

# Ep 20: Second Adolescence w/ Tanaya Joshi (she/her)

Tue, 7/12 9:00PM 1:14:34

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

parents, mom, people, friends, queerness, dad, wedding, feel, adolescence, happening, talking, story, moved, life, austin, years, big, relationship, sexuality, gay

## SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Tanaya Joshi (she/her)

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of the Second Adolescence podcast. I am your host, Adam James Cohen. And today's episode is gonna be the last in this series of episodes with the new episodes set coming in September. So be on the lookout for that. And oh my gosh, this was just the perfect way to end this set of episodes because this conversation was so powerful. I was so affected by our guests story and was so appreciative of her coming on to invite us all into it. Our guest is to Neha Joshi, and she shares with us about her experience growing up and ultimately getting to a point of understanding her identity and kind of navigating adolescence and all of that. But what was particularly powerful in this conversation was how transparent Teneo was with inviting us all into her experience navigating some really challenging family dynamics with regards to family members struggle to get to a place of acceptance and celebration of her identity, she was so generous with her story. And you know, so many of us unfortunately, have some challenging relationships in our lives that we have to navigate. And her story is one that's just such a powerful example of how to do the work of continuing to kind of honor our own self and put boundaries where we need and kind of then slowly decide when it's okay to let people in. It was just, uh, I can't recommend enough. So welcome to that conversation. And I'm so appreciative of Taneja for inviting us all into it. And as with each episode of the second adolescence podcast, I want to invite you as a listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of her stories are different and unique, you might hear things shared on the show that really differ from your experience, where you might hear other things that really speak to what you went through or are currently going through, I really hope that all of this happens, and that together, we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks. If after the show you want to connect further, feel free to head on over to [secondadolescenecpod.com](http://secondadolescenecpod.com) for show notes, and more. Or you can follow the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome to second adolescence. I'm really excited and curious to have you on and hear about you and your story. And I guess before going anywhere, I'd like to invite the person in your shoes to give a little mini introduction just to give the listeners a little context who the person is behind the voice.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 02:47

Yeah, absolutely. My name is Tanaya. Introductions are always so funny for me because I'm like, I talk about work, too. I talk about my life. Honestly, I was born and raised in Mumbai. And my family moved to the US when I was 11 years old. And been here since I came out about seven years ago, a year into dating my partner. And it's been a pretty rocky road with my parents, which came to a pretty nice conclusion this year at our wedding. But yeah, that's that's my journey. And then you know, as a person, I love spending time with my dog and my cat. They're both very small. I love to cook love to have friends over for dinner. I do a lot of art, you know, pottery, printmaking, things like that. And then the thing that pays my bill is I work as a product designer in tech.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:36

Okay, I'm so excited to dive into so much of what I've heard so far. But I guess it's the first to land us Why did you want to come on and share your story?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 03:44

Yeah, well, that's a great question. When it comes to like queer storytelling, I've heard so much sadness and trauma behind it, which there is there's a lot of that in my story as well. But I also have a lot of joy to share that I have been privy to this year. And I just hate being like a part of a trope that is like the gay best friend or the one who gets killed off in movies. You know, we have happy endings, we have happy stories. And I don't know, I wish I would have had more access to those when I was having a hard time coming out. So yeah, that's one reason. And the other is I think each coming out is so different than the next. There's a lot of similarities. But there's also massive differences. And if there's anything I can share in my story that helps that, you know, resonates with people helps them makes them want to reach out moves them in any way, then I consider that I know some really big honor.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 04:42

I'm so touched that you're here, and I so appreciate you but we just met and I'm just like just so grateful to get to even have this moment. And I'm so honored that you wanted to come on and share your story with our community. So yeah, so you mentioned your story began in Mumbai. And so I'm curious like what was like that first Chapter of your life like growing up there.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 05:02

So I grew up in Mumbai in South Bombay very bustling part of Mumbai. I was nicknamed tomboy. Like we had this big sort of technically it was an apartment complex. It was like a big circle of apartments. And everybody knew everybody and everybody knew everybody's business. And there were like, people got nicknames. You know, like it was a very close knit community, there were times where my mom would have to like, would would be out on a project for a couple of hours. And my neighbor would watch us so like, you know, it was just such a close knit community. So yeah, I, I always joke that when I was about six years old, I

gave my Barbie a haircut, and I realized it's never going back. So I picked up a cricket bat, and I joined the boys. I've always just been like, soft Butch people asked me I, one of my very fond memories is I once left the house wearing your dress, and I had my mom draw a mustache on my face. And there was a family friend who ran into us. And he's like, Hey, why do you have a mustache? And I looked at him. And I was like, Why do you have a mustache? And I just kept walking. So I think gender is something that collared gender, call it the sort of spectrum of masculinity and femininity. But that was something that I was exploring since I was a kid. And the awesome thing is because play is encouraged, especially like where I grew up in India, nobody looked at it as a bad thing. People are like, people will just call me tomboy. And you know, I would just be walking around and shorts and a T shirt. Like, my mom, as I got older, taught me how to walk. And I'm putting this in air quotes. Because growing up, I used to walk like my dad, I used to be like, chest out, arms out. And I used to walk like this, wear a hat. And my mom was like, Oh, you're getting older. You can't get away with this shit anymore. We got to turn this shutdown. But yeah, that was like the early early childhood for me.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:52

Okay, and so would you say that because it sounds like at that point when your mom came in to kind of teach you to walk what sounds like more feminine, quote unquote. Yeah, was that kind of the shift of sounds like pre that moment in childhood, there was a lot of space to play. Not that people knew you've been doing this with the play a little bit more gender play with a little more masculine, feminine, kind of, there's more space to show that, but then it sounds like at some point, it changed. Is that when you got older, or when did that shift?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 07:16

Yeah, wow. Let's see. I think I had started to feel some waves of that, as I was getting ready to leave India. I was 11 when I left. So I was still young enough that I wasn't being like extremely policed in the way that I was. But I think as I began to, like, get a sense for it, there's one guy who I used to play cricket with all the time. And he was like, hey, people are asking if we like each other. And I was like, What's that for this thing with the, you know, my mom being like, you need to learn how to walk properly, right? I think this, like heteronormativity started taking effect, toward the end of my time in India. And then when we moved here, it was such a jarring change. Nobody had time to pay attention to how I was walking. We were in a new country.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:00

Hmm, yeah. What do you remember about making that move? How are you feeling about that move.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 08:06

I was feeling really excited in the beginning, because I was like, my dad moved to the US in 2000. He scoped everything out. He had this job, but he was like, let me be here for a year, see how it feels. And then, you know, I'll see if I can bring my family over. And so this was back in the days of dial up. And there was this app on my Windows 97 computer, that would give me

five minutes of FaceTime with my dad. And so that's how we would call him for for about a year. And then he came and visited once or twice. So I like America was something that was like buzzing around me for a year before we moved here. And when we did, it was a really rough year, because again, like I came here, just the same person that I was there, right, like I was definitely very tomboyish more mask presenting. And I think people kind of saw that they're like, Oh, you dress weird. You look for me, you sound funny. So that I had a hard time adjusting in school because I was in a school where there were not a lot of Indian people. And so I think people just hadn't really seen immigrants from different countries. And it was just a lot of local kids there. And I remember being like, well, you know, my grandma said, If I hate it, one year later, I can just go to India and live with her. And I just remember that being in the back of my head. And then my parents kind of saw me struggling in school and getting bullied a lot. And so we switched schools in seventh grade. And I think that's when it just I was like, Oh, this place isn't so bad. after all. I think I got this, like, I think I can make it here.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:35

