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*Megha Middha, Assistant Professor of Law in Mody University of Science and Technology, Lakshmangarh, Sikar*

*Megha Middha, is working as an Assistant Professor of Law in Mody University of Science and Technology, Lakshmangarh, Sikar (Rajasthan). She has an experience in the teaching of almost 3 years. She has completed her graduation in BBA LL.B (H) from Amity University, Rajasthan (Gold Medalist) and did her post-graduation (LL.M in Business Laws) from NLSIU, Bengaluru. Currently, she is enrolled in a Ph.D. course in the Department of Law at Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur (Rajasthan). She wishes to excel in academics and research and contribute as much as she can to society. Through her interactions with the students, she tries to inculcate a sense of deep thinking power in her students and enlighten and guide them to the fact how they can bring a change to the society*

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*Dr. Samrat Datta Seedling School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University, Jaipur. Dr. Samrat Datta is currently associated with Seedling School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University, Jaipur. Dr. Datta has completed his graduation i.e., B.A.LL.B. from Law College Dehradun, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Srinagar, Uttarakhand. He is an alumnus of KIIT University, Bhubaneswar where he pursued his post-graduation (LL.M.) in Criminal Law and subsequently completed his Ph.D. in Police Law and Information Technology from the Pacific Academy of Higher Education and Research University, Udaipur in 2020. His area of interest and research is Criminal and Police Law. Dr. Datta has a teaching experience of 7 years in various law schools across North India and has held administrative positions like Academic Coordinator, Centre Superintendent for Examinations, Deputy Controller of Examinations, Member of the Proctorial Board*



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Mrs.S.Kalpana, presently Assistant professor of Law, VelTech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R & D Institute of Science and Technology, Avadi. Formerly Assistant professor of Law, Vels University in the year 2019 to 2020, Worked as Guest Faculty, Chennai Dr. Ambedkar Law College, Pudupakkam. Published one book. Published 8 Articles in various reputed Law Journals. Conducted 1 Moot court competition and participated in nearly 80 National and International seminars and webinars conducted on various subjects of Law. Did ML in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Administration. 10 paper presentations in various National and International seminars. Attended more than 10 FDP programs. Ph.D. in Law pursuing.



## Avinash Kumar



Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC - NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR - Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.

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# **THE EVOLUTION OF LGBT TO LGBTQIA+**

AUTHORED BY - SHARIQ AHMAD & MD SHAKIL ANSARI

## **Abstract**

The LGBTQIA+ community, characterized by its diverse and ever-expanding acronym, constitutes a mosaic of identities challenging conventional norms of gender and sexuality. Societal evolution has led to increased visibility and acceptance of these identities, sparking essential dialogues on inclusivity, recognition, and equal rights. The historical journey of this community is marked by resilience against discrimination, evident in persistent advocacy for legal protection, societal endorsement, and equal opportunities. The "plus" symbolizes a commitment to embracing an evolving understanding of human sexuality and gender diversity. The journey towards acceptance extends beyond legal victories, necessitating profound social and cultural shifts. Increasingly, LGBTQIA+ individuals find representation in various domains, fostering understanding and empathy through accurate portrayals of their experiences.

An examination of the evolution from LGBTQ to LGBTQIA+ reveals the gradual acceptance of diverse sexual orientations. The progression extends to transgender individuals who assert identities incongruent with their birth-assigned genders, transcending societal barriers over time. Bisexuality has also gained recognition as a distinct orientation, challenging the binary construct of attraction. However, concepts like transracial and transabled identities remain more contentious.

The societal acceptance of these identities underscores a broader shift in attitudes, with increasing recognition of the right of individuals to define their own lives. The unresolved question emerges: What other forms of self-identification may arise within this dynamic landscape? The "plus" in the acronym acknowledges the ongoing expansion of these identities and experiences. While earlier struggles were centered around sexual attraction, the spectrum of LGBTQIA+ has broadened to encompass complex intersections of gender and identity. As society confronts these novel concepts, the principles of empathy, respect, and inclusivity remain crucial in fostering a more equitable future.

## Short title

This topic research paper maybe be called as “the evolution of LGBT to LGBTQAI+”

## Research methodology

The research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining ‘non-doctrinal’ and ‘applied’ research methodology approach to achieve the desired objectives.

