

## ANBU UK LGBTQI+ & Tamil Community: A Conversation - Interactive questions and answers



Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019 @Platform, Finsbury Park

Compiled by ANBU UK (a multidisciplinary team including doctors and psychology professionals) and key ANBU volunteer speakers Krish Vells and Bava Dharani.

No	Question	Answer
1	Do you feel less valid as a gay man if you don't come out?	<p>[Krish]Not at all. Its about taking ownership of my own life journey. Coming out is about living a life that in all inclusive for yourself that does not allow space to be fragmented and hide parts of your self. Coming out is I saying no, I do not want to live a life being invisible. Coming out is about the right time for an individual as many factors must be taken into consideration so coming out is not about feeling less valid, but more to be seen as you are beyond any labels for what you are, your thoughts and your feelings and your own perspectives.</p>
2	How can I get support from Galop or Anbu? Do I call?	<p>ANBU UK are passionate about opening up services and support for LGBTQI+ community, including possibly running discussion groups post our LGBTQI+ &amp; Tamil Community: A Conversation event. if you're interested in attending discussion groups please do email us at <a href="mailto:supportandwellbeing@anbu.org.uk">supportandwellbeing@anbu.org.uk</a></p> <p>There is support available, please see below:</p> <p><b>GALOP:</b> The Galop National, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Domestic Abuse Helpline: Provides confidential and specialist telephone and WebChat service for all members of LGBT communities, their family, friends and agencies supporting them who have experienced issues with domestic violence and abuse. Domestic abuse can be psychological, financial, sexual, physical and/or emotional. Need support? We're here to help.</p> <p>Phone:            Free Phone <b>0800 999 5428</b>            Opening Times:10am – 5pm Monday            10am – 5pm Tuesday*            10am – 5pm Wednesday            10am – 8pm Thursday            1pm – 5pm Friday            (*1pm – 5pm Tuesday is a trans specific service).</p> <p>Weekend chat service Saturday and Sunday 3pm – 7pm            Online: <a href="http://www.galop.org.uk">www.galop.org.uk</a><a href="http://www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse">www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse</a>            Email: <a href="mailto:help@galop.org.uk">help@galop.org.uk</a></p>

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		<p><b>MindOut:</b> MindOut is a mental health service run by and for lesbians, gay men, bisexual, trans, and queer people. We work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ communities and to make mental health a community concern          Helpline: 01273 234 839 (you may need to leave a message on our 24-hour confidential answerphone)          www.mindout.org.uk (webchat available)  <a href="mailto:info@mindout.org.uk">info@mindout.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>Survivors UK-</b> If you are a man over the age of 18 and have experienced rape or sexual assault you can get help and advice from specialists in the field of male sexual violence who have helped many men to work through their experiences.          You can phone them or use their web chat service which allows you to have a confidential one-to-one chat with a trained professional.          Phone: Text chat 020 3322 1860          Opening Times:          10:30 – 21:00 Monday - Friday          10:00 - 18:00 Saturday - Sunday          Online: <a href="http://www.survivorsuk.org">www.survivorsuk.org</a>(webchat available)  <a href="mailto:help@survivorsuk.org">help@survivorsuk.org</a></p>
3	Did you feel like you had to choose between being part of the lgbt community and being Tamil?	Answered at event
4	Who were you're advocates / allies	Answered at event
5	Personal experiences of overcoming barriers	<p>[Bava] I think an important barrier I faced was to feel part of a community without having to mute/hide any aspect of my identity. There are many outlets available now to reach out and be part of spaces where you can feel safer. Like the Tamil LGBT meetup group on meetup.com, Queer Asia or even night out spots like Hungama. Quite a few of my queer friends tell me that when you are part of the LGBTQIA community, you have a family you are born into and a queer family. When you find the right space, it can definitely give you a strong sense of belonging and community which I cannot understate.</p> <p>[Krish] Being true to yourself and living your life as you see fit becomes the way you overcome barriers. At work, whilst I don't have the need to declare my sexuality from the start, I have a policy that if it is important for people (usually it is) to ask this question, I usually will not deny it. So we need to set some non-negotiable policies for our self so that when it matters, we stick to being true to our self.</p>