At this new school. It sounds like it was a better fit. Are you or what was the difference at that school?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 09:40

A lot more diversity. Specifically, like, you know, I mean, look, here's the thing. The first school I was in was also diverse. It was just diverse and different way. So it's unfair for me to say diversity, it's that there's just a lot more Asian people there. So like, there are Indian people who saw me and they're like, Oh, you sound like my mom, because you're from the same country as my mom. Okay, this makes sense to me. Come on.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 10:00

Yeah, and then Okay, so this is an adolescence, like, what was happening in terms of your understanding of your identity at the time?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 10:08

Yes. Okay. I'm so excited to share this with you. I have a Harry Potter journal, and it's downstairs in my nightstand. I had a best friend when I was 13. And I just thought she was awesome. And I remember hanging out at her house one day, just kind of looking at her and like being very captivated by her. And I came home and I wrote in my journal, I was like, talking about how beautiful her hair looked. And then I wrote in all caps, I am not gay. That was my first coming out. And then I just locked it away for 10 years before I came out. But that's what was happening when I was 13. You know, I was like, when I was 12, I was in that school that I was having a hard time and people were teasing me. They're like, this guy likes you, this guy likes you. And I like didn't really understand it. Also, like, I was very naive when I came to the US and much further behind than a lot of my peers were. And so I think that was also the other

thing that was impacting my understanding of my sexuality, or just like attraction or anything like that. But the first thing I ever felt in my chest was these feelings. Were my best friend when I was 13, which is, you know, right around that time of puberty. So

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 11:22

Oh, yeah. I'm just thinking about little, little you. Yeah, but then, okay, you mentioned okay, then I locked that away for another 10 years was that? I mean, I'm sure it's not a simple process, or a simple answer of what locking away means. But where was that like a conscious effort? Where was that kind of on the unconscious level? Like, what does locking it away mean? What did that look like for you?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 11:46

Okay, so locking it away. It means a couple of different things, I think. So I kept reading that journal. I was actually reading it with my partner and we were just laughing our butts off about like, teenage me just like being angry at my parents and like also being like, I love Daniel. I love this guy. I love that guy. I have like, I love Daniel Radcliffe in my notebook, because a yo for JK Rowling. But like Harry Potter was really big back in the day. So I was looking back at this journal, and I saw a lot of I Heart boy name. One of them was I think it was this boy Daniel, who I liked. And then two days later, I came back to my journal and I said, I have moved on because I saw him pick his nose. It looks really fun for you to hide your sexuality, I guess if you're me. But that's what it looks like is like, a lot of I Heart this boy, I heard that boy. And I think I started to understand most importantly, I think I started to understand at that point, and this is not like a right learning, but the learning I picked up was male attention is good. If boys like me, that's good. I should be likeable to boys. And that was starting to like stick in my brain a little bit more. And I was like, oh, yeah, cool. Like, this is what I'm supposed to be. This is how I'm supposed to be performing performative heterosexuality, right like that's, that's what a lot of queer people grew up with. So yeah, that's, that's what it looked like. And then the a very interesting thing was happening on the side, which is that I had really, really deep relationships with both boys and girls. And I hate to put gender on a binary. But you know, that's how these friends identified. There's this guy who I would play interruption rats lap with every day at lunch, and we would just like find each other we'd like scarf, our lunch down and replay. I was just like love hanging out with each other. So outside of these, like fleeting like crushes, or like forced crushes, whatever was happening. There were these, like real relationships I was having with boys. But they never felt anything more than friendship. And then I was having these relationships with girls who are becoming like, every now and then I would have like a best friend who I would just have so much affection for that my chest would well and I would be like, I will give my life for you. And my friend, whoever the girl was, and there are many of these women in my life. But there would be like, You're so weird. You're coming on so strong, like what's your deal? Because the thing is that I was very much modeling the way that I had seen, like, I'm a big Bollywood fan. And I was modeling the way that I had seen heroes in Bollywood romance their actresses without actually understanding that's what was happening. So there's these male friendships that could have actually been crushes had I had the capacity to like the boys. And then there's these like, girls in my life, who I just became so attached to, and I was like, I'm just a very caring friend and people I guess, just don't want that. And I don't know what I'm doing wrong. I just want to take care of my friend. And that continued till I was 23. I had a best friend in undergrad. His name was Sean. I love the dude like he was so incredible. We

were just like inside For a while, he was on an internship that semester of my birthday and he like drove down just to celebrate my 21st with me and buy me a drink and like, oh my god, I loved him so much, but I never liked him more than a friend. And if there was ever a boy in my life I would have truly genuinely ended up with it was him. And then on the other hand, I was again, like having these friendships with like, all sorts of like, all of these different women who are coming by in my life were who eventually just ended up shunning me because they were like, you're coming on too strong. So here I was, having learned that male attention is good, not knowing what to do with the actual relationships that I had with boys. Because at some point, you know, Shawn and I are no longer friends, he found a girlfriend and stopped talking to me because in heterosexuality It's weird if you're a boy, and your best friend is a girl. So honestly, like I held on to that grief for a long time. But I just wish that I could go back to him and tell him that I could have never liked him. I knew that we really were just friends and nothing more and there was nothing like threatening about me. But you know that the time for that is gone. But yeah, that's that my friendships evolved in these these like, really, really weird ways for about a decade.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:14

Yeah. And like, I can imagine that must have been so so confusing. For younger you going through that of like, feeling what you're feeling. And then kind of not knowing what you're doing acting in the way like you were socialized to kind of from these Bollywood films, even unconsciously, but then getting this feedback from these girls were like, Whoa, this is this is not okay. Like, what do you? How do you think like younger you like internalize that, like, what do you think that did to that younger version of you?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 16:40

I was really beaten down. Oh, totally. Right. Like, like, I mean, like, what else? Right, like you have this best friend. And the thing is, I had no idea. This is what it means to like somebody. And I'll tell you, I had another friend who I was developing this kind of friendship with at the time that I came out. And I like, took three steps back. And I was like, I liked her. And I was like, Oh, my God, I've liked all of them. So you know, it was it was really lovely once I was like, unlocked that. But but because I hadn't unlocked that. Like, I'll give you an example. I had a friend in college, who I just loved, like I had so much love in my heart for her. I had a massive crush on her. And again, I didn't know this. And it was really tough because she was developing a crush on another guy. And I remember one day, she was really sick. And I had gone to visit my parents, which I saw them pretty often when I was in college, and she was sick. So I was like, Hey, I'm gonna leave early and go take care of my friend. I stopped by a grocery store. And I picked up like a can of soup and like a towel for like a cold compress. Because she was running a fever. I picked up some Advil and like some snacks, and I like brought the bag over to her dorm. And it turned out that she was spending time at the guy's dorm. And I just remember, like, feeling crushed. Like I had this aching desire to care for this quote, friend, I was like, what does this guy have to offer her that I'm not offering her? I could take better care of her. Why is she not coming to me? Oh, yeah, that's basically that's like a really great, I think, example of what these friendships felt like.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 18:14

Yeah, totally. And yeah, and a great example of how like queerness was there, but it was at this like unconscious level you weren't quite aware of, of what you were feeling and what it was what its meaning was. And so yeah, so when did things start to shift for you? When did you start to kind of gain a little bit more of that conscious awareness of of what your feelings were?

