

LGBTQ+ Community in India: A Brief Timeline of Events by Aditi Anvita

The rainbow flag, which one might be observing all over the internet, are a symbol of diversity and the unity of the LGBTQ community. The beginning of June marks Pride Month, which is all about celebrating the identities, culture, and experience of the LGBTQ+ community, and acknowledging their influence on history locally, nationally, and internationally. It is celebrated to honor the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 in Manhattan. The colors rainbow in the pride flag, the Greek alphabet 'lambda' and the pink triangle represent the LGBTQ+ community. Specifically, the pride flag, designed by artist and gay activist Gilbert Baker in 1978 became the universal symbol of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Initially, the last Sunday of June was celebrated as 'Gay Pride Day' in the USA. Later on, the celebrations started to continue for a month including diverse sexualities with pride parades, picnics, parties, concerts, workshops, seminars, fairs, etc. being organized by the LGBTQ+ community and its supporters. Currently, the celebration is observed in countries like Australia, Berlin, Canada, Cuba, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the United Kingdom, the USA, Wales, and many more to count including India. Some of the cities of India like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, Agra, and Ladakh are favorites of the LGBTQ+ community for the celebration.

Decades away, the scenarios were different in India. As homosexuality started being unbanned and the movements supporting the rights of the LGBTQ+ community are spreading in the world somehow, it has also prompted the opinions of people in India. Youth at their levels are raising awareness through their social media pages and blogs. They have started identifying and accepting their sexuality after knowing in depth about the terms, which were completely exotic years ago. The film industry is making attempts to present the lives of the LGBTQ+ community and the importance of promoting their rights. Authors and writers have started inking about the community. Many multinational companies have implemented activities and networks for LGBTQ+ employees and their families to connect and discuss the issues they face. There's much more to add to the list.

Here's a brief history of the LGBT+ movement in India:

- 1860– Section 377 of the Indian penal code was introduced under British rule which considered homosexuality against the natural laws and was regarded as a criminal offense. Even after the independence, no change was made regarding this.
- 1992– On 11 August, the first protest in support of gay rights was organized.

- 1999– First Gay Pride Parade called Kolkata Rainbow Parade was conducted in Kolkata.
- 2009– The Delhi High Court found Section 377 and other legal prohibitions against private, adult, consensual, and non-commercial same-sex conduct to be in direct violation of fundamental rights given in the Indian Constitution.
- 2012– ‘Creating Inclusive Workplaces for LGBTQ Employees in India’, a guide was developed together by IBM, Goldman Sachs, Google, and community business.
- 2012– On 23 February the Ministry of Home Affairs opposed the decriminalization of homosexuality, considering it immoral.
- 2013– In December, the Supreme court reinstated section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.
- 2014– On 28th January, the Supreme Court of India dismissed the review petition against its previous verdict on Section 377.
- 2014– Three major political parties, AAP (Aam Aadmi Party), Congress, and CPI (Communist Party of India) showed their support for decriminalizing homosexuality in manifestos for the upcoming election.
- On 20th of July, BJP’s state general secretary, Vanathi Srinivasan released the first book on genderqueer in Tamil, written by Srishti Madurai at the 6th Hindu Spiritual Service Foundation Service Fair in Chennai.
- 2015– The bill involving decriminalization of homosexuality, proposed by Shashi Tharoor was rejected by Lok Sabha.
- 2016– Amour Queer Dating, a dating platform for the LGBTQ+ community was launched in India. In May, the Bhopal pride March was hosted in India involving the participation of around 200 people in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- In the month of October, a group of citizens proposed a draft of a new Uniform Civil Code, legalizing same-sex marriage to the Law Commission of India.
- 2018– Section 377 was considered unconstitutional by the supreme court as it violated the right to privacy and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, and it was invalidated in India on 6th September.
- 2020– On 12th June, the Uttarakhand High Court stated about the protection of live-in relationships in the LGBTQ+ community by law but, marriage was still not legal.
- 2022– On 2nd April, MP Supriya Sule introduced a private member’s bill in support of equal rights of marriage to the LGBTQ+ community under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

The battle against section 377 has ended in India but, the movements, promoting equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community are still on their way to bringing a significant change in society for the welfare of future generations. There are several countries with liberal LGBTQ+ laws like the Netherlands, Canada, Argentina, Malta, Portugal, Norway, Belgium, etc., India is yet to join them. Currently, LGBTQ+ foreigners working in India are unlikely to be discriminated against at the workplace but, discussion about the community is still not open.