Non-doctrinal research method is also known as socio-legal research and it looks into how the law and legal institutions mold and affects society, this research method have been used to approach the burning social issue and to see how different counties rights effect the LGBT community and how this community is effecting the society by analysing the factual incidents and Reports data.

Applied research is a non-systematic way of finding solutions to specific research problems or issues. These problems or issues can be on an individual, group, or societal level. It is called “non-systematic” because it goes straight to finding solutions. And to be specific with in the applied research the author has used evaluation applied research to meet the research desire. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of transracial, Transabled, transgenders and other community members as well as societal attitudes toward these emerging identities. Comparative analyses will be conducted to examine similarities and differences with established gender and sexual orientations. Furthermore, The main data to evaluate was Gallup Poll report, some individuals factual situations and the rules and regulations of different countries and their surveys to reach the given conclusion.

## Research Focus

This research aims to investigate the emerging phenomenon of identity perception and acceptance that goes beyond established gender and sexual orientations within the LGBTQIA+ community. The study seeks to understand the motivations, experiences, and societal implications of individuals who identify as LGBTQ or otherwise, and to explore the limits of acceptance within contemporary society.

## Research problem

Navigating the Complex Landscape of Identity Expression and Societal Influence: An In-depth Analysis of Emerging Identities and Their Implications within the Expanding LGBTQIA+ Spectrum.

## Research Questions

1. What are the underlying motivations and psychological factors driving individuals to identify as transracial, transabled, or other unconventional identities within the expanding LGBTQIA+ spectrum?
2. How do emerging identities like transracial and transabled intersect with established gender and sexual orientations in terms of identity expression, societal acceptance, and legal recognition?
3. What role does societal influence, including media, celebrities, and brands, play in shaping the understanding and expression of non-traditional LGBTQIA+ identities?
4. To what extent do factors like evolving social attitudes, legal reforms, education, and awareness contribute to the growth and diversification of LGBTQIA+ identities?
5. Can the LGBTQIA+ community and society at large strike a balance between affirming individual identities while critically assessing potential ethical and psychological implications of emerging identity claims?
6. How can media and educational institutions influence or encourage society and contribute positively to raising awareness about LGBTQIA+ diversity and challenging stereotypes surrounding non-traditional identities?
7. How can policymakers and legal bodies address the complexities of emerging identities within the LGBTQIA+ community without ensuring and analyzing the diverse category and what all could lie within?
8. What problem could policymakers face if they don't specify the plus symbol before granting them any rights?

## Introduction

The LGBTQIA+ community, an inclusive and evolving acronym that encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and other diverse identities, represents a rich tapestry of human experiences and challenges societal norms surrounding sexuality and gender. As society progresses, the visibility and recognition of these diverse identities have grown, sparking essential conversations about inclusivity, acceptance, and the fight for equal rights.

The history of the LGBTQIA+ community showcases their resilience in the face of discrimination, stigma, and marginalization. Throughout the years, members have tirelessly advocated for their rights, aiming for legal protections, societal acceptance, and equal opportunities. The Stonewall

riots<sup>1</sup> of 1969 are often seen as a pivotal moment in LGBTQIA+ activism, igniting a movement that has since made significant progress in demanding equality, challenging societal norms, and increasing visibility through global Pride marches and celebrations.

Within the LGBTQIA+ community, there exists a remarkable diversity of experiences, identities, and intersections. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals encounter distinct challenges related to sexual orientation, navigating relationships, and combating stereotypes. Transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals grapple with issues of gender identity, including accessing healthcare, legal recognition, and societal acceptance. The queer/questioning category encompasses those who are exploring and questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, seeking self-discovery and understanding.

Intersex individuals, born with physical or biological traits that don't align with traditional male or female definitions, often face challenges associated with medical interventions and societal acceptance. Asexual individuals, who may experience minimal or no sexual attraction, are often overlooked or misunderstood in discussions about sexuality. The "+" in the acronym represents other diverse identities that are continually being acknowledged and included as our understanding of human sexuality and gender expands.

The fight for acceptance and equality for the LGBTQIA+ community extends beyond legal battles and policy changes; it necessitates broader social, cultural, and attitudinal shifts. Visibility and representation play crucial roles in fostering understanding, empathy, and acceptance. Increasingly, LGBTQIA+ individuals are gaining visibility in various spheres, including media and entertainment, leading to more nuanced and accurate portrayals of their experiences.