**T** Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 18:34

Yeah, let's see. You know, I can't remember the early days of coming to terms with my sexuality, because the ones that came out, I was hanging out with a friend of mine. And I told her, I was like, yeah, by the way, I'm not straight. And she was like, Yeah, you know, your dude mentioned something like that a few months ago, when we hung out, and I was like, kind of caught off guard by that. I'm a verbal processor. And when something big happens in my life, I make phone calls. And I get it out, I say the thing over and over again, and I talk to people. And that's how it starts to make sense in my head. And I was very subconsciously doing that without realizing that. And then I hit a point where I was picking up my brother from the airport. And this was also at a time where my brother and my relationship wasn't particularly great. But I had a lot of fondness for him. He's my younger brother. I mean, you know, like, I'm his older sister, I have just all I'll always have a special place in my heart for him, but I was picking him up from the airport, and we're second Atlanta traffic. And I remember talking to him, and I was like, Yeah, I've just been thinking about something. You know, I think I just liked people for who they are, regardless of their gender. And my brother was like, Yeah, I mean, I yeah, I get that. And in that moment, I was like, Ha, it's okay to be like this. Because the other thing that I was feeling a lot was when I wrote I'm not gay, my journal at the age of 13. I wrote that because I thought I'm Indian. Indian people are not gay. And the reason I believe that is because homosexuality in India is such a complicated thing. It wasn't legal to be gay till like 2013. I think, you know, it's like, it's a really fucked up country. It's like holding on to these old Victorian laws. And it's really difficult to be queer and to be Indian, because I am very Indian. I listen exclusively to Bollywood, I love Bollywood movies, like, I have like a lot of Indian shit in my house, I cook Indian food all the time, like my values, Mike, the person that I am, is informed by the fact that I am an Indian. And so for a long time, I was made to believe that Indian people are not gay. And that's also because I have seen people were very clearly gay. Marry folks of the opposite gender, I have seen queerness be masked with heterosexuality my entire life. And these people would get made fun of all the time, like society would just be like, Haha, he saw a feminist to like crazy guy anyway, How's his wife doing? You know, like, that's the shit that was happening around me. So I had no examples of Indian people who are gay. So for a long time, it for me, it was like, these two things cannot coexist. And so when I said this to my brother, it was almost like it was really liberating. Because I haven't talked about this in a minute.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:20

That's okay. That's okay. Yeah, take your time.

**T** Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 21:23

it was really liberating. Because we have the shared past, and somebody with my past validated me. Yeah. And it just, it made me feel seen in a way that I think possibly nobody else could have done. Yeah. And I don't think I realized that till till right now

could have done. Yeah. And I don't think I realized that till right now.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:48

Whats it like to have that realization in this moment.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 21:51

It's lovely. It's such a lovely thing to like, learn from your younger siblings, you know? Yeah, it's just like, my brother's a very special person to me. Yeah. And this is one more reason why he's special.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:05

Absolutely. Thank you so much for letting us into that part of your story in that moment, because gosh, I mean, I feel so affected just from my end, just kind of hearing about that experience, and just feeling just like so much power and just love and just go brother. Oh, that's so sweet. Yeah.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 22:28

He's a good one. Yeah. It took him a while to come around and actually figure out how to support me. But you know, I don't think he realized in that moment, what he was like, the gift that he was giving me and what he was doing for me and what he unlocked for me.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:42

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And then so Okay, so that an unlock was happening. So then how did that lead into what came next? What happened?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 22:50

So two quick stories. The first is that, that conversation just gave me like, just liberated me, right. And so sometime in the next few days, one of my best friends was over at my house. And I remember like, sitting across from her, and this was my first official coming out. And I said to her, Hey, I think I like girls, and she goes, cool, How'd you figure it out? And I was like, you know, like, all the girls around us are always like, you look pretty, like your calves look nice, or like, your hair looks nice. And I was like, I feel that, but I like really mean that. That's how I described. Right, right. I mean, that's the complicated thing, at least about being a woman and being queer is that like, I mean, I was spoiler alert is that my parents did not do well, with my coming out. And my mom, I'd be like, watching movies with my mom, and she would be like, gushing over an actress and how she looks and our hair looks. And so I was sitting next to her. And I was like, Yeah, me too, man. And so like, for me, I was like, this is a strange behavior, but but I really not.



A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:05

Wow, that's a really great point that for folks who are socialized female, there is more space to comment on kind of the attractiveness and kind of the, the aesthetic or beauty of other females. Yep. In a way that's yeah. Not experienced as homosexual. Whoa, great point. Yeah.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 24:25

Like I feel very comfortable. Like if I see a picture of my friend, I've done this before. I like seen a picture of like my friend looking really nice. Now give a very specific compliment and be like, your shoulders look great. Like, I can't imagine a guy going to another guy being like, your shoulders look great. It's fucked up.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:42

Right. I know.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 24:54

And then, so this was in December and then, funnily enough in February, I met the love of My life.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:01

So it just what year are we? Where are we at in time?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 25:03

Yeah. So we are in December 2013. I had December 2013, I, that conversation with my brother came out to my best friend. And then February of 2014, two of my friends were hosting a dance competition for Indian classical dance. And they were directors, they were running the whole thing. And I was freelance doing freelance photography at the time. So it was like, Absolutely not a question that I would be doing that gig. And I was like, don't even pay me for it. Just buy me a nice rental, like, read me nice equipment. And like, let me just do this for you. So I was having a blast that week. And I wanted to represent my friends. Well, so I was on my best behavior. I was like, super friendly. I was like, everybody coming here is going to leave here being like, last year 2014 In Atlanta was the best and show I have attended in my college career, you know, I was set to make it happen for my friends. So I got there was meeting a lot of people. And then it was the rehearsal. So usually what we do is morning rehearsal, where I get to see all the runs, and I get to take some pictures and like, get a feel for what the routine is. So I know where to be at the right times. And then the show happens in the evening. So the morning rehearsal was happening. And the UT Austin team comes up, and I'm taking pictures. And gosh, I feel like such a chum telling the story. Because literally, I was watching my now

wife dance, and the camera was up, and I was about to take a picture. And I took it and then I just put my camera down. And I just kind of looked at her. I was like, very captivated by the way she was moving. By the way her hands were moving specifically. And I was like, Huh, what's this feeling in here? And it was, I got to know a little while later that by this time on a theme, my partner had already been crushing on me. Oh, whoa. So this show happens. And you know, people are talking about me because I am the photographer. Like if you're friends with a photographer, you get the photos early, you get you get, you know, the good pictures, all that stuff. So people usually and you know, like I said, I was I was on my best behavior that weekend. I was like really wanting to be a good host. So her team was like, Oh my gosh, isn't the photographer. So fun? And she was like, yeah, totally, guys. She's so cool. Yeah, totally. We so we wrap up the show, and I'm leaving. And I'm like, You know what I'm done. Like, I'm on my feet for 12 hours. Like, I can't do this. I'm going to go back. So I was heading back to my apartment and Aarthi stops me. I had a bunch of people who are like, hey, oh, my gosh, you're coming to the after party. Right? We'll see you there. And I was like, Nah, I'm tired. I you have fun. And out of these jobs. She's like, you're coming to the after party, right? And I just stopped. I looked at her. And I was like, Yeah, let's do that. So I get to the after party with two of my friends. I drove them because I knew I wasn't going to drink that night. I was too tired to like actually party. So I drove them and we enter the party. And I don't even remember where my friends went because I just went looking for Arati. And it was awesome. She was a drunken mess. She made a fool of herself. It was just the funniest evening. And, you know, then we went back, she went back to Austin, I went back to Atlanta. And after that we ended up exchanging numbers and just chatting and getting to know each other. And then we FaceTime then one time we FaceTime that midnight, and the next thing I knew it was 7am. And then it happened again, and it happened again. And then I was like, here's that friendship that's not a friendship.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 28:37