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6	Who is the 'Tamil community'?	<p>Community is a collective group of people that have a shared characteristic/ attitude/ interest in a common area. A Tamil community is therefore what you define as the Tamil in a particular space.</p> <p>When we talk about ANBU work with the Tamil community, we're referring to a section of society we interact with that is uniquely Tamil; that could be in our understanding of certain set of cultural norms, our shared experience of being Tamil, speaking Tamil language, or simply looking and feeling a Tamil identity in the same space together.</p>
7	Do you ever find female homosexuality and bisexuality are ignored? Are you not recognised (answered, could expand)	<p>[Bava] I think female sexuality in all its forms is still not a topic we talk about in the Tamil or South Asian community. We are hyper-sexualised and desexualised at the same time. And female homosexuality and bisexuality was not something I saw in Tamil women growing up. It was difficult to unlearn that you don't have to be a man/masculine to desire women, but at the same time respect how others express their gender and sexuality. These gender norms are not only present in the Tamil community but in society in general. There is definitely a lot to unlearn on gender roles in same-sex female relationships. I don't think same-sex desire especially in the female context is taken seriously, but I am hopeful with new representation that I see in the media, social media, etc. For example, the new mainstream Hindi film, Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga portrayed a same-sex female relationship in a positive way. Also, younger south Asian females are more open about their queerness and desires on social media platforms like Instagram.</p>
8	How does Tamil cinema and religion impact the LGBTQI community?	<p>[Krish] Up to last year, I would say no different than any other main stream movie industries that have the generic boy-meets girl formula. However since the streaming services such as amazon and Netflix to name two started, there has been a huge increase of cinema and media addressing and catering to the issues of LGBTQI plus. A simple search of Tamil + Gay or Lesbian or LGBTQI+ will yields many links to many sites with films documentaries and other outlets. So we are making progress. As for religion and its impact on the LGBTQI+ community, I would say no different when it comes to cause and effect of unquestioned unchallenged ways of living.. If you look at Republic of Ireland as an example, this is proof that things can be spoken about openly leading to challenging thoughts and behaviours and resulting in heralding in new perspectives and legally binding polices. So this can be done and this struggle belongs to the human species not just a Tamil specific.</p> <p>[Bava] Tamil cinema and religion are very important markers of our culture for diasporic Tamils. In both aspects, LGBTQI issues are silenced or treated in a tokenistic manner. But there are up and coming independent Tamil films that do have positive portrayals of LGBTQI people. Examples like Ladies and Gentlewomen and My Son is Gay are two such Tamil films. For religion, I can only comfortably talk about Hinduism. I think it is widely accepted that historically we</p>

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		accepted certain queer communities like, transgender females (to a certain degree). However, there is no further discussion on how our historical acceptance translates to modern day acceptance. That's a conversation that maybe we need to start having in Tamil spaces.
9	Do you think it's difficult for young children to find out the LGBT safe community in UK ??	Answered at event
10	Is there any Tamil speaking support groups for parents of LGBTQ children in London?	<p>There are some fantastic resources by Orinam, a Tamil organisation based in Chennai. They have resources in English and Tamil for support with talking with loved ones here: <a href="http://orinam.net/resources-for/friends-and-family/">http://orinam.net/resources-for/friends-and-family/</a></p> <p>Unfortunately we don't know of any UK Tamil based support groups yet for parents, however, would recommend contacting organisations mentioned under question 2, and additionally reviewing signposting material we shared at our event, here also: <a href="https://www.thetrevorproject.org/about/programs-services/coming-out-as-you/the-guide/">https://www.thetrevorproject.org/about/programs-services/coming-out-as-you/the-guide/</a></p>