## **The Evolution of LGBT to LGBTQIA+**

Initially we saw a rise homosexual people, Gay – men who are sexually attracted to men and lesbian- women who are sexually attracted to women, and it is pretty clear that in present times it has been accepted by the society though different countries accepted it in different times but almost majority of the democratic counties accepted the sexual demand of the homosexual people. As of 2023, marriage between same-sex couple is legally performed and recognized in 34 countries including united states of America and United Kingdom and the first country to

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<sup>1</sup> Stonewall riots of 1969. (n.d.). In Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved August 06, 2023 from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Stonewall-riots>

After Gay and lesbian, we got transgenders, men who identify as women, women who identify as men, they claim the opposite gender of their birth gender because they feel that they are trapped inside wrong body but society, after years of movement and struggle started to accept that also.

We also have Bisexual, who are attracted to both males and females. They experience emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to people of both genders, without necessarily being equally attracted to all individuals or experiencing attraction in the same way. Bisexuality is considered a distinct sexual orientation, separate from being heterosexual or homosexual and as a society we accepted and recognized that also.

Not just this, we have transracial people also, people who claim the opposite color of their birth color, an American born women Rachel Dolezal, who is born white claimed that she was trapped inside a wrong body and her inner soul is black in color, she claims that she should have been born black and not just this she even went to great lengths to change her appearance, including her hair and skin tone, as a society we accepted that also and recognized that transracial is a thing.<sup>2</sup> After transgender and transracial we have transabled, individuals who desire or feel a strong need to acquire a disability or impairment, despite not having a physical or cognitive condition. And not just this, there have been incidents where they engage in self-harming behaviors or seek out surgeries or interventions to fulfill their desire.

One notable incident involves the case of Chloe Jennings-White, an individual who identified as a paraplegic and used a wheelchair despite having full mobility.

Another incident involved a man named Jason, who purposefully damaged his spinal cord in an attempt to become paralyzed. His case sparked intense debate and raised ethical concerns regarding body integrity identity disorder (BIID) and the concept of transability.

Furthermore, Jewel Shuping, a young woman from the United States, goes blind on purpose.

Ever since she was a little girl, Jewel Shuping dreamed of being blind. At the age of 21, Jewel

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<sup>2</sup> Rachel Dolezal, in Center of Storm, Is Defiant: 'I Identify as Black'. Retrieved August 08 2023, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/us/rachel-dolezal-nbc-today-show.html>

chose to take matters into her own hands and make her lifelong dream of becoming blind a reality. She claims that she had a psychologist pour drain cleaner in her eyes, then waited to seek medical attention. Afterwards, she gradually lost her eyesight and is now almost completely blind.

“I really feel this is the way I was supposed to be born, that I should have been blind from birth,” jewel says.

And as a society we accepted that also, if they believe that they should be disabled or should have been born disabled, who are we to say anything? Though it might look strange to some intelligent people that why would someone want to live like a disabled person who are born perfectly fine. Moreover, even if they believe that they should have been born disabled but born fine, why can't they just use it, why they feel the need to get that body part off?

There are many questions regarding transabled people and their choices but as I said who we are to say. If they believe that they should live a life of a disabled person and happily want to do the same, we has to accept that, after all its their life.

Transgenders, transracial and transabled, what else? What else could individuals claim to be identifies as? These questions remain still open. The LGBT community is not just finite to these terms only but goes far dynamic and beyond, the addition of “+” just takes it to another level. Until now, the society was dealing with the cases where men felt sexually attracted to men or women felt sexually attracted to women or men claiming that he should have been born as a women or visa-versa, but does it ends somewhere?

### **The "+" symbol in LGBTQIA+**

The "+" symbol in LGBTQ+ represents the inclusivity and recognition of identities beyond those explicitly mentioned in the acronym. It acknowledges that human sexuality and gender identities are diverse and can extend beyond any fixed set of labels. The "+" serves as a way to encompass a broader range of identities and experiences that may not be explicitly represented by the individual letters.

As I said, up until now, society was dealing with the trend of LGBTQ, after years of movement and struggle, society started to accept the fact that men wants to have sex with men and women wants to have sex with women, and the struggle to make this thing normalize among society

certainly has a great impact, but the “+” sign add much more to it, and not just transracial or transabled people but this sign accept whatever an individual feel and claim to become.

