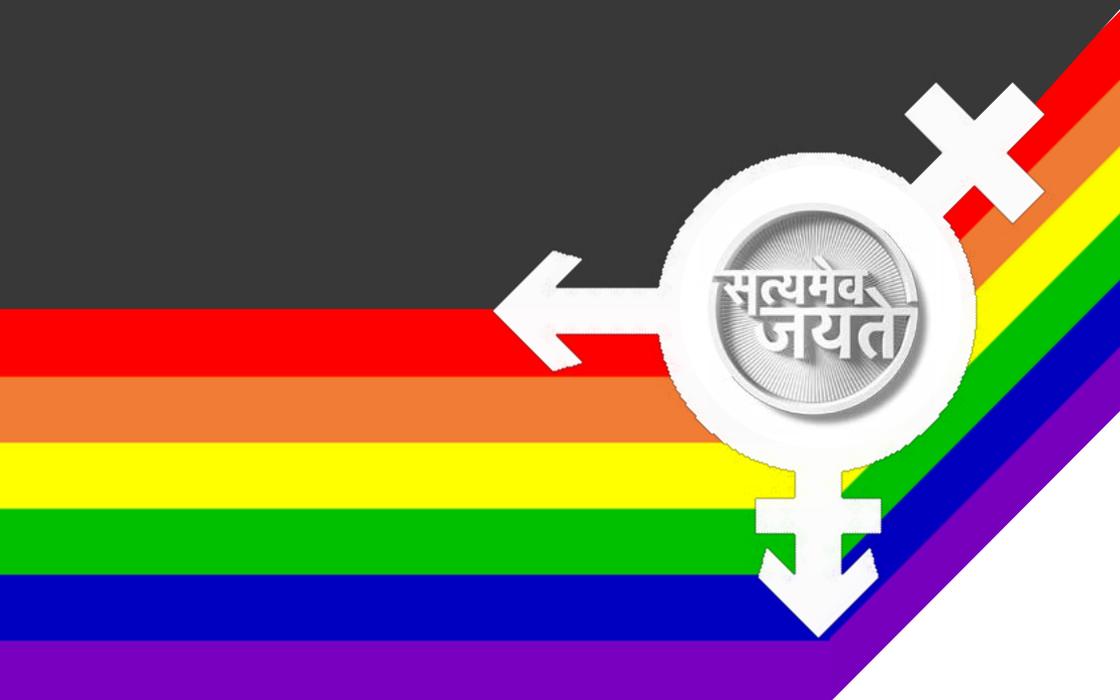


# ACCEPTING ALTERNATIVE SEXUALITIES

SNAPSHOTS OF LGBT LIVES IN INDIA



## **CONTENTS**

Introduction	3
Coming Out to My Family	4
Still in the Closet	9
An Ongoing Battle for Acceptance	13
Gay and Happy	22
Changing Mindsets	28

## INTRODUCTION

On the morning of October 19, 2014, a few minutes before our episode on Accepting Alternative Sexualities was about to air, we had a short discussion about the possibility of receiving hostile responses on our social media pages given how contentious this issue has been over the last few years.

About 15 minutes into the episode, our Facebook and Twitter timelines were flooded with messages that surprised us and moved us deeply. Teenagers, parents and grandparents were openly supporting the rights of the LGBT community. Many confessed that they regret making fun of gay and transgender persons. Several people wrote to us saying that they used to think homosexuality was wrong but now felt a shift in their attitude.

Our episode hashtag 'FreedomForLGBT' trended on Twitter at the number 1 position in India and in the world. In a country where there is a law discriminating against the LGBT community, this response was like a beacon of hope.

This booklet is a result of the big surprise that India gave us. So many members of the LGBT community have recounted the struggles and triumphs of their personal lives. We are touched by this generosity of spirit. It is an ongoing battle for acceptance of course, as evident from the messages that show ignorance and lack of acceptance.

All names in this booklet have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved with the exception of a few who asked for their names to be retained.

This effort is in collaboration with The Humsafar Trust, which has been working on these issues for several decades. There could be no better day than Independence Day to launch this booklet. We hope these winds of change continue to blow and lead to a fairer, more loving world.

With warm regards,  
**Team Satyamev Jayate**  
August 15, 2015

## COMING OUT TO MY FAMILY



Episode guest: Simran Shaikh

“

I called daddy  
once and he  
said, ‘You died  
for us long ago’  
and banged the  
phone down.