Oh, here's that friendship that's not a friendship. Whoa, yeah, it was like the same feelings. It was the same kind of there's a same internal experience. I was driving kind of this curiosity about this person that you had when you were younger. But now you actually were in the situation where the other person was responding in the way that kind of met that same feeling. Oh, yeah.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 28:56

Oh, and you know, I think like the point of like, second adolescence, it's, it took me a while to reach out to you because I was like, I don't know if second adolescence is really what I experienced, because I was 23. And 23, to me is really young. I'm about a decade out from this experience of coming out. And so I look back, and I'm like, 23, that was adolescence. But actually, my adolescence was riddled with really, really complicated relationships that I didn't know what to do with. And so I got to have the second adolescence at that point, I got to have my very first relationship. My very first crush my very first butterflies, like my very first lot of things,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 29:38

and like what was it like to have all those first?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 29:40

Oh, that's so nice. It was just, I mean, everything started to make sense then, like, just the way that like romance is talked about in media, and this subset is done through a heteronormative lens, but like Bollywood songs started sounding different in my ears. No, so that's what I felt I was like, Oh, this is the stuff I was like. This is what my friends have been feeling when they've had these like, boyfriends and girlfriends and whatever else. Like, this is the feeling I was like, Oh man, I can't believe I've been missing out on. Totally,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 30:17

totally. Oh, I so personally connect with that of like, finally understanding all of the songs finally understanding all the films like finally accessing this experience of feeling and experiencing art in a way that I'd never experienced before that I'd seen. Maybe other people seem to really get it's like, why is everyone crying? And then like, oh, I guess I'm like, bawling listening to this song. Right. Oh, that is so special. Wow. Wow. Hmm. Okay, so you you both met when you're 23. And then kind of I sounds like things progressed from there. What happened next in your story.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 30:51

So one night, so Arati was an English major, which I was really excited about. There's a play called Euro Odyssey. It's an old Greek myth that Sara wrote, rewrote into a contemporary play. And it's, it's gorgeous. So I had a book of her plays. And I was like, hey, I really want to read this with you. And it's, I forgot, it's actually a very romantic play. So she was reading the leading lady and I was reading that like other characters. And it literally starts with a scene where Orpheus professes his love to you ready to see. So we're reading this play this evening, and then her computer dies in the middle. And so she puts it to charge and she comes back out, calls me on her phone, and she's just sitting in the hallway and chatting. And she said something about us being friends. And that was like, I'm one of those people where I'm like, when I've hit my threshold, I've hit my threshold, I'm taking no more shit. When I'm below my threshold, you can probably talk me out of things, you can soften me on things, you can convince me of things. But I think I'd spend 10 years just not addressing these crushes as crushes. And I wasn't about to let this one go. So she said something about being friends. And I said, we're not friends. She goes, What do you mean? And I said, I don't FaceTime with my friends all night long and miss class the next day. And so she's like, okay, what are we? And I was like, Look, I like you. I don't know what we are. But I like you a lot. And she was like, oh, no, I, you know, I was like, my friends have been telling me that we're not just friends. And I was going to talk to my friend, and I was gonna get back to you on this. And I was like, Well, I'm sorry, I beat you to the punch. But I this is just how I feel. And I can't be quiet about it. We should figure out where to go from here. And just then her laptop had finished charging. So we finished reading the play. And then she was like, Okay, what should we do? And I was like, how about you take 24 hours to think about it? Because at that point, so are these five years younger than me, she was an undergrad, I was in grad school. She lived in Austin, I lived in Atlanta, I had two more years of grad school, she had two and a half years more of undergrad. So we weren't going to move for two years. Like nobody was going anywhere for two years. So it was not an obvious. Yes. So I said, take 24 hours to go talk to all these friends who are going

to talk to and come back to me and we'll we'll chat and she comes back 24 hours later. And she's like, I'm here. I'm all in Let's date. And yeah, I mean, the rest is history. We just yeah, we just got married. So

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 33:27

oh my gosh, oh my gosh, I can't wait for this movie to be made of your story. I'm already excited by it. But okay. Okay, so then like, so that was kind of what was happening in terms of this relationship kind of getting to really dive deeper into it, then, like, what was going on for you in general, in terms of like your experience of your identity then and how you existed in the world and with other people in your life? So thinking about family and thinking about other friends? Yeah. How did that look for you?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 33:53

At that point, I was surrounded by straight people, and street friends or just friends who like hadn't explored their sexuality. So it was intimidating. And initially, when I was talking to oddity, I think some people started to catch on people who are around me. And then I started talking about it. And I think being Indian and gay is like, so on. It was at least it was relatively uncommon when I was coming out that like, you know, even the weekend that I met Arati, I really hate that. One of the ways that like I was talking about her obviously, right, like subconsciously that was on my mind. And I was talking about her that weekend with somebody and I was like, oh, yeah, don't be where you're at. And they're like, oh, yeah, the bisexual one. And it really I really hate that that becomes your like moniker. And I was really afraid of that being mine because I was so much more than my sexuality. And I am today like, I'm gay as hell but like, I'm so many more things. And so I was really afraid of that. So I was I was very slowly coming out. I wasn't talking Got it. And then I started doing it in small bits and pieces. And it's funny because since then a bunch of people I was around have come out. So go figure. So that happened for about a year. And then in January of 2015, I sat across from my parents, and I told them that I am gay, and I had brought it home the previous fall, she had come to visit me, she and my mom got along swimmingly. And, you know, my, my, like, yeah, my parents really liked her. And then in December, there was a wedding in Austin of a friend of ours that I went to and out of the came and said, hi to me at the wedding. So hi to my parents at the wedding. And so like, you know, we were like putting our, like, significant others in front of each other's parents I had visited out at the at some point, and she, she had, her parents had me over. So we were doing that. So she came out in October, it was Rocky. And then I came out in January. So she came out October 2014. And then I came out January of 2015, we had realized by them that this relationship is something serious. And something really special. It was both of our first relationship with a woman. Yeah, just like I you know, we're both Indian. And we both have like, like our values match pretty well. And and I think there was just a lot of sort of synchronicity in terms of what we wanted in a relationship, where we were headed all of that. So so we knew pretty early on that this was headed down to the U haul lesbians, right? Like it was headed down a very serious path very quickly. So I came out in January of 2015. And it was really tough, because my mom did the exact right thing by being like, Hey, thanks for telling us Do you feel better? And I said, Yeah. And my dad said, No, this is not you. And I said, it is me. And he's like, No, you're misunderstood about Arati. She's not like that. And I was like, I promise you she is. I don't know, I'm not confused about the fact that we're in a relationship and that I like her. And then I remember, it was a really rough conversation, my dad was like, we can get you