A grown men posted an add on craigslist wanting a nanny just because he feels like a baby, the men claims that he identifies as a baby and want a nanny, how ridiculous does that sound? But again, who are we to say and shouldn't the LGBTQ community fight for those men, if he believes that he is a child.

An individual cannot just claim anything up, just because a man claims that he is a child or he believes that he is a child, shall be given child's rights or the community starts fighting that if the men believes that he identifies a child and wants to live happily like that way then we shouldn't stop him.

And if that is the case then any murdered could come up after killing someone and claim that I identify as a child and then would you give him the privileges a child gets? Or even worse what if he claims that he identifies as an insane or lunatic person, will the court exempt him from the murder charges and provide him defense for the murder.

Its been decades since the LGBTQ community is fighting for the rights that they claim to deserve and after so many years we recognized that men can love men or women can love women and tried to normalize it, but what if someone claims that he is sexually attracted to something else other than human? For example animals, if anyone claims that he/she is sexually attracted towards animals, will the LGBTQ community treat it as a sickness or fight for the support of it? Whatever the LGBT community does the society will certainly treat it as a sickness but the question is how long? How long the society can resist if there is tireless efforts to make these things normalize.

Recently, Victor Hugo Sosa, the mayor of a town -- San Pedro Huamelula -- in southern Mexico, married a female crocodile in a traditional ceremony believed to bring good fortune. The reptile, a caiman, represents the "princess girl" in local lore.<sup>3</sup>

Now if the people of those community believe that the these kind of marriages should be normalize, shouldn't they expect from the LGBT community to support them?

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<sup>3</sup> Mexican mayor marries crocodile in centuries-old ritual to bring good fortune. Retrieved august 10, 2023 from <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/mexican-mayor-marries-female-crocodile-century-old-practice-bring-good-fortune-2400729-2023-07-02>

And if these kinds of cases started to come, people who started to claim that they feel sexually attracted to animals and want to have sex with them, what will the LGBT community would do? They can't just say that if an individual feels that they are attracted to something or identifies differently from their birth identity, then they shall have the right to do the same.

And its not just some hypothetical situations, people are actually doing that, recently, 40 year old Nagpur man was arrested for committing a sexual scene with stray dog on the street and 45 year old men charged with 377 of IPC for committing sex with stray dog in Mumbai Andheri area. Now these are just 2 incidents that has been stated above but the number is in thousands.<sup>4</sup>

A person cannot do anything and later claim that they did that because they felt that way, almost before half a century words like homosexuality were considered as strange and sinful, and nobody believed that it will be normalized so much in the time to come, but people fought for it, and it did. And now many other words like transabled or zoophilia (sexual attraction of a human toward a nonhuman animal) are coming up and who knows it will be normalized after half a decade as well.

### **The growth of the community**

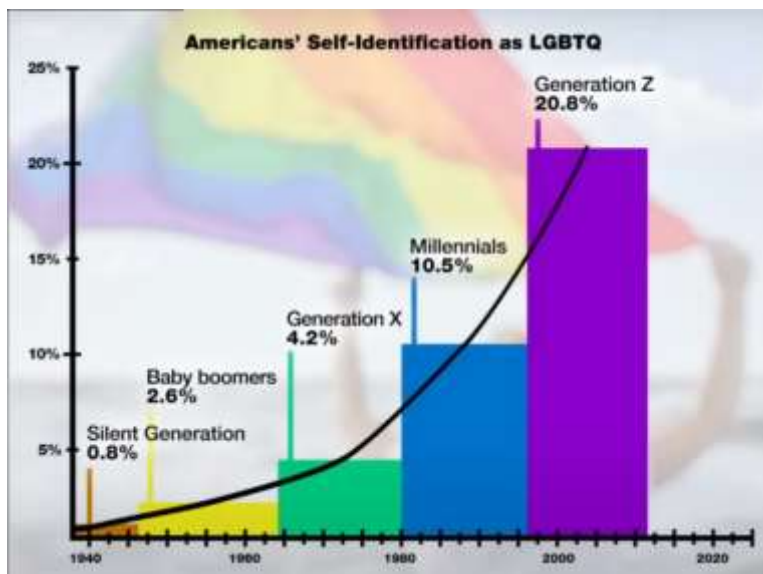
The population of LGBTQ+ individuals is diverse and has been gradually increasing over time. Factors contributing to this growth include increasing social acceptance, improved visibility, and individuals feeling more comfortable and empowered to openly identify with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. However, it is important to note that accurate data on the exact size of the LGBTQ+ population can be challenging to obtain due to various factors, including societal stigma, underreporting, and varying definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity across different regions.

