

### 3. A story of love and acceptance, with Parag Mehta and Vaibhav Jain

**Nandini:** Hello everyone, this is Nandini Ray, and you are listening to the Maitri podcast Between Friends, conversation with matiri. My production team members and I are very excited as we have a lovely couple with us today. They are going to share their beautiful love story with us. I'm sure when this last story unfolds, some community members might feel uncomfortable. But the episode will be a great opportunity for all of us to identify our own biases. First, let me introduce this lovely couple, meet Parag and Vaibhav. Vaibhav Jain is a global public health specialist who has worked for universities, think tanks, and the WHO. he is currently consulting on several health and civic engagement projects and serves as senior advisor for the AAPI farms, a political action dedicated to increasing political power for Asian Americans in the United States. He is a former dental surgeon from New Delhi India who currently lives in New York with his husband Parag Mehta. Parag is a senior vice president where he leads the company's efforts to advance sustainable economic growth around the world as the executive director of the company's center for intrusive growth. Parag has spent the past twenty years working to advance justice, inclusion, and human rights through political activism, public health service, and now philanthropy. He played several leadership roles in President Obama's administration including as liaison to the AAPI and LGBTQ communities and chief of staff to the US surgeon general; he is the board chair of the New American leaders, a national nonprofit organization that works to strengthen American democracy by electing first and second-generation immigrants and refugees to public office. Parag is a second generation Indian American from central Texas and a graduate of the university of Texas, Austin and the Maxwell school of citizenship and public affairs at Syracuse University. Thank you so much Parag and Vaibhav for coming to our show.

**Vaibhav:** Thank you Nandini, thanks for having us.

**Nandini:** Listeners, I must add here that when Vaibhav and Parag got married in 2019, their wedding made headlines around the world. Not only was it a same sex wedding performed according to Dharmic traditions, but it also served as the model for how families and communities can evolve when they lead with unconditional love and compassion. A toast by Parag's dad had gone viral on social media and became an example of parental acceptance. Now that you are plaintiffs in a landmark court case for the Delhi high court which seeks to legalize same sex marriage for 1.4 billion people in the world's largest democracy. Today we will hear how their activism is helping to inspire positive change around the world. I'm so happy that you are here today. You know, let's start our conversation. Parag, you are a second generation Indian American, and Vibhav is a dental surgeon from india. I would be curious to know how you met and fell in love? Who proposed? I want to know everything!

**Vaibhav:** So, I (laughs)...

**Parag:** Well, we met because Vaibhav is much more than a dental surgeon, he is persistent and I think when you grow up in India, I think you learn that you can't just wait for things to happen, you must go out and seek it. I give him a lot of credit; so, in 2012, he was in Washington DC as

a graduate student studying for his master's degree and I was working in the Obama administration and we both happened to be at the same event, which was the annual gay pride parade which happens in June. There were probably half a million people there that day, either watching the parade or participating. He was one of the watchers I was a participant in. I was marching with a Desi group which is the LGBT group for Desis who live in the DC area. And I happened to be marching in the front of the parade and so, they were playing Bollywood music and we were having a great time. I kept looking in the audience for Desi folks because I wanted to go dance with other brown people. When I got to Dupont Circle which is the center of this parade, I must have seen Vaibhav and danced with him; I have no memory of this by the way. I danced with a lot of people that day, but he remembers it very well.

**Vaibhav:** Yeah, so for me, Nandini, it all started obviously in 2012, but I wanted to backtrack a little. I moved to the US in 2011 for my master's program. It was a big cultural shock for me. Leaving home, there was so much that was different.

**Nandini:** I completely hear you; I came from India when I was 26 years old, so I completely understand what you are going to say.