help. You know, he was just sort of stuck in that my mom kind of got quiet. And then my dad and my mom are very involved in their community. They do like a lot of performances and stuff. And so we had a play that he was directing. So the people were coming over for rehearsal. So he went to that. And I went upstairs, and my mom just came into my room sobbing, and she's like, don't go into their world tonight. Don't go into their world. And I said, What world we all live in America. Like we all live in the same country, there's no there world in our world. This is just who I am. And it's that same feeling, right? Like, if you're Indian, you can't be gay. It's not your world. You can't be a part of your world while being this person. While being this thing you have to be like, it's a different world. So your other? Yeah, it was it was really difficult. And it went on for six years. And we were just at a standstill. I mean, I stopped going home for a while and seeing my parents. And one of my really good friends, his parents are friends with my parents. And they sat my mom, dad and my dad, and they were like, really trying to be like, Look, you have you have a whole kid outside her sexuality. She has so many things that you're missing out on. If you don't keep in touch with her, go talk to her. So my mom started to make more of an effort with me and like, just like try to have conversations. And so she was trying really hard. My dad stopped talking to me for two years didn't look me in the eye for two years. We were in the same room. And he would talk about things relating to me and omit me from them. Like, my mom said something about Northview high school and my dad was like, yeah, when Yosh went to North you XYZ and I was like, fucking asshole. I'm right here. I went to North view. I went to North Korea before my brother went to North view. And so I was just always feeling left out by him. But others, like you're not one of us, you don't belong. And at the same time, he really wanted me to come home and like wanted to take care of me like he was he was really, really, really struggling with that. My brother on the other hand, he had a lot of his own stuff going on. And I don't want to speak for him on this podcast. But what I'll say is whatever he had going on, transpired into him not being able to show up for me. So this, here's a kid who a year ago, like liberated me, and like when I took the step toward further liberation, he wasn't able to stand behind me. And that was really painful. Because the thing with it is she had a heart coming out, but she had her sister behind her the whole time negotiating with her parents. I didn't have anybody. And maybe it's unfair to say I didn't have anybody because I had my dad's aunt and her husband. They're like my grandparents, they were there. They were talking to both of my parents, and they were like, Look, you guys, I mean, we're just as surprised as you are but like, that's your kid. You gotta take care of her. Their son Nikhil who's my cousin love him. He's been like an older sibling to me all these years. Yeah. He's, he's really special because that's summer. The summer after I came out. I got an intern Chip had a very big firm in Austin. It was like one of the it's an international design firm. It's huge. It was going to be like, a deal maker for my resume. And he calls me he goes funny. I don't care if this internship is in Timbuktu or an audit these living room, you are taking this. You're doing this. I'm so proud of you.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:19

Yeah. Sounds like he was such a champion of you. Yeah.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 40:23

Yeah. And so were his parents. I mean, you know, they were having a really hard time negotiating their relationship with my dad, who was like a second son to them. Yeah. And me, who they like very much like, supported and sided with and one of the best for. And then of

course, there were like, my parents, best friends who, you know, who were relentlessly negotiating with my parents. And at some point, like I came out to them, and you know, they were Yeah, they were relentlessly negotiating. And they were really trying to push my parents down this path of like, Fine, don't accept her yet, but be nice to her Be good to her. And then we'll talk about the sexuality piece, but like, at least don't treat her like shit. You know, they did a lot of work on my parents. And then once my parents stopped treating me like shit, which is when I got a job. So very quickly, I finished my program in 2016, moved to Austin, I had a problem with my thesis defense. So I actually ended up elongating that by another year. So I was in Austin, I had my first job, which I got, because of this internship, that internship was a, I'm telling you like it made my career. It was a very important internship because it got me my first break, and my first break, got me my second break, and it goes from there. And so I got that job in Austin, I packed all of my belongings and boxes, I took them down one by one, and my dad sat there watching TV, not paying any attention to me, not wanting to help me, none of that, I was packing an entire little Toyota Yaris, full of my things. And this man said nothing to me. And in Indian culture, you touch the feet of your elders for blessing. So, you know, I when I was packed, I went to my parents and I touched their feet. And I remember giving my mom a hug, and she physically pushed me away. And that's how I left my parents house. Wow. And that was in 2016. That had happened. And if it hadn't been for the support system of my dad's aunt and her husband, who very quietly wrote me a check, and we're like, hey, we just want to pad your bank with this money pass back whenever you can. And I did, I paid them back pretty immediately. But they're like, just hold on to this till you're on your feet. So they did the thing for me that like my dad didn't do you know, and my parents best friends, they sat me down and taught me how to budget and like, they're like, Okay, great. So I'll find an apartment, here's your budget, here's your grocery budget, like they like taught me how to, like, you know, deal with my money for the very first time because I was gonna have a salary now. So all these things that my parents were missing for I had people fill in and helped me figure out how to become an adult. Yeah. And from there, it was just, I think that's pretty much the last thing that was notable in my relationship with my parents. I think in 20s, this was 2017. I moved to the Bay Area with Arati, but I never mentioned her to my parents. I never told them I moved with her. So they thought I must have left her. So it's all of a sudden, my dad is talking to me again, like nothing happened. And things are feeling a lot lighter. It's a lot easier to go back to my parents house and see them but we're still not talking about my sexuality. We're still not talking about it. So that part was still really tough, but, and then we were in that standstill for a while. And then in January of 2019, I proposed to RFP we had booked a weekend in Guerneville, which I realized is like the gayest town in California. I had no idea. We actually went to this restaurant called boon, eat and drink, which is owned by a lesbian woman who like we were like, Yeah, we got engaged. And they're like, great, free champagne. So they were really lovely to us very welcoming. And so we I proposed to her very privately there. And then when we came back, I had invited a bunch of friends from like, all over the US and her parents. And we came back to our apartment. And she was surprised with everybody. And then we had a party that night. Yeah, it was like, it was amazing. It was it was so lovely. You know, I really hate like buying into strange things, but this one was really worth it.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 44:32

Some of them are good. Yeah, totally.

