

Trajectory Stages of a Queer Person

Rahul M

Assistant Professor, Sree Venkateswara College of Engineering

Abstract

Old habits die hard and we reach purgatory without knowing who we are. Moreover, few people attempt to learn their true identity. We call them queer people. This interview will give an overview of the preliminary, progressive and advanced stages of a queer person.

Keywords: Purgatory, queer, progressive, preliminary

According to Laverne Cox, “We are born as who we are. The gender thing is something that is imposed on you.”

Yes, we are in the 21st century. Compulsory education, upgraded society and standard of life. Each and every one is ameliorating their living standards. We are living in a society which gives you wings to fly. But, are they real? Definitely, society helps you to build a nest and train you in the art of flying. It guides you to your goals, ambitions and destiny by flowing the rules laid by society. It has do's and don'ts. No one is allowed to cross the social premises. We consciously enjoy our freedom and unconsciously obey the terms and conditions until we feel queer.

Old habits die hard and we reach purgatory without knowing who we are. Moreover, few people attempt to learn their true identity. We call them queer people. This interview will give an overview of the preliminary, progressive and advanced stages of a queer person.

Interviewer:

Mr. Rahul.M
Assistant Professor
Sree Venkateswara College of Engineering
Nellore

Interviewee

Mr. J
Queer Community Member
Tamil Nadu

TO KNOW YOU BETTER

1. What identity means to you?

There are two identities, one is gender identity and the other one is sexual identity, which is sexuality. Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. If I am not wrong, besides male and female, there are 72 genders. I was born as a boy, and I stick to the same till day. When it comes to sexual orientation, I fall under the queer umbrella term, which is bisexual. Once I used to represent myself as a queer person, but later on, I started exploring and I identified myself as a bisexual. Yes, I am attracted to both males and females.

2. When did you realise that you have feelings for same gender and how did you confirm your identity?

For the very first time, I came to know that I was attracted to men at the age of 16. I was an introverted person at my school, though I managed to get a friend in my 8th grade. After completing school, we were preparing for the entrance exam. During that period, I came to know I was attracted to boys by exchanging kisses. Technically, my friend initiated the kiss, and I didn't hesitate or try to stop him. That's the spark or moment I started liking the same gender. But it took me years to confirm my identity and accept myself. I have undergone several traumas and difficult faces to realize my true self.

3. Did you experience any child abuse or unhealthy treatment from any of your male friends? (Includes family members, neighbours, relatives etc.)

I guess I might have experienced child abuse. But I am not sure about that. I keep on remembering an incident when I was 8-years-old. Till now, I didn't know how to categorize the incidents that happened during my childhood. I have a cousin who is three years older than me. Occasionally, he took me to the terrace and did something physically. As I told you, I'm still not sure. I haven't confronted him, but still, it is on my mind. It became a trauma. Whenever I see him, the scene flashes in front of my eyes. I don't know what he did. I don't know if it was abuse or not, but I feel uncomfortable or nervous when I see him.

4. Did you undergo any mental trauma to adjust yourself as you are? If yes, how did you overcome your insecurities?

I am not sure about the mental trauma other than the experience I had with my cousin. So that might be one of the traumas I am still holding and carrying till date. Basically, I didn't approach him and talk about the incident and if I had done that, I could have received a clear picture. Apart from that, I faced harsh bullying during my college days because of my accent and feminine body language. To answer the question of how I overcome, I don't have a valid answer, because I didn't overcome. I just started living along with myself. This is me and this is how I am. Later on, I bravely replied back to all the bullies at college and I stood for myself. I overcome my insecurities by supporting myself or accepting my true identity.

5. Have you tried to explore your identity? Could you please share few positive and negative aspects of exploring one's identity? What is the preparation someone should take before trying to connect with other people?

Yes, I have explored my identity with different people in terms of mental and physical connection. Once, I considered and assumed myself as an asexual person who was never sexually attracted to anyone. But later on, I connected with people and started to have physical intimacy. I had a relationship with a girl and two guys and also, I developed feelings for transmen, later on towards transwomen as well. Yes, I know it's complicated and you might think I'm crazy. In the beginning, I wasn't attracted to transgenders physically, but I was attracted to the way they represent themselves, their accessories, makeup, everything. Eventually, I was attracted to them physically. Yes, life is complicated, twisting and tangled. To untangle myself, I explored four genders and I came to the conclusion that I am comfortable with men and women. This is my exploration part. It might sound hilarious to certain people, but trust me, finding your own identity is not a piece of cake.

The positive aspects are basically you get to know what you like and what you don't like, you get to know the community and about yourself better. The negative aspects are, if you get involve with wrong people, they might blackmail and loot you and high chances of spreading sexual diseases. Always good to take precautions. Before go with random people to bed, make conversations and be comfortable with the person before exchanging person details.