**Vaibhav:** Yes, I also had a secret, and my secret was that I was gay. I never visited a pride parade or any public queer event for fear of being outed. I was very closeted and when I came to the US, I promised myself that I would be honest to myself and to everybody around me. In the 2012 pride parade, I had decided that I was going to march with this group. And then I realized that this was too forward, I've never done this. So, let's maybe watch it this time and be an audience member. So, I decided to go there, and this was a very long event. Several hours, it was very hot. But when I saw Parag, there was something about him. Everytime he would see somebody remotely brown looking; he would invite them to dance. I remember he was wearing a very cute white t-shirt that said the word desi on it and he basically danced with anybody brown looking. And at one point in time, he danced with me, and it was only a few seconds, but I had my camera with me, and I was taking lots of pictures. When I came back home, I was looking at my pictures and I saw this picture of Parag and I thought to myself who this guy is, he was very cute and he seemed so much fun and energetic, so maybe he's on the group's facebook page. I was part of that group on facebook, and I looked through all the members on their facebook page, but I didn't find him and then I looked through a couple of member's profiles and somebody had tagged Parag. I remember thinking that maybe this is that guy.

**Nandini:** Oh boy, you are persistent, you are persistent.

**Parag:** Yes, I am.

**Vaibhav:** you know in some cultures you call it stalker-ish but persistent is a nicer way of saying it. But I found him. I basically just went on the group's profile to find out who he was and then I googled him not realizing that I was being so stalker-ish. I looked him up on google and when you look him up on google you learn about all his advocacy, not just for the queer community but also for Asian americans all over the US. so, it was just so heartwarming for me, I thought to

myself: look at this guy. He is Indian American, and he grew up in this country, but he cares about his culture, his identity so much more than others that are being surrounded by so I would love to meet him. So, I sent him a facebook message and asked to meet him to see where things go. Again, I had no agenda in mind and was very shy. I didn't know what to do, so facebook had this very old feature called poke where if you don't know somebody you could send them a message. I listened to my heart and thanked God I did.

I was kinda surprised to get a poke because I didn't think anybody used that feature on facebook. But I ignored it and the next morning I think he poked me again and I ignored it a second time. By the time I got to work, he had poked me a third time, so I decided to send him a message to ask who he was and if he was going to continue to message me or did, he have something to say. You know, use your words. And to his credit, because as you can tell, he is good with words. An hour later, I got a beautiful message from him telling the story of how he had come to that parade and seen me and looked me up and how he wanted to meet me and basically get to know me. I thought it was very sweet and enduring. We planned to meet the next night for dinner. That was our first date and we have been together for nine years ever since.

**Parag:** Our first date was six hours, we just didn't want to go away, it was so much fun.

Wow, it's a beautiful love story and I love hearing love stories, and love interacting with happy cultures. In our work, we see so many people abused by their partners, by their intimate partners who they trust and love. It's frustrating so when I see happy, healthy, and respectful couples, they really give me hope. I am happy, I want people to, I want to see happy people, I don't know why people hurt their own. It's frustrating. I feel if intimate partners have mutual love and respect, open communication, and compassion in their relationships, why should we even care about their class, caste, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. If the couples are happy and safe with each other, then that's all that should matter. Unfortunately, the reality is something else. So, I don't want to talk about that, let's focus on love and happiness today. So how did you talk to your parents about your marriage, and what was their reaction?

**Vaibhav:** Yeah, so for me, it was obviously a process because as I mentioned to you, I was closeted and my parents had no idea, so that process started after I met Parag, and it was in 2013, I was doing a fellowship with the WHO in Geneva and my parents were visiting. At that point in time, there were some family and friends who had found out because we were posting pictures together on social media. So, Parag, because he had come out to his parents like fifteen twenty years ago. He had gone through this process, so he was a guide and source of light for me in this entire moment because I was so scared and confused. He told me, you know your parents love you so much, this is one thing that you owe to them. Make sure that you tell them in your own words and tell them about yourself versus them finding out in some other way because that would be very hurtful. People could misrepresent, people could say something that is not true so take some time to, take some strength, but tell your parents. So, 2013 summer is when I decided to tell my parents. They were visiting me, and you know, they are such kind loving parents, so I sat them down. They were about to leave for Delhi from Switzerland and that night I sat down, and I started to cry. My parents are like what happened, what's going on, is something wrong. I said I wanted to talk to you both, they thought that something serious

