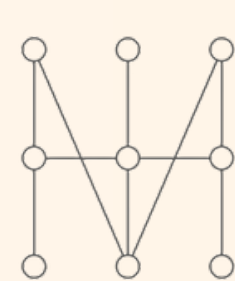




mental health journey:

**UNTOLD STORIES OF PEOPLE FROM THE
NORTHEAST OF INDIA**

EDITED BY
KUMAM DAVIDSON SINGH
THE CHINKY HOMO PROJECT

 mariwala
health
initiative

This book is a multilingual anthology of lived experiences of queerness and mental health in the Northeast of India. Every attempt has been made to ensure that the book is free of error and contains accurate translations and faithful representations of people's stories. Should you find any mistakes or mistranslations in any language, please write to us at contact@mariwalahealthinitiative.org. Thank you.

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In the case of material being triggering or upsetting, you can reach out to iCALL at (+91) 9152987821 or icall@tiss.edu.

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INTRODUCTION

The Chinky Homo Project (TCHP) is a Digital Anthology of Northeast India that seeks to explore, discuss, and document the lived experiences and narratives of the LGBTQI community of and from the region. Over the years, TCHP has built a digital archive, done community building, art projects and storytelling sessions. TCHP has also done storytelling sessions both online and offline including in Delhi, Guwahati. Some notable art projects and collaborations of TCHP are Pandemic Series, Yes We Exist Campaign, Reframing Northeast under Reframe Genderalities 2.0. Currently, TCHP in partnership with Matai Society co-runs Mahei Centre - a grassroots vocational-livelihood project in Moirang - Manipur for Queer, Trans persons and women.

The book is a culmination of TCHP's community based anthological works and the Editor's ethnographic, curatorial and literary endeavours. His earlier published works include "Zubaan's Homebound Anthology" and "Routledge's COVID 19 Assemblages: Queer and Feminist Ethnographies from South Asia".

Pandemic Series, an effort to document the impact of Covid-19 on people marginalised on the basis of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) as well as People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in/of the Northeast, an ethnographic project caught the attention of SAATHII India and Orfalea Centre for International and Global Studies, University Of California Santa Barbara (UCSB). The LGBTQ+ Fellowship awarded to Kumam Davidson Singh by SAATHII India and partially supported by UCSB gave the right

support to bring out many unheard stories from the region. The stories reveal complex lived realities of LGBTQ+ persons as well as PLHIV of which mental health reveals itself to be a terrain rarely studied through lived experience perspectives. On the other hand, mental health issues also continue to be largely medicalised/pathologised and taboo. When it comes to people on the margins -culturally, politically, economically and geographically - the sense of vulnerability leads to an overwhelming sense of isolation and hopelessness. At this juncture, the book has indeed been a true calling to venture towards an area of work and of lived experiences that hardly receives the attention it deserves. It is also a spontaneous expansion of the works TCHP has been doing through its documentation and archiving processes of LGBTQ+ lives of Northeast India.

Northeast India, often a contested region but also harmonious in its own way, tends to be framed as "fringes" and "periphery" but also as "frontier" and "gateway". It exists at the fringe to the centre New Delhi and also as a frontier/gateway to South East Asia.

Move the centre and Northeast India would cease to exist as the peripheral region. To speak of "the Northeast" is to account for eight different states, each with its own unique history, culture, and traditions. The national imagination tends to homogenise the Northeast and in doing so, erases the diverse ethnic, racial, and religious identities that are prevalent in the region. However, that is not to deny that the borders between these states, and even with other countries, are often porous and allow for cross-cultural interactions and fluid identities that cannot be bound to any one state in particular.

उज्यालो तर्फ...

TRANSLATED BY ROSHNI SUBBA

म

हाम्रो शुक्रबारको दिन भेट्ने सल्ला थियो। त्यो बिहान म अत्यन्त व्यस्त थिएँ अनि उनलाई भेट्नु अघाडी कतिपय काम सिध्याउने चेष्टा गर्दै थिएँ। शायद म आफूलाई यत्तिकै व्यस्त राखेर मन भुलाउन खोज्दै थिएँ होला किन भने उनलाई भेट्नु अलिकति डर पनि अनुभव गरिरहेको थिएँ। त्यसै पनि मलाई ज्यादा केहि पनि थाहा थिएन उनको बारेमा, उनी चिन्ता परामर्श लिदै थियो भनेर मात्र सुनेको थिएँ। कति उनको बारेमा र हाम्रो भेटको बारेमा सोचे पश्च्यात पनि केहि बुझ्न नै सकेको थिईन । संकेत राम्रो थिएन ... के सोध्नु होला उनलाई? कसरी पनि शुरू गर्नु होला कुरा कानी ? अनि कसरी बातचितलाई बनाएर राख्नु होला?

