Aneil, who is now 63, was born to parents who married for love. He was born in Delhi and was sent to Frank Anthony Public School for an education. He then did his graduation and Masters in Arts from St. Stephen's College. He was good at both studies and sports. From early childhood, he had been physically involved with other boys.

He was 13 when his two cousins indulged him in masturbation and that is how his new life began. He would more often than not indulge in sexual acts with his cousins, whenever they would find his home empty. However, there were no real feelings involved and it was all about this new sensation: pleasure. The definition of homosexual was, till then, defined as 'a mental disorder' – a very disturbing thing to have to grown up with.

In 1981, he became an Army officer.
Aneil was doing great in his career, as he began climbing the army career ladder year after year. In 1985, he became an Indian Army Commando Instructor and was then made the Adjutant, one of the highest positions in the army. However, something happened that made him leave the army after serving the country for eight years. He had had consensual sex with a man, which somehow came to be public knowledge. As a result, the homophobic bullying began.

"At an Officers Meeting, the Commanding Officer of the Battalion said, "We have officers here who like 'chikna boys". His attempt was not to inform the other officers, who already knew, but a direct way to intimidate me." He further added, "Such bullies became part and parcel of my army career. It was irritating and intimidating. That is why I put in my papers and left the army."

He began to try his luck in the corporate world and managed to find a job at an international Dutch company. He was doing so great in his job that he was promoted to regional manager for North India.However, his professional excellence did not impress his employers when they found out that his sexual orientation is different from the majority of their other employees.

"The company thought that my queer sexuality may destroy the image of the company as I was in a high position in the company. My skills and excellence in my job did not mean anything to them just because I am gay," said Aneil. He was in his 40s at the time.

"I was disheartened and devasted to see my career destroyed due to [my] being gay, despite working hard and having been promoted to higher positions in both army and corporate jobs. I began surviving on Rs. 3000 a month because I had no source of income," expressed Aneil.

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After leaving the Indian army in his 30s, Aneil found love while searching for it at the famous gay haunt in Delhi's Cannaught place. He was 19 years old. On the one hand, Aneil was well-educated and had achieved great success in his career and on the other, his first boyfriend happened to be illiterate and handled the family's leather business to run the house. It was a harmonious clash of two different worlds.

"This is what love is all about. It does not see race, colour and standard. It just happened out of chemistry. Our eyes met and we fell in love. Love happens when there is chemistry between two people." told Aneil.

After the first date, they began meeting almost every day. They would meet at Aneil's house where he stayed alone after leaving the army. The relationship lasted for about four years and ended as he found "that my boyfriend had been coerced into male prostitution by his friend. It was a little extra pocket money. I was broken and depressed, but I had no other choice but to accept the situation".

After a few months, Aneil met another man and fell in love. Although they would meet every night for the next 4 years, he was only later devastatingly found out that the boy was in a married heterosexual marriage. It broke his heart to come to terms with the fact that, for the last 4 years, the boy had spent every night in his bed.

Living with his first partner, he decided to take a stand. His parents were in Lucknow, but both his sisters were in Delhi; they knew of his partner. He refused to attend any family dinners when his partner was not invited. The family refused to educate themselves on the subject. Both his brother-in-laws would make snide remarks, as if he did not belong in this world. Aneil made the choice to handle these situations with forethought and evenhandedness, which led his parents to respect his wishes even if they were not able to accept his sexuality wholeheartedly.

In 2003, Aneil shifted to Lucknow where his parents were living at the time, to take care of his ailing father. Aneil was diagnosed with HIV in 2005. Despite a leading international NGO helping him with initial testing, he found that they completely lacked empathy and compassion – a key feature necessary for such medical intervention. Four months after being diagnosed with HIV and with the international NGO not doing anything, he went to Delhi AHF and was put onto medication immediately.

"It was so late that I was told by the doctors that I had only 6 months to live," told Aneil. This news hit him so hard that he began making changes to his lifestyle, including rigorous exercises, sticking to healthy food and reading as much as he could about the virus. At the age of 59, in 2017, he ran India's most intricate obstacle course, the Devil's Circuit, with fifteen army-styled obstacles over a distance of 5 kilometres. He became the oldest person to complete the full course.

Aneil now practises HIV advocacy and runs a support group at his residence in Lucknow. He has dedicated his residence to the community, where growing numbers visit over potluck lunches. His home is a safe space for this growing family of LGBTQI folks. They are his adopted family.

HIV advocacy will always be center stage for him; however, creating a safe space for this family is equally close to his heart.

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