happened and they got really upset. I said I am fine, but I want to tell you that I don't want to get married. My parents said that's nothing, that's alright, there are so many people who don't get married, and we won't force you. I know we have been asking you when I want to get married. But I said there's more to it, the more part is that I am attracted to men, not women. So that sent chills down their spines. They had absolutely no idea. I had to explain what the word gay meant to them. And you must understand, these are my parents. They grew up in India, they had no frame of reference for the word gay. I had to explain it to them, and I remember Parag telling me to be confident about what you are telling them and be up front. Don't get scared, if they feel that you are not unsure of what you are saying they will think that it is a reversible thing or that there is something wrong. So, with conviction I told them that I am gay and that I have known myself for so long. My father immediately came and put his hand on my shoulder. It started a period of conversation which was very uncomfortable, my parents asked some very uncomfortable questions because they had no idea. During the conversation, my mom asked me, and she said, you know, I think I feel bad as a parent. And I just started crying. I remember thinking why you are saying this mom. Is this because I'm gay, it's not your fault, I promise you it's not, this is who I am. She said no Vaibhav, this is not why I think I feel as a parent, I think so for it took 26 years of your life to tell me such an important truth, such a big secret of your life. I think I feel as a parent, I couldn't give you that comfort and space to be who you are, to be honest with me. So, from now onwards, I'm going to do the parenting that I couldn't do for the last 26 years. I am going to be a parent, and you will relax and take care of yourself. But there is one small thing that I ask of you and that is don't tell anybody. We love you; we respect you, we are very happy for you, but just keep it to yourself. And they left after that, it was very difficult for the next six months because my mother would call every day on the phone crying and was very sad. That was the process, and ultimately it took her three to four years and we finally got engaged in 2016. And then, we told our parents, and they were very happy. In 2017 we said we wanted to get married, and they were very supportive. I don't blame parents because when they, at one point, they are parents, they love their children. I am a parent and I love my parents but at the same time, I am also a community member, so I don't know if I have enough resilience to face the community if I am going against the community norms. Sometimes I feel that we need to talk a lot and we need to normalize everything. If a lovely couple can be heterosexual, they can be homosexual too. That kind of normalization, we need to, we need to talk a lot and maybe we can start with our immediate community and what we are doing now on this podcast or at parties, we can talk about these things so people can start thinking that it is normal and not something secret. It is not obscene to love and to have a same sex partner. I don't know how and when we can do it, but we must. That's a beautiful story. I can see that your mom on one hand, she loves you a lot, on the other hand, she is kind of thinking that my son will face some community stress. She wanted to guard you from that stress and of that I am understanding, is that true? That is true. So, I think that is what she was most worried about. She knew she had to protect me, both my parents thought so. They were just worried and were thinking about how you are going to face society. They were also worried about me going back to the US, but they were thinking about how we live in a society, and it is going to be very difficult for us to live in that environment. How will we face our friends? It's that phrase we use in Hindi, that's something she was most worried about. She learned something very quickly, Nandini, she learned that people would talk, people will see what they like to but at the end of the day, if they

love you, if they support you, and they accept you for who you are, they will come to you and they will always be with you. And that's what happened, she slowly started to tell her siblings, my aunts and uncles, my father started to do the same. They were all supportive. Well, there were some family members who gave weird reactions and stupid comments, but my parents decided, that those people, they are not worth it. We love our child, and we want to celebrate that child. We want to tell our family how proud we are of our child. If they think that they want to support us, but if they don't want to, that's on them. And that was a journey and I absolutely agree, they started just where most parents start, they started from a place of fear and not knowing, and they were very scared. We must move forward, and they understood how easy it became when they accepted the truth and then they started talking to everybody about it.