Whenever you try to connect with someone, if you are not comfortable with it, don't just abruptly cut off him from your life. Connections don't mean physical life. Try to be nice to each other. Be with him as a friend, if he wishes the same. My sincere suggestion is, never judge a book by its cover. Do talk and travel with people and categorize them. Maybe he will turn into a great friend and help you to understand your true identity. Always take condoms and take time to think before making love. Money will come and go, but true friends and beautiful memories will come once in a blue moon. So, save it before it leaves.

6. From the realization stage to present, what are the changes you felt as a person? Could share your experience?

About self-realization. Yes, I am very strong about my sexual identity that I am a bisexual person. So, I opened up to my siblings, close friends and even to my colleagues. Where ever I go, I carry myself. I never try to act like someone I am not. Previously, I used to act like a straight person to hide my insecurities and later I stopped overthinking about the consequences and decided to represent myself the way I am. Now I am happy and proud of myself. From this I learned that accepting our true identity will bring joy, self-confidence and self-love. Most people face obstacles to getting acceptance from their loved one. Fortunately, I am a very lucky person. The people who know about my identity are ready to accept me and support me. Still, my loved ones do bully me, but I cherish those moments now. It brings a smile to my face. This is my journey. Once, bullies made me cry and now, my bullies make me happy. From salty tears to sweet smiles.

7. How will you rate the freedom of a queer person in India?

It's a tricky and complicated question. India is a diverse country and it has a unique culture with many languages and traditions. I am a person from the south. In my opinion, I would rate the freedom of a queer person in India 7 out of 10. I believe queer people are enjoying their freedom, not completely, but better than in the North and West parts of India. Out of 10%, 3% will rely on the village side. Still, people are not aware of LGBTQ and they consider homosexuality as a taboo or sin. I was born and brought up in a city life and the people are ready to accept and open their voice to queer people. If the authority provide queer education to normal people and bring awareness, everyone can see the queer rainbow (their flag) crystal clear. No more hiding and pretending. But it will take time. I wish to see my future generation with complete freedom.

8. Is the society being supportive? Do you think a queer person can lead a peaceful life in India?

This is a continuation of the question I answered just now. Yes, I think people have been supportive in recent days. Because of my 2021 pride, I understood that many families are aware of the term LGBTQ and what gender and sexuality are. I would like to share a moment I experienced in 2021pride walk in Chennai. It was my first pride and I saw many allies and families who were supporting the community. As a beginner, it was a visual treat for me. I was astonished and surprised. That vision told me "Yes! You are

not alone; we are with you.” That’s why I rated the freedom of a queer person 7 out of 10 for the previous question. But I cannot deny the fact that people in villages are struggling, accepting society's rules and acting like a heterosexual. If society gives an opportunity to rural people to come out, then the 3% will disappear forever.

9. Could you name few cities in India where a queer person can live without fear.

A few cities where a queer person could live without fear might be metropolitan cities. The best part of these places is, the people around them are supportive and leading a peaceful life. The cities offer queer gatherings, meetups and queer tourism, pride walks to spend quality time and queer cafés which organize various programs and activities. You can enjoy the perks of a queer person in cities like Chennai, Bangalore, Kochi, Hyderabad (Hyderabad has opened a queer pub), Mumbai, Kolkata and Korgan (it is one of the most happening places in India in terms of queer parties.)

10. Do you think counselling will help to change someone’s identity?

According to me, it is surreal. Counselling will not help to change someone’s identity. Because I have undergone psychological counselling, when my parents came to know that I had some trauma and I was not ready to open up, they took me to the hospital for counselling. The sessions helped me not to change but to confirm my identity. I became more aware of society and the community. Sometimes people would tell me that counselling helped them to overcome their trauma, but I feel they want to live in a safe zone and pretending like they have changed. In my perspective, no one can change one's identity, but we can get a control over it.

11. Would you like to share any of your thoughts/experience to the upcoming queer community?

Well, people do say that they are independent, but unfortunately, all living creatures depend on someone or something. Plants depend on rain. The rain depends on the sea and the sea is dependent on water sources. It is called the eco-system. Everyone needs someone’s help to survive. So, my point is you should be a supportive cell of others. People might say they are okay but still longing for your help. Be a rain for your wilted friends to give hopes to their darkness. Irrespective of your gender, give support. Never break someone's heart. You might pull someone’s leg to be a hero of your friend's circle, but it destroys someone’s hope and confidence to rise up. If you are not ready to help them, do nothing.

For queer people, if you are not ready to open up, then no need to. Before you come out of the box and stand for yourself, think wisely. Make sure that you are ready to face society and your loved one. Be brave and strong. Try to contribute something to your community. Give a hand to people who struggle and live the life they’re longing for. Overcome the obstacle, remove the thorns and walk forward. To end this answer, I would like to quote Tennyson’s few lines from Ulysses

“To strike, to seek, to find
And not to yield.”