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 44:34

This was really good. This thing was really cute. Oh, I actually set up a camera like I've woken up and like, I was like, I have to go pee and I set up a camera. And it was really funny because I don't know why the camera just stopped recording two minutes. It just has two minutes of me waking up it. And then the minute I started proposing to her it happened and I told my mom I was like, Hey, I'm gonna get married to her next year and my mom was Like, well, we'll never accept this. Your dad and I are never going to accept this, this is not do whatever you want to do, we don't care. And so I was like, Okay, well, no problem. I had pushed them maybe one more time before because it was so hard this entire time to live a double life. And the best and worst thing about me is that there's only one me. And that means this is the me that's coming to a party, this is the me that's, you know, going to work. This is the me, that's like, I don't know, like, if this is the only me that's showing up anywhere and everywhere. There are not many different versions of this. And it's great if you like me, and it's not if you don't, but this is where I'm at, this is who I am. And I don't mean this in a shitty way, like, I'm not going to change, but just that I can only be authentic to who I am. And I can't be anything else. And it's one of the things that I'll say I admire about myself the most. And it's it's the toughest thing to work around. Because when the shoe doesn't fit, it really pinches the toes. So it was really hard to go to my parents house and not be me. And to have to like always watch what I'm saying watch my step. All of that stuff. Like I was calling out at the private. And my parents aren't having a good time because they're like, We know she's coming to our house and calling that girl. I'm like fucking i and that's my fiance, like, what do want me to do? Right? So we're getting ready to get married in May of 2020. The last thing we did was in early March, we had a combined bachelorette party in San Diego, during which we were all at the beginning of the bachelor party. We're like, if somebody coughed, we were like, Haha, do you have COVID? What's this COVID anyway. And by the end of the party, people going to New York were scrambling because their flights were getting canceled. Like it was literally like a four day period of being like, what's this COVID And like, holy shit, I have to get home. We got home and we went into lockdown immediately. Yeah. So that was it, we had to cancel our wedding. And we just had to be on pots. And so the next all of 2020 was a year of massive reflection. It was a year of like getting a lot of distance from my parents. It was a year of therapy. I mean, not that I hadn't been doing therapy before. But I found an exceptional therapist that year. And I was like, I found her in 2019. And I was like really on this journey of like unpacking shit with my parents. Yeah. And 2021 starts, I visited them at the end of 2020. Argentina, I got a dog in 2020. We took him there, my parents loved him. And it just felt wrong not to like to have this dog with two moms. And like not be talking about it. And I knew that this is getting this is getting Messier. It's getting complicated. I can't do this anymore. And so in February of 2021, I cut ties with my parents, and I texted them and I said, I want an authentic relationship with you, I cannot have that till you accept the fact that I'm in a committed relationship with Arati. So whenever it is that you're ready to accept her as my partner, please email me until then I don't want to talk. I don't want calls, I don't want visits. I just don't want to be a part of part of your life anymore. And I waited for them to text back. And they did they sent me some very shitty text messages back that were like, Oh, you're the kind of person who choose some, like a partner over your parents like what, like, fine. If this is what you want to do, that's fine. And so I sent that text, and then I blocked them immediately. And I had the quietest, quietest, most peaceful six months of my life.



48:33

I say that without discount. Like, I don't want to discount the incredible hard work and effort that I was putting in therapy at that time. Like we were doing a lot of inner child work. Like I was sobbing in therapy sessions, all that I'm a crier, and I'm not even shy about it anymore. But

like, I was just starting therapy sessions. They were exhausting me. So I was doing a lot of that work. But it was also giving me back a lot of peace and quiet after a long time. And I felt the stillness inside of me that I hadn't felt in a long time. And that's how I knew I had made the right decision. It was a tough decision. But it was the right one. Yeah, it was. I think it was a very big turning point in my in my journey as like coming into my adulthood. It was the first birthday I had where I hadn't cried. Because birthdays were I hated my birthdays. Because I always felt like I felt attached and indebted to my parents on my birthdays. And that was a really complicated thing to feel with people were just not seeing you for the person that you are. So yeah, it was it was a really great period. And then my brother reaches out to me and he's like, Hey, I think both of our parents are making some movement. And I was like, Okay, what's going on? And he was like, yeah, so apparently they were starting to sort of warm up to the idea of like your personal life and your sexuality when you cut ties and kind of sent them back because they thought that oddity had instigated this. And I was like, oh boy Like, how many how many things? Are they going to pin a pin on her? I mean, initially, they were pinning my sexuality and the fact that I'm gay on her. And I'm like, if it were only that easy. That's not how it works. So long story short, is that my mom followed my template and sent me a very lovely email. It was not perfect, but it showed it tremendous thought and progress. And it wasn't just talking about her, it was talking about the world. Outside of her, right, her email was like, Hey, I'm realizing that the most important thing for me is my kids. And I have to be a part of my kid's life, no matter what. So she realized, like, when I cut ties with her, she realized what she was missing out on. None of us was having a great time in that period, you know, and it yielded a lot of reflection on my mom's part. And so she sends me this email, she's like, you're my priority. My kids are my priority. Also, the world is changing. You know, Tanaya, when you were growing up, women didn't really wear pants a lot. And look, now all women are like all women wear pants. And who knows, in the next 30 years, it'll be like, way more normalized for women to marry women. And she's like, basically, she was she was trying to say times are moving and so must I. I don't want to fall on the wrong side of history. So it was it was that's what like really compelled me is that it wasn't just about me, because if it was just about me, that would be something else. But it was bigger than me. It was about it was about queer community. It was about queerness. It was about wanting to make the right decision for not just for me, and that's when I was like, Holy shit, this is huge. And I replied to her, and I unblocked her and I started chatting with her. And I was like, Hey, your email my made my day, and she was like your texts made my day. And we ended up chatting. And it took me a couple of weeks to just warm up to like texting her. Before I actually called her and caught up with her. Then at some point, she said, I want to come visit you in California. She's been saying that forever. I just never entertained it. So she says, I want to come visit you in California. I said, I looked at Arati. I was like, I want her here. How do you feel? And she goes, You know what? I feel fine. That's great. And so she said, Bring her over. And so my mom visited in November. This woman hates hugs. And it is Arati is her hug coach. We're not into the business of coercing people into hugs. But we're in the business of if you're giving hugs, you better give good hugs. And my mom, I warned Aarthi that my mom was a terrible hugger. She like opens the door and she's like, hi, and gives you a big hug. And I was like, Where the fuck is this been? I haven't received this in 32 years of my life.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:49

Wow. Yeah. Yeah. Like to see Holy moly. Wow.



T... .. #... ..





