

Satrang holds Coming Out, Coming Home II program

STAFF REPORTER

Los Angeles, Calif.

THE South Asian LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Questioning) community and its allies recently gathered for a momentous event in the history of South Asians of Southern California. "Coming Out Coming Home II", the second event of its kind, was held at the Southern California Library (SCL) in Los Angeles on Sunday January 17. The event was organized by Satrang, Southern California's only organization working to raise awareness and provide resources for people who identify as South Asian and LGBTIQ. Following the success of last year's workshop and reading, Satrang sponsored this year's workshop and reading to provide members of the South Asian LGBTIQ community a platform to share their experiences in a safe and creative environment. The meet was the conclusion of a six-week writing workshop held this past September and October; the reading was inspiring and emotional.

Facilitated by theater artist and former Satrang Board Member, D'Lo, the workshop became a space for attendees to go deep — exploring and crafting their personal stories. "Nearly all the participants came to the workshop saying they didn't know how to write," said D'Lo. "Yet what was proven on the day was that not only could they write beautifully, but that their personal stories were intensely powerful." During the event, eight workshop participants shared their stories, spanning topics from integrating their spirituality and sexuality to coming out to family members. The stories evoked tears, laughs and a standing ovation from the room full of family members, friends, partners and allies.

According to the 2008 Needs Assessment Survey carried out by Satrang and the South Asian Network (SAN), there are about 300,000 South Asians living in Southern California. "Taking into account the commonly accepted theory that the LGBTIQ community makes up at least 10 per cent of any given population, it is estimated that there are, 30,000 LGBTIQ South Asians living in Southern California," said officials of the Satrang group. "Because of these findings, we understand that many of our community are immigrants who are closeted or in isolation. There is no place for them to be 'out' and South Asian — the cultural reverence for "silence" is strong, especially when it comes to situations and subjects that could affect one's standing in either their cultural community or their employment status."

In our community, we know for a fact that many people suffer from mental health and thoughts of suicide because of the homophobia," said D'Lo. "It's sad that people don't feel that they can just be who they are and be loved by their family and community for being authentic in their identities." Satrang is a social, cultural and support organization providing a safe space to empower and advocate for the rights of the South Asian LGBTIQ community in Southern California through education, networking, and outreach. Satrang envisions a world in which South Asian queer/ alternative sexualities and gender identities are embraced and celebrated. Satrang was honored to have the Southern California Library host the 2nd reading of this workshop with new participants and new stories. The Southern California Library has been home to many of the rich beginnings of movements — starting with meetings, lectures, classes, and political organizing.

It is dedicated to archiving the fruits of these movements — archival collections, books and periodicals, pamphlets, sound recordings, and films — that allow people to remember and cherish the history of resistance. Through the Library's collections, they are able to not only remember but also learn how to address the challenges our communities face today. The Southern California Library hosts workshops, regular art exhibits and cultural performances. In building a network of artists, the Library seeks to deepen its commitment to art as a critical element of social change.

For more info about Satrang, the reader can go to www.satrang.org or call 1-(888) 370-9569.

Satrang Activists
at a parade