**Nandini:** The more we talk, the more we can normalize these things, and more people will have strength to stand firmly with their children and talk about this. I remember, honestly, I didn't know anything about the youth. The day I first watched a video about Parag's dad, that is how I came to know about you. The video was like a father loving and delivering a compelling speech at his gay son's wedding. The speech was so heart touching that I wanted to share that video with everyone in my community as I know that many parents and family members are not supportive of their children who don't follow socially constructed gender norms and many teens and young adults are suffering. They are facing hatred, abuse, and oppression because of who they are and who they love. That is so sad. I want to share that video, again that speech, again with my listeners. Would you please play that video clip?

I didn't know in advance what my dad was going to say. I didn't know how much he was going to share.

**Video recording:** This is my first gay wedding by the way, and for many of you this might be your first gay wedding to attend. Back in 1997, I was one of the luckiest fathers around. My son was valedictorian, spelling bee champion, doing a great job as Romeo, and he fooled me as he played a great Romeo in Romeo in Juliet. Everybody else had a girlfriend, he had a girlfriend and this and I taught, and I said Parag, you're such a great son, I am so lucky. On the 27 of March at 4:25PM on that Friday night, Vaibhav gave a very small speech. Dad and mom, I am gay. I have known it since I was ten years old. I thought I was confused but I am beginning to realize that I am gay. I thought I will hide my being gay until you die so you won't be embarrassed, I tried to commit suicide while I was in high school but I did not succeed, thank God for that, but last week, I was discussing in my class and there was another India girl I blurted out that I was gay so I knew the news would come to you sooner or later. Therefore, I am telling you I am gay. The whole thing was like a fifteen-minute speech. From the best of the time, our life, and the worst of times. I was a very homophobic person, there's no question about it. So, I thought that this is no big deal, I'll fix him, I'll find the best medical center in the country, I'll find the cure for it, and I'll handle it. Monday morning, I was the first person to enter the medical library and I pulled out all the cumulative medical texts and I suddenly realized in thirty minutes that American Psychological Association back in 1973 had declared that gay people is not a disease, it is not a defect, it is not to be cured, it is not contagious. And if you accept somebody is gay your child is not likely to be gay than otherwise. I asked a simple question: do I love my son, any less at 4:31 than I loved him at 4:24. And a long pause, and the answer was no, I still

love him the same. So, then I wrote a letter and when I wrote the letter, this is what I did, I said who will be the fifty people who will play the important roles in Parag's life? Some of them are very conservative and I knew that they would freak out if they heard it, so I kind of thought okay maybe fifty percent of the people could not find out. And my life would really be isolated, what to do? Again, a few minutes later the answer came, very simple. I said if there are fifty percent of the people who don't want to talk to you, maybe they don't need to be in your life, why not just stick with the other fifty percent? Who will be with you?

**Nandini:** So, listeners, I hope that you could hear a loving father's speech and his blessing to his son, and I personally love that speech. I hope that all of you loved that speech too. So, after hearing that speech, I just asking Parag and Vaibhav, do you want to say something to those parents who are struggling accepting their queer children.

**Vaibhav:** Yeah, I think that, you know, what my dad's words made so clear is that at the end of day, we must prioritize our children, right? That's a parent's number one job. And in some ways, the reaction has been amazing, people recognize how extraordinary his words were, as you didn't Nandini. And on the other hand, it is a very ordinary act of fatherhood, because essentially what he is saying is "I love my son and I choose my son over society and what society thinks." and that should not be as extraordinary as we made it out to be. But I will say this, we recognize that for both my parents and Vaibhav's parents, this has been a journey, it has been a journey of incredible courage and bravery. We applaud them for it. What our hope is, and the reason why we keep sharing our story and why we appreciate people like you telling this story is exactly what you said in the beginning, which we have to normalize this, it should no longer be a shocking or brave thing for a parent to stand and up and say I love my child regardless of who they are or what they are. That should be the norm. I think that my dad's words and the reaction to his words around the world are helping to make that the new normal.