Furthermore, if we take a single country, let's say united states, then according to Gallup poll report the LGBT community population seems to be roughly doubling every generation in the country.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 40 year old man arrested. Retrieved August 09, 2023 from <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/crime/nagpur-40-year-old-man-arrested-for-having-sex-with-dog-article-96279809>

<sup>5</sup> LGBT Identification in U.S. Ticks Up to 7.1%. Retrieved August 15, 2023 from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>



The data shown above is based on the Gallup report, which shows the increasing population of the community.

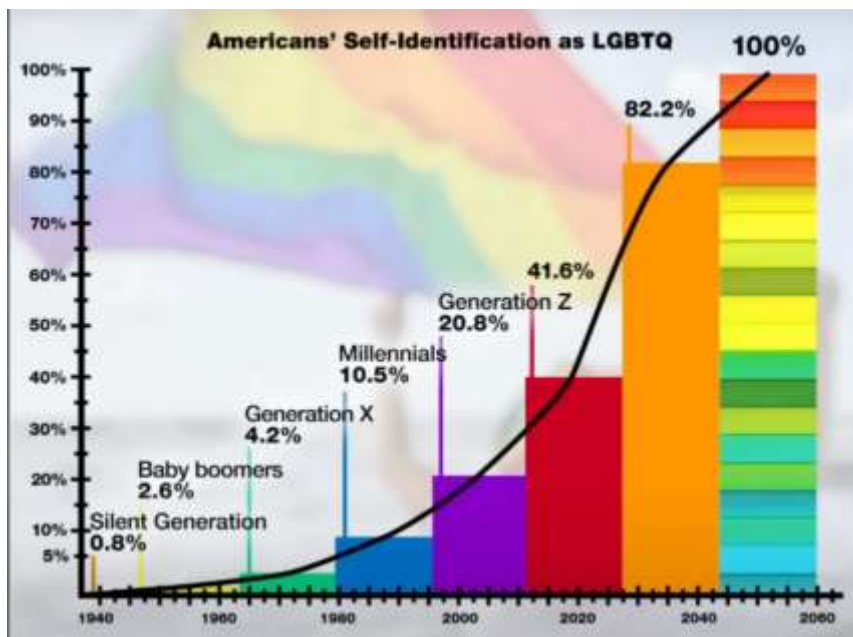
According to the report, less than 1 percent of the population identified as LGBT who were born before 1946.

Then the number increased to 2.6% in the boomer's generation (people born from 1946 to 1964) and then it got doubled to 4.2% in generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980).

Subsequently, the data shows that the millennials generation (born between 1981 – 1996) had a LGBT population percentage of 10.5% and the generation Z (born between 1997 – 2012) shows the percentage of 20.8% which is double of millennials.<sup>6</sup>

Now if we follow this trend of the increasing population of the LGBT community then we will all be gay or lesbian by the year of 2054. By the end of 2060 all the people we'll see would be anything but straight. The figure below shows the same.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid



## What's causing rapid growth in people identifying as LGBT?

There are various factors contributing to the growth of the community such as evolving social attitude, increasement of visibility, education, awareness or legal reforms.

**Evolving Social Attitudes:** Society's understanding and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities have progressed over time. This has created a more supportive environment for individuals to explore and express their authentic selves, leading to more people identifying as LGBTQ+.

**Legal and Policy Changes:** Many countries have made significant strides in recognizing and protecting LGBTQ+ rights through legal and policy changes. These changes, such as decriminalizing homosexuality, legalizing same-sex marriage, and enacting anti-discrimination laws, have empowered LGBTQ+ individuals to live their lives more openly and authentically.

**Education and Awareness:** Increased education and awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity have contributed to a better understanding of the LGBTQ+ community. Efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity in educational curricula and public discourse have helped break down stereotypes and foster acceptance.

**Supportive Communities and Resources:** The growth of LGBTQ+ support networks,

organizations, and online communities has provided individuals with a sense of belonging, support, and resources. These communities offer safe spaces for individuals to connect, seek guidance, and share experiences, which can encourage more people to embrace and affirm their LGBTQ+ identities.