... त्यो दिन लागेको डर जब म अहिले सम्झन्छु, मलाई लाग्छ, त्यो डर केहि पनि नभएर, हाम्रो समाजको मानसिक स्वास्थ्य प्रतिको धारणाको फल मात्र थिएँछ । उनलाई भेटेर कुरा कानी गर्न अगाडी नै, मलाई थाहा लागी सकेको थियो कि, यो यति सजिलो हुने छैन भनेर। मेरो मन र मनशा त ठिक थियो, तर सामाजिक अनुकूलनको परिणाम त्यो डर थिएँछ। उनलाई कतिपय चोटी भेटेर, संगै बसेर बातचित गरे पश्च्यात, यो केही हप्ताहरुमा , म स्वयम आफूलाई बेग्लै पाउँछु। यसै प्रक्रियामा मैले कति कुरा सिखे अनि कति कुरा नयाँ पाराले पनि बुझे।

स

अचार ... सानु हुँदा देखि नै, मलाई अचार खुबै मन पर्थ्यो। घरमा मलाई सबैले 'अचार कुमारी' भनेर बोलाउँ थिएँ - पिकल प्रिन्सेस - एकदम सुहाउने नाम।

मलाई अचार मन पर्छ भनेर उसलाई पनि याद थियो। योजना बनाएको थियो होला। त्यसदिन म घर बाहिर एकलै थिएँ ... मलाई त्यति याद भएन के गर्दै थिएँ। मेरो नजदिक आएर, उनले मलाई अचारको लोभ देखाएर उनको घर लग्यो। म सानै थिएँ त्यो बेला, असुरक्षित, कोइ प्रति केई शंका पनि थिएन। छल भनेको के हो , त्यो पनि थाहा थिएन। उनको घर गयो भने चाँहि अचार पाउँछु भनेर मात्र थाहा थियो। त्यति भएँ नै उनलाई बिश्वास गर्नु सक्छु जस्तो लाग्यो। म खुशी थिएँ , आशा लागेको थियो अनि मैले उनलाई पछ्याएर गएँ।

एउटा नयाँ , अनौठो कमरा ; निक्कै अर्ध्याँरो पनि, अनि यता उता बाट आवाजहरु आइरहेको - बाहिर रोडबाट आएको आवाज, अनि फेरि टेलिभिजनको पनि आवाज सुनिरहेको थिएँ; तर त्यहाँ बेसी जस्तो मैले डर महसूस गरीरहेको थिएँ।

म के गरी रहेको थिएँ होला त्यहाँ? किन ति आइमाईलाई सुनेर यहाँ आएको थिएँ होला? म त्यतिबेला - छ - सातबर्षको मात्र थिएँ। अनि उनी म भन्दा धेरै ठूलो थिएँ। के भईरहेको थियो ? खै मैले त बुझ्नु नै सकेको थिइन । एकदमै छिटो, अनि एकदमै अपरिचित। उनी नाङ्गो थियो। अनि म संग के के गरिरहेको थियो। अनि , म , एकतिर गतिहीन। म अचार लिन मात्र आएको थिएँ। म घर बाट पनि दुई मिनेट मात्र टाढो थिएँ।

म

उनी दुई मिनेट मात्र त घरबाट टाढो थिएँछ ...

के उनलाई गाह्रो परिरहेको छ याद गर्नु वा त्यो घटना बारे वर्णन गर्नु , भनेर पनि सोधे ? त्यति गाह्रो हुन्दैन आजकल भने उनले। अलिक बुझ्दा , मलाई लाग्यो , त्यहाँ एउटा सुलहको लामो प्रक्रिया चलिरहेको थियो।

स

शायद त्यो दिन देखिनै होला, मेरो मान्छेबाट भरोशा

Victoria mwi loko mangdi gareh dana, mwi nyiga mepe kopiyo, nyime mepe kopiyo, nyime tallo nyiga sangbo mepe kobiyo ho laga nyiga tallo nyime sangbo mepe kobiyo na. Sidigo mangchung- mangra mangpe kalo mwi ching dakana mwi 'pansexual' ke. Hoga mwi sabo chingdar dakana mwiga rana-mangna, kobiyo- tabiyo si aasi ga bikna aring bo hidi lape bikwe dana.

Aaro kalam Arunachal tallo dungsame tauna, ho Victoria bingna? “ngo India sau hidi lape dungde bo mangmo dana, Arunachal de bingmo lape yapo takto”. Mwiga agu arab, ajing-abang pang malang Arunachal te do, hajape mwiga lebo

Arunachal talo dungna alamo. Mwi mangdana maga rana bingna lo mwiga ane-abo mye nyiye bingkam tana. Habo mangtalo mwi Arunachal mye yapo dara tabo mangdana. Mangdi takalo mwi sabape ching dana mwimye nyi-pangye mangkam gedana. Mwi agu gakar banang ho laga sabo mangna rana sam rake kare dana bing ba nang mwiga agu bangnime nyi malangye kodi kori koye aeykam tana. Ayo ne mwide samme rakogalo rapey tanna, nyiga bingna-rana mye sabo mangtak tana, si ho go mo? Hajalape mwi mangmo dana maga agu nyiye mwi dara lo hanyiang to. Hosgo bo bingba nang mwi mangdana mwiga agu nyiye samme chaknya sa re?

.....