**Parag:** One thing that I would also like to add is if you hear the full speech, it's available on my youtube channel, you will hear that Vaibhav's dad, my father-in-law now, was very vulnerable in the entire conversation. He shared how homophobic he was as a parent and he was indifferent and sometimes ignorant, he would say things that he didn't know. So, it's such an honest thing that he starts with how he was a homophobic father and when my son came out, this is how I changed. I think...

**Nandini:** And at some point, he said he went to the library to read about how I can fix it, how I can cure him, and then I know, he found out that it is not a disease, it is normal. And that part is so empowering. Right?

**Vaibhav:** That is the thing I was just about to mention. It is very important for parents themselves to not just listen to what they hear around from relatives, it is all right. If you don't know and if you have mixed feelings that is fine. But learn to educate yourself, learn to love. Find resources even if you are in India, if you are anywhere in South Asia, if you are in the US, find resources because there are now resources available. Ten years ago, fifteen years ago, maybe not but now, the internet has everything. Local libraries will have content. Go learn, go educate. It is all right to not know, it is all right if you are homophobic, but you need to change

yourself after educating yourself so I think that is something that I learned from that. You must remember, that Parag, that speech he gave, you should look at his expressions, you would see that he was very uncomfortable.

**Parag:** I had no idea what he was going to say. He shared a lot of information, a lot of personal information that I did expect him to say, but you know, it's interesting that the day after the wedding when we were saying goodbye to all of our guests, one of my very good friends from college came up to me and she said how are you doing and I said, I'm good, and then she said no I'm asking because when your dad was giving the toast last night I wasn't watching him, I was watching you. She said, I could tell from the expression on your face how uncomfortable it was and how difficult it was to hear him share all of that, she said Parag I want you to know something, that speech was not for you and Vaibhav, even though it was a toast as your wedding, it wasn't for you. Your dad was speaking to his friends and his family members and his generation. What he was doing was, he was speaking in their language, and he was giving them permission to change their minds. He was giving them the opportunity to grow up. She said that is one of the best gifts your father could have given you, not just to the two of you but all the people in that room. That was the moment where I really felt so thankful and proud of my dad for what he did. Because I realized, this is how change happens.

**Vaibhav:** Both of us had heard the story so many times, so many of our family members had heard the story too. But after, many of our friends and family reached out to us and said Hey I really loved your father-in-law's speech would you mind sharing it? So, I asked him, dad is it okay if I cut the speech and post it?" He said sure, so the videographer sent me the whole wedding video, I clipped it and posted it on my youtube channel, and then I shared it with a few friends. Next thing you know, within a few months, it's getting hundreds upon thousands of views. And we were shocked, we were like what is going on. This is a story that we know and that's when we realized the magnitude and the power of the words he said and how honest we were as parents.

**Nandini:** That's a powerful message. Another thing I wanted to share with you and Vaibhav when you were saying you were watching Parag's face, when the dad was giving the speech, and no matter what, this is a big speech, but no matter what, when parents are saying things in a public platform, things are always tense. What are they going to say? That's a very true thing. I am a parent, I have teenagers, so I know that. Whenever I am saying something, they are looking at me and this wedding day and dad is giving a speech, so I totally can understand Parag's nervousness.

**Parag:** Thank you Nandini, I appreciate it.

**Nandini:** So, you know, you just told me that it is normal, and we know that it is of such magnitude. And now so many other people can appreciate it. For many people it is not normal, it is a very problematic thing, it is very shameful and a gray area. And you know, some people in our community they say that homosexuality is a foreign concept, it is not even in our culture. When I heard that, I didn't know how to react, but I would like to know what your response would be.

