I see no obstacle to homosexual parents being able to provide just that.

Why then is such an honorable institution subject to **restriction**? Where is the harm in two women or two men who are **emotionally attached** wanting to be with each other, just as a man and a woman can? The concept of homosexuality has been around since forever but an attempt at understanding it, respecting and accepting it has only just begun. But the **US triumph** has seen **repercussions** of previously unseen levels all **across the globe**.

In the days following the Supreme Court judgement many people on my **Facebook** friend list streaked their profile pictures with an array of **colours** to show their support for the cause. But do they really believe in gay rights? I conducted an informal **survey** on Facebook through a one-to-one chat (mostly people of my age group) to get a general opinion. The **majority** were **positive** towards the cause.

Why then is the **Indian government** so **hostile** to this idea? The answer is many-layered and deeper than we may think. Indian politics is outrageously **vote-bank** based and no ‘politician’ in his right mind would speak favourably on the issue of abolishing sodomy laws pertaining to homosexuality. India, no doubt houses the greatest diversity of people all living together in harmony albeit with occasional communal tensions. Religious clerics, especially Hindu and Muslim ones are perpetually engaged in verbal wars. But unfortunately the **onetopic** on which **every religious leader** seems to **agree** is that **homosexuality is a crime**.

The majority are Hindus and in case any public opinion survey comes up in the future their saying yes or no will make a great difference. Let us look at some **mythological stories** to understand the ancient perception of gender. **Shiva** bathes in the Yamuna and becomes a **Gopi** so that he can participate in raas-leela with Krishna. In another instance **Aravan**, the son of Arjuna and Ulupi, wanted to be

married when he came to know of his imminent death but no woman would take a man who was to die the next day. So **Krishna** took his female form, **Mohini** and became his wife, spending the night with him. This points to prevalence of **alternate sexual choices** and even **interchange of gender** in those days. Are the above incidents not ‘unnatural’?

Hinduism says marriage unites two people for **four** purposes:

Dharma-duty, **Artha**-Wealth, **Kama**-passion and **Moksha**-spiritual liberation. None of it will be unfulfilled in a homosexual marriage. The basis of any relationship is love and love is eternal. Only the true understanding of love will help you attain spiritual purity. I recently read a book ‘**The Laws of the Spirit World**’ by Khorshed Bhavnagari. It told of an interesting point about souls. **Soul-mates** are so called because it is believed that a soul, when it takes birth on the Earth, divides into two: male and female parts. The two parts occupy different bodies and long to get back together. Sometimes the two parts which reside in two women in this life might have been in a man and a woman in a previous birth. An indescribable but genuinely felt bond compels them to come closer and reunite.

Another important thing here is India’s treatment of **transgenders**. The law officially recognizes them and in traditional ceremonies ‘**hijras**’ are invited to shower their blessings. If we can understand the clash of birth sex and the gender one relates to later on, why can’t we understand a love between two human beings?

Another argument is the prevalence of **AIDS** in same-sex relationships but the percentage of affected is only about 7%. But overall HIV-infected individuals comprises only 0.2% of the nation’s population so it should not be a cause for worrying. AIDS occurs among normal people too and the AIDS campaign is seeing much success.

Despite our differences we all do believe in Nature isn’t it? Mother Nature made a significant number of species homosexual. In animals the only reason of sexual relationship is to create progeny. If Nature found a way to balance the animal population which had homosexual members, how different is *homo sapiens*? Plus when the global population is itself a threat procreation as a claim fails miserably.

I rambled on, expressing my thoughts but will reading this article make anyone see the light? The **younger** generation are more **accepting** and have a broader mindset and a **rational** mind. But the **old** people steeped in religious definitions of morality

will most probably never understand all this and may call it **blasphemy** even. And as long as the masses are averse to homosexuality the laws will never be touched. It might be laughable in western countries that in India most young people do not have the right to marry a person of their choice and we are talking about heterosexuals. Religion, caste, colour, social status, amount of dowry etc determine a union. The near future seems bleak but the growing awareness among the Indian youth promises some hope.

The US example will certainly herald a new **consciousness** among the youth, making them more liberal and accepting of a person for who he is and not what he prefers to do in his bedroom. Every individual is meant to do something, contribute in some way to the world but if he spends his life stressed out over his sexual orientation his talents will be lost. And what a loss that would be when today India needs more and more enterprising young people. (India has reportedly 2.5 million homosexuals.)

I look forward to the day when there will be millions out on the streets all over the country demanding the archaic laws to be made more sane and humane and the government will have to take notice. For the youth of today are to be the voters for quite a few elections to come.

Your heart sees the truth

But you listen to your mind

The light is all over the place

You close your eyes and become blind

Open them once, give love a chance

It is most natural, you'll find!