The factors stated above shows an important role in the growth of LGBT community but in the author's opinion the most important factor is increasing visibility which means that when people see their alike then they are more likely to open up and share their thought while being bold.

**Increased Visibility:** With advancements in media representation, LGBTQ+ individuals and their stories have gained more visibility. This increased representation allows individuals who may have previously hidden their identities to feel more comfortable and confident in coming out and openly identifying as LGBTQ+.

The most influencing thing which contributed in the same is either Tv series or brands. It is noteworthy that Prior to that time of 1980s in the United States, the LGBTQ+ community was commonly portrayed in a highly negative light by the public and media. The gay lifestyle was associated with notions of filth, lack of hygiene, and sinfulness. LGBTQ+ individuals were often confined to seedy bars and bathhouses and were generally perceived as morally depraved. However, after that period the change can be seen in movies or tv series, they are stated being portrayed as 'classy gays'. The change in the lifestyle of gay or lesbian in the movies were often started seeing as rich or happily married people, more educated than others and modern or advance than the society.

Now when celebrities in movies and in real life started representing themselves as homosexuals then it influenced a lot of people, even though the people do not accept that but subconsciously their minds are influenced by the same. They started becoming bold and proud and started living in a myth that the life of homosexuals is more of quality, they are more modern as celebrities and the society is not advanced enough to understand their feelings.

Now, people might not accept the given point that they are being influenced by brands or celebrities but let's take an example of coloring hair. Though coloring hair is an old practice but now people are doing different colors let's say green. Now, it wasn't so much trend until Billie Eilish colored her hair green and now BTS army are doing the same thing as BTS singers.

Let's take another example of dressing, wearing short dresses was considered immoral even in the top tier counties. According to a BBC Archives video, in a social experiment in 1964 in Britain, women considered wearing topless dress as immoral, disgusting and misbehaving, but in recent times even in the counties like India which is known as the country of culture is highly influenced with the trend of short dresses and women can easily be seen wearing very short dresses which almost shows their complete body.

Now, celebrities indeed play an important role in changing that behaviour of the society especially women, whether consciously or subconsciously.

Furthermore, you must have heard about Ellen DeGeneres. In 1997, Ellen DeGeneres, a popular American comedian and talk show host, publicly came out as a lesbian both on her sitcom "Ellen" and in real life. Her decision to be open about her sexuality was groundbreaking at the time and contributed to increased LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance in mainstream media.

There are other big names also such as Neil Patrick Harris (played Barney Stinson in *How I Met Your Mother*), Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Wanda Sykes, Jim Parsons and thousands of others.

Now when people saw these celebrities coming out as LGBT with boldness and living great life, it influenced and encouraged them to do the same.

### **Suggestions**

With the increasing gay community and their demands of rights, we certainly cannot suggest people to stop choosing genders and live with what they have been born with, but how do we make people understand that one of the reasons of their change of behavior could be influence and nothing else? This is definitely an open question for many countries at the moment. Well, the author suggests that since brands, tv, celebrities or books has much influence on this topic then why not reserve the situation and make people understand the demerits of the increasing population of the community through the same way, why not tell people why they shouldn't opt to change their gender this easily through the said way.

Another suggestion would be to specify the plus symbol and what all could lie inside, and to tell the courts of law to elaborate on the same. The parliament should also specify the category of the plus symbol before granting it any rights.

## Conclusion

The topic is certainly very much debatable in every country at the present time. With the increasing population of the community, it's getting more complex. The population is not just increasing but it is also getting diversified, many other categories are getting included which seems surprising. The '+' symbol indeed welcomes other categories to show up and supports them to be identified as how they want to be.

Many democratic countries allowed homosexuality and do not discriminate on the basis of sex, even india in 2018 after Navtej Singh Johar vs Union Of India allowed the same. Democratic countries intend to provide equality to everyone.

34 countries among the world had allowed same sex marriage including united states and the decision in yet to come in India, the case is already enrolled in the apex court of the country.

Furthermore, even democratic countries are embracing and supporting the new community but they had to set a bar for a certain limit otherwise as fast as the community is getting diversified it will get so much difficult for the nations to restrict people to be identified in a certain way.

And since everyone at the moment is talking about the the merits of the community and their rights but we shall indeed talk about the demerits of the same because what people see in reel life isn't always true, reality is far different.

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