Ianaya Joshi (she/her) 52:53

I was like, stunned. Yeah, I don't think I felt anything in that moment. Yeah, because I was like, this is exactly what I expected. It's something I never thought I would ever have. And also, like, was aware of I was I thought it was like, I was like in a multiverse, you know. But we had that entire trip. And even through the evolution of the trip, my mom was, you know, warming up, like, the first day we took or the second day, we took her to Cal Academy of Sciences. And as we were watching fish in a very quiet dark room, I said, Hey, by the way out, Arati and I are having our wedding in April, you should come. And she was like, Oh, okay. And I was a little thrown off. Because my brother was like, yeah, she wants to come to your wedding, which is why I told her in the first place. But she was really vocal about it. By the end. She was like, You know what, then yeah, I know where I need to be. I know the feelings. I need to feel that our feelings of full acceptance and joy. And I'm gonna get there. I'm doing it. And it was so lovely to hear that right. Like, it was a it was like really painful and really lovely to hear that because I don't think I expected her to like, come in and be like, I'm ready. Let's do this. And, by the way, this whole time that people who have been supporting me on the sidelines haven't stopped. Right? Like Nikhil, my cousin who had mentioned goes back to my mom, like, and they were having dinner and he pulls her aside and he's like, Hey, are you are you ready? Are you looking forward to this? And she was like, yeah, absolutely. And he's like, okay, Lena, I just want to, you know, give you a heads up that it's a different thing to accept your daughter's queerness in theory, and it's a different thing to see it in practice, you have to be ready for this. And so there's still people coaching them on the sidelines, as as they're making this journey and making my life easier and making their journey toward acceptance easier. And yeah, and so November, November trip goes by so well, by the end of the trip. My mom is asking a lot of questions about audit these parents. So I said, Hey, in two weeks, we're going to Arati's sister's wedding reception in Austin. Do you want to come you can meet her parents and my mom looks at it. She says, you know, this has gone for too long. I'm ready to move forward. Let's do this. So I booked her ass to Austin. And we go to Austin, we introduce my mom to Arati's parents. And it's like, the ball is just rolling. I mean, it is like rolling, we're four months away from our wedding. By the way, we got married on paper at the end of 2019 in anticipation for our wedding, because we just wanted to get the paperwork over with, I don't think he was quitting her job she needed to get on my insurance. So we did what most gay people do, which is get married for convenience. Not for love. The love is there. It'll always be there. It'll be there forever. And I don't need a piece of paper to prove it. But unfortunately, I need that piece of paper to make sure I'm not committing insurance fraud. So we got the paper. And so we had to postpone the wedding to 2022 because of COVID. So we're about like, four months away from the wedding. My mom needs out of these parents, it goes extremely well out of these parents are like, just like cannot wait. And she's at this event. And not only does she see that out of these parents are just showering me with love. Her sisters in laws are also showering me with love. Like these are people who have no business or like obligations to me like no business being nice to me like no obligations to me. They could just be like, Oh, that girl yeah, that's, that's our like daughter in law's sister's wife. Cool. But they are just so lovely. Like just the warmest, kindest, loveliest people who are just like your family and come on in. And my mom got to see that. Yeah. And the thing that's really healing about it is that this is exactly the thing my mom had been aching for in her life that she never got, because of which my parents moved to the US in the first place. So it has been a healing journey for my mom, to have a good relationship with my in laws, and my sister in laws and laws. And to just know that, like, goodness exists in law, tension is like a very common thing in Indian culture. I am sure like, I've seen that even here. But I think she's seeing an example that it doesn't always have to be bad. It can be good. It can be healthy can be nice. Yeah. And then my dad's journey was a little bit more like pulling wisdom teeth, you know, not just pulling teeth pulling the toughest of teeth. Because a lot of people were like, Dude, what are you doing? Your wife is there like, because

the minute my mom was in, she was like, Okay, girl is what are we doing for your wedding? Let's plan this thing. And I was like, we planned it. And she's like, great, go over all the details for me. And she's in it. She's like, adding events to the thing. I was like, Mom, you're gonna flush me on my money. She went to India before the wedding. And the lovely thing is, oh, this is this is important. So she went to India before the wedding to do shopping. And she went to shop with her sister. But in order to do that, she had to tell her sister about me. So she had her sister come in she but her sister lived about a two hour drive away. So she came in. So she said her sister and my grandma was 89 years old. She sat them down and she said, hey, I want to tell you something done. He was getting married. And they're like, oh, that's excellent. And who's the guy and they're like, and she was like, that's the thing. It's not a guy. It's a girl. And my mom, she was like, Mom, she is the word for your mom's sister, my mom. She was very upset, like crying. And my mom immediately FaceTime me and out of the chute. She was like, Hey, be ready, girls. I'm gonna FaceTime you. And I talked to them. And I introduced it to both of them. And they were like, still kind of getting their bearings about them. And my grandpa said, Hey, how are you? And I said, I'm good. I'm happy. And he's like, you're happy? And I said, Yeah. And he's like, that's all that matters to me. Yeah. And what's incredible, is that both my Moshe and my grandpa came to my wedding. They flew from India for this wedding. My 89 year old grandpa was one of the three grandparents who walked me out, along with a few of my friends. And it was just so special. And I wouldn't have had that if my mom hadn't come around when she did. And then there's my dad. So like, going back to the pulling teeth, a lot of people are going to him and they're like, Dude, what are you doing? You got it, you gotta get it together. And he doesn't do well to that. I mean, my dad and I are very similar people and that, like, you know, when I get into a fight with it, it takes me a little while, like I'm in my head, and it takes me a little while to like find my authentic center, like how am I actually feeling about this thing? Let me evaluate whether my feelings are like misplaced or not. And then let me authentically find an apology if that is what is necessary in this moment. And that takes a minute for it to happen for me. And until it happens, my apology that comes out of my mouth is not genuine. And I and that's something that I've talked about, like in our conflict resolution is that I'm like, Just give me a little bit of space, I promise you, I'm going to come and do the right thing. You just have to let me find my center before I do. And you have to help me, you have to, like give me the space to do it authentically. And I really hate being likened to my dad, because it happens so often. And I, you know, I'm like, I'm my own person. But he and I are very similar in that regard. So my dad is like, kind of stuck. A lot of people are talking to him. And he's like, I don't care. Like just I'm just not authentically accepting this. And then in the end, our Nikhil has a conversation with my daughter, he was like, Look, I just want to be abundantly clear with you. Now your kid hasn't been galavanting. For the six years that you have not been parenting her, she has had to make herself she doesn't have to build a wall, she doesn't have to do a lot of fucking work to be the person that she is today. And he was like, it's it's taken a lot of community. And it's taken a lot of community building, for her to be who she is. And I just want you to know that I don't know what impression you have of her. But it's not that she's just ignoring you and gallivanting around and living a great life. She has been, she has gone to a lot of therapy, to get to where she is today. And to accept your position on her sexuality. And he was like, if you're going to make any movement on it, I also want you to understand that it is an extremely high cost, you are asking her to pay high price you're asking her to pay in order to come around and let you back into her life. And then a couple of weeks from there, we went to Atlanta, there was like a pre wedding party that was happening. One of the aunties was hosting it, it was awesome. It got to meet all of the Auntie's on on my side. I mean, I was on great terms with Auntie's on her side, because I'd been visiting Austin, and like, you know, her family has been with me for years. So I've gotten to meet them. And so she got to meet all of my Auntie's. And that same trip, my dad and I sat down and we hash things out. And he, again, like Nick Hill, and my dad's and her husband, they sat down, and they helped mediate this