**Parag:** Yeah, we've heard this a lot...what I would say is homophobia is a foreign concept. Homosexuality has been a part of our culture from the beginning. You go back and you look at some of the carvings on our ancient temples in south india, you will say same sex love portrayed. It was a normal and prominent, celebrated, part of our society for thousands of years until outsiders came in and conquered india. So, whether it was the Mongol empire or the british empire, they set up laws that had this victorian sense of puritanism and propriety. This had opposition to anything outside of their norm. That is what we are stuck with today. So, among the many terrible legacies that the british have left us with, we are left with laws that criminalize homosexuality and this sort of idea that the only kind of normal love is heterosexual love. That is not part of our culture, that is not who we are. In fact, what we are fighting for today in India and around the world is for a return to our roots. Of what our culture always has been, and what we always celebrated, which is love, love in all its many forms.

**Vaibhav:** If you go to India, and in my anthology, you will see that there are so many characters; we talk about Lord Shiva in Jainism, I am, Parag and I are followers of and we talk about the soul not just being a masculine and feminine thing, we talk about it in the gender neutral. We talk about how a man and a woman are not just made of one soul, they are made of man and woman together. So, you know, that in of itself tells you so much about the knowledge of our ancestors. I would argue that and have you listeners, check out somebody named David Utnaik. Now David Utnaik is a renowned writer in India, and he writes openly about queer issues but he also relates them to the stories in Indian mythology. How LGBTQ+ issues and stories have been in our mythology forever. He gives such beautiful explanations so I would urge your listeners to read some of the writings of David Utnaik.

**Nandini:** Hopefully those of you who are listening can at least, some people will, go back to your suggestion and read that. They should, people, if they don't educate themselves, they wouldn't be able to come out of that dark, I don't know how to explain it, it is such a sensitive topic. I just want people to read to understand and talk to people and as you said Vaibhav, yes, it is okay to be homophobic but if you know you bias and want to come out of it, if you talk to people who is from that community if you read and then you will hopefully understand and correct your homophobic beliefs. I hope people will do that. Do you want to give any messages for those who haven't come out yet? Many people feel that they feel pain, they feel oppression, they are scared to come out. So, do you have any messages for them?

So, my message is a couple of folds. Number one, I would say, always come out when you are safe, when you are ready, and come out on your own terms. Don't come out because your friends are telling you, your family wants to know, no. come out when you are comfortable, when you feel ready, then you should come out. Also, when you are physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially safe. Then you know, my parents were accepting, they were great. But it could have been one south. Easily my parents could have been very upset. My father was funding my education at that time, he could have said, no I'm not going to fund my education, come back to India with me. It could have been very dramatic and traumatic for me. He could have forced me to get married and that is not something to joke about, it happens in India all the time. I can tell you have LGBT friends that I have known for the longest time, they were forced into straight



marriages, gay marriages getting married to men, gay women getting married to men and it's all true. So come out when you are ready when you are absolutely safe. And know this when you do come out, if you don't get the kind of acceptance that you get from, from your parents, that you expect from your parents, there is a community around who can support you. I found that community when I found queer groups, I found that in the community and in my husband who I love. So, there are millions of people outside of your home who love you and accept you. Know that you are amazing, and you are perfect the way you are.

**Parag:** I would just add that for anybody who is listening who is struggling with coming out, or struggling with their sexual orientation, remember that you are perfect and that nothing that anyone says or thinks can change who you are and perfection that you are. Believe in yourself, believe that you are deserving of happiness. Believe that you are deserving of love, don't settle for anything less than that. This is your life and at the end of the day, you are accountable to yourself. So, I would say live your best life and you are loved and that we love you. You belong to our community.

**Nandini:** Wow, what a beautiful message. Everyone should have love and dignity in their lives. Everyone should have happiness in life, and I don't know why many people have problems with someone's dignity and love.