conversation. And my dad said, I want to apologize for the way I've acted. I don't want to like, go back, and like big old balls. But I do want to be the adult here and assume responsibility for my behavior. I accept your choice and partner and audit the she makes me very happy, I'm happy for you. I would love for you guys to come stay with us. Because we were staying with friends at that time, because I didn't want to go stay at my parents house. I wasn't sure how that was going to be. And then, you know, he said, If you invited me to your wedding, I wouldn't be any trouble. And pretty much every No, like I had taken my I brought my like morning pages journal with me. And I've written down a bunch of stuff in there about like, just helping him realize how much harm he has caused. And I was like, Oh, well, let me just close this and throw it on fire. I don't need this anymore. You just did my work for me, great. But this man waits till like two seconds till game time to say this. And I was like, okay, all I can do is take your word for it. And I have my only terms for him where you can come to the wedding, but you come to the wedding as family and not as a guest. Because that's how our community works. The Indian culture works in a way where you are not going to be looked at as a guest, you're going to be looked at as a participant, whether you are or not. So you have to act like it. And if you're ready for that responsibility, if you're ready to show up as a family member, you can come otherwise sit out. And I said that means not, I won't be any trouble. But I will be actively hosting and welcoming people as a representative of that as side of the family. So he was like, yeah, we'll do it. And so I think the rest is pretty much history here. Right? Because at this point, my mom is like at a level of 12 out of 10 hype about this wedding. She's gotten to that place that she really wanted to get to in November. And I mean, the wedding happens in my mom, one thing my mom keeps saying over and over again is Dunia. I put the same kind of energy love effort, excitement, enthusiasm into this wedding that I would have put if you would have married a man and I am absolutely sure of it. And it's like it's such a lovely journey for my mom to go on. And I wish my dad had that time to unravel and unfold. Because in the time that he was still stuck when my mom came here met it became a part of our lives. And the thing is my mom loves to be a parent but woman is Like, so excited to be a parent. We were moving apartments recently. And we asked her if she would come and help. And she was like, happily. And she like, took a red eye back. I mean, she's like, in her late 50s. I don't, I'm in my 30s. And I don't like taking a red eye. But like, she'll do it, you know, cuz she's like, I think especially because she's missed out on my adulthood. She's even more excited to be a part of it now. It's really cute too, because so I'm really fluent in my mother tongue. And so my mom and I are the two classes together every week where my mom teaches her our language. So it's just like, it's given her so much like, because she came to terms with this earlier, it's given her so much room to grow. And we're now just starting to see that from my dad.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:05:46

Yeah. I mean, so many thoughts and feelings are going through my and as the witness and receiver to the story, I guess, first, let me just say like, one, I feel just so appreciative of you inviting all of us into your story. And by illustrating kind of, yes, like the challenge and triumph with it all and just, I'm feeling so kind of observant of like all the work that you did for yourself, like, the way you were able to kind of then show up with both of your parents and be so firm in who you are, and have the boundaries you needed to protect yourself. But also invite them in when they're when they're able. And then to hear the journey that your mom went through, and that your dad's kind of in, maybe still in process of coming through. I know we have a lot of listeners to this podcast, who are also parents of adult queer children who are kind of still in their own process of making sense and meaning out of what this means for them and their child. And so even hearing, I just feel I'm thinking about them. As I'm hearing your story. I'm also thinking about other queer people who I know have a similar, similar in the sense of kind

of, it's been a journey with their parents who are listeners and a part of this community. And so I just feel so, so appreciative of you offering the story and what is it been like for you going back through your whole story up until now sharing it before we look at winding down?

T

Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 1:07:07

Yeah, yeah, it's been awesome. I feel like I haven't actually, like sat down and articulated my queer journey in a second. And it's like, it's so emotional. And it's got so many ups and downs. I don't know, you know, I like I feel really lucky where I've landed. But I still don't believe that it gets better. Like, I think that I really struggle with the It Gets Better narrative, because, you know, the thing about having your parents in your life is now you have your parents in your room there's all the other shit. Right? But I think I can't say that it gets better. But I can say that it gets that you get tougher, right? You get smarter, you get better. And I think one thing that I'll add here is that I think that I don't know if my parents realize this, but my parents and I have been on very similar journeys, my parents moved to the US in 2001. And any there's like an immigrant phenomenon where when you when you move from your home country, you want to like really preserve the culture and the like values, traditions, all of that like your your language you you look at preserving everything big and small. You were like packing for the Tupperware and take it with you overseas, but you kept so then you go overseas, and you try to recreate that right? And you build your community. And I saw my parents doing that when we moved here. Like they went out they made friends like within the first two years my mom had like written a play about our like culture and and like brought together like pools of people to like put up put up this great performance in like the Marathi community of Atlanta. I just saw my parents be like, so resourceful, like, they're making friends. We're making friends. They're making friends with our friends, parents like Right, like, there's just this like resourcefulness that's happening. And then I come out and out of need. And also add because this is what I have learned from my parents. And that's what I do. Right like it like that's also a part of my story, that resourcefulness. And I'm really grateful for them for modeling that because it's the thing that has helped me navigate my queerness this this resourcefulness this like, like learning how to build a community learning to like, love people from near and far. Hold them close to your heart. How do you do that? You know, and in many ways, I thought was the like my mom, my parents began to model that for me. And it's kind of sad but like my parents gave me without knowing the survival tools that I needed for the way they were going to treat me over the next six years. And if there's one thing I'll say about our wedding, you know, at the end, I talk to our priest about the I love our priest, she was phenomenal, also a queer woman. And we talked to her about it, and we're like, look, neither of us cares about the institution of marriage. We don't want administrative rights, we want liberation. You know, that's, that's what we want in our queerness. We want to not have to tell these fucking stories. But we're able to survive, having lived a story like this, because of the people we've surrounded ourselves with. And our wedding was as much a celebration of the community that has helped us survive and thrive as much as it was a testament to or a celebration of our love. And I hope that thread was really clear, as I was talking about the last few years is that it's I know, I mentioned, like three groups of people, but like, there was a whole host of friends on my side, who will show up for me in the drop of a hat, like, Oh, my God, I am so lucky. So I think as like my parents were going through their stuff. And as there were people, as far for my story, it was important to talk about the people who stood between us we're negotiating. But yeah, but I had a lot of people behind me as well. And I'm, I'm happy that we got married because we got to celebrate that. And my parents got to see that my parents got to see that my family is bigger than my mom, dad, and my brother. And my family is like 150 people who came to the wedding, and even more who we

couldn't have at the wedding. Yeah. And it was really lovely. If it was really powerful for me that my parents saw that. And my parents could feel the force of that community that was standing behind me, and will continue to stand behind me in this lifetime.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:12:04

I'm like buzzing just hearing your story. Oh, my goodness. And I kept you longer. Hopefully, that's okay. I just, I like didn't want to stop you. I guess again, I just feel so appreciative of you coming on and sharing all of this and sharing your story. And on the individual end, it feels like such a gift to receive. And I just, I feel like it's going to be such an offering for folks. And so I just so appreciate you being so honest and so generous with your story, and letting us all into it. And then are you someone who if folks wanted to connect with or reach out to afterwards, is there any way you want to open that channel?

**T** Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 1:12:40

If people want to email me, that's a great way to get in touch with me. I'm literally always available to anybody who wants to have a chat through my newsletter. If they want to shoot me an email, I can send them a link to that as well.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:12:53

Awesome. Awesome. I'll be sure then to link to your email in the show notes of this episode. Oh, well, thank you. Again, I feel like I'm just gonna be sitting with their story for the rest of today. Just like, there's so much just on my own just to think about and feel. And, again, I just, I'm so glad you reached out.

**T** Tanaya Joshi (she/her) 1:13:10

Thank you that that means a lot. You know, I think that this is what I said earlier, right? Like, if I can make any difference with my story, then I consider myself deeply humbled, where people are strong, where people are resilient. And it sucks that we have to be but

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:13:25

Right. Right, right. Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to [secondadolescencepod.com](http://secondadolescencepod.com) for show notes and more. And you can connect further by following the show on Instagram [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). If you're interested in being a future guests on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence visit [secondadolescencepod.com/bea-guest](http://secondadolescencepod.com/bea-guest) and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now. Whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you and your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. All right. Take good care.