**Parag:** Usually, Nandini, it's because the person who is bigotted is reacting to something in their own lives. I find that people who hate and people who are bigotted are reacting to their own deficiencies, their own inadequacies, and insecurities. It was interesting, when we were planning our wedding, we researched hard to find a priest to officiate it because there weren't many Jain priests in America to begin with but even the few who were there refused to do a same sex wedding. We were lucky that we finally found a terrific officiant who performed Jain weddings and was happy to do a same sex wedding. But before he officiated, we invited a leader from a Hindu organization, the leader from the local temple in Austin, Texas, and the monk. When I asked him would he be comfortable saying a few words at our wedding, he said absolutely. I said how is that though, because so many people in the mission and in the Hindu religion are opposed to this. And he said a beautiful thing, he said, Parag, it is because I, as a monk, understand that gender is not about genitals, it is about energy. He said the most important thing you must understand about Hinduism is that Hinduism instructs each of us to live a life in pursuit of happiness. Now think about that, thousands of years before people sat down and wrote a declaration of independence in America saying we have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, thousands of years before that, halfway around the world, the people of India had figured out that the pursuit of happiness is the goal of our life. So that monk came out to our wedding and spoke out about our wedding ceremony and said exactly and very lovingly and said that these two boys are doing exactly what their faith demands of all of us, they are pursuing happiness and they found it in each other.

**Vaibhav:** You know, sometimes you don't discuss this, Nandini, but not having that love, being devoid of that love can give you so much mental trauma, it can give you so much anxiety, depression, people actually become suicidal so those are things that people often don't talk

about. LGBT youth in the US, and back home in india, all over south asia, all over the world, suffer from some of the highest rates of suicide, mental health issues, depressin, anxiety, and all of that can be sorted if would jsut given some acceptance, some love, and were approached with dignity and love that they deserve.

**Nandini:** Of course, you are so right, Vaibhav, you are so right. I hope that one day, that day will come. I am very hopeful, and I know that you are also hopeful about that. People who love others who are full of love, positive energy, they can think like that.

**Parag:** It brings that hope because of which, we filed the case in the Delhi high court because we believe in that dignity. We know that this is right, which is why we have hope in our people, in our traditions that one day that day will come, and everybody is going to feel loved.

Nandini: So, time is running out, I hope we can continue this discussion for another hour but time is running out and I'm hopeful that I will invite another episode so we can share some happenings with other people, with other listeners. Thank you so much Parag and Vaibhav for coming to our show and sharing your life stories with us and sharing your vulnerabilities and sharing positive vibes with us. I'm sure your story will comfort many people and cause them to reflect on their own biases and it will give hope and strength to many who are in pain. So, thank you.

**Vaibhav:** Thank you so much nandini, thanks for having us. You know it's als oimoportant that folks like yourself, podcasters, and storytellers like yourself are bringing same sex couples because I think you would also agree that it is important work, very miportant work. We need storytellers and podcasters like yourself to bring our stories to light because that is when people around you, people in your community, in our community will learn about us. So, thank you so much for what you are doing.

**Parag:** Thank you Nandini.

**Nandini:** It is my pleasure. Parag, you want to add anything?

**Parag:** not just saying thank you for your time.

**Nandini:** Thank you for your time. So, thank listeners for listening to our show. I will be back soon with another interesting episode. In the meantime, please catch up with our previous episodes that you may have missed. Find all episodes on soundcloud and other podcast apps. Please like and share if you haven't already. Bye for now. Stay safe and stay happy. Thank you. This project was made possible thanks to funding provided by the Santa Clara County Office of Gender Based violence prevention.

This show is for informational purposes only and is not to be construed as legal advice. Always consult an attorney for legal advice, views expressed by guests of the radio show are individual opinions and not endorsed by Maitri.

Maitir is a free confidential nonprofit organization based in the San Francisco Bay area that helps families and individuals facing domestic violence. Don't suffer in silence, call the maitir helpline 1-888-Maitri.