”

**COMING OUT TO MY FAMILY****“My parents didn’t speak to me for two years.”**

One Sunday afternoon, I just told my parents that I am gay. My father was reading the newspaper and he didn’t turn his head and my mother thought it was a joke. They didn’t react at all. When they finally realised it was the truth, they fought with me and didn’t speak to me for two years. I will wait until they accept me, maybe in some months or years.

I have faced discrimination at my school, college and workplace because of who or how I am. It used to hurt a lot earlier, but I have gotten used to it. Now I have decided to live for myself, as the society who has not even seen you and does not know who you are, does not leave me with any other choice. The heart of the problem is being different and people need to understand that being different is not a problem. This is about feelings, it is just about being human.

**Ketan**

I want to talk to you about an incident which I think was unfair. The incident is about a boy in Shillong who had undergone sex reassignment surgery years ago and is now an independent female having her own salon. Once, people mishandled her, took her out of the shop, tied her up and slapped her. They even made a video claiming she had kidnapped one man. The part I hate the most was that all the people were just spectators and taking videos.

**Katherine**

On the first night of our marriage, my husband preferred sleeping with his back towards me. He told me he was tired. It was the second marriage for both of us and I thought we would become closer with time but that day never came. Every day he made some lame excuses to avoid coming close to me. He even said he hated the colour red (usually the colour that a bride prefers) and me applying red lipstick or wearing a red bindi repelled him.

Months passed by without us being intimate. When I discussed my problem with our families, he took me for a holiday to Jaipur and was intimate with me. When we returned, he went back to being distant. When I asked his family for help, they called me sexually unfit and said that I was not allowing him to touch me. They even took me to get some medical scans done from a doctor they knew. I pleaded that he should also get tests done. By then, he had shifted to Delhi for a job and he got a medical report from Delhi that stated that he was perfectly alright.

In the meantime, since I have a government job, I was staying at my hometown. My husband used to visit me just once a week. I thought that a second divorce would just destroy me so I adjusted with him. I tried to take him to a doctor again but he of course never agreed. Two years passed by and many things happened that pointed to him being homosexual. He even told me once that he felt pukish when he touched me. I can't even explain how miserable I felt then.

One day my brother read some of my husband's online chats with other men and discovered that he was gay. All that I wanted him to say to me about love and togetherness was said by him to a man. I even have a copy of the same with me. I might have read it like some 1000 times, but it broke me from inside equally every time I read it. I found that his family knew he was gay but to maintain their reputation, they had not told me or my family. I was their prey.

I separated from him and now live with my father. He is a retired man but he is my only lifeline. My husband is a free soul now but what about me? What was my fault? Since the last 1.5 years, he has not even called or messaged me once. I am neither married nor divorced nor single. What is my status today?

**Prachi**

I stay in US where we talk freely about homosexuality and people have the right to choose whomever they want as their partner. One of my friends couldn't express himself to the society in India and nor did he tell his parents that he is gay. He then came to America and understood what it feels like to be free. He met a guy here whom he fell in love with. He went to India last year to tell his parents but he never came back.

Later that year, his older brother told us that he was being kidnapped and they do not know of his whereabouts. His parents have filed a missing persons report as well and they have lost hope. I want to ask whether it is bad to come out in the society. Is it wrong to speak the truth? No matter how many rallies or marching bands we organise, very few people truly accept people for who they are.

### **Rose**

When I was 15, I was afraid of even going out of the house because the other boys used to tease me. My teachers too thought that I was effeminate and humiliated me. There was a lot of pressure on me from my parents to get married even though they knew I was gay. My parents would even lock me up and beat me. I was forcefully married off to a woman. She ran away from the house after a month. Things are a bit more settled now and I look after my family.

### **Manish**

Why don't we have the right to choose our own life partner? We are not disturbing anyone. We just want another gay person as a partner. Can't this society let us live a dignified life? Please let us live and accept us as a part of the society. Many gay persons are shedding tears almost every day in their respective lives. We are also humans. We too have a heart. :(

### **Rahul**

Just because you are born straight, you have the right to be free and do what you want? When you were born, did you tell God to make you a girl or a boy, to make you gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual? The answer is NO! This is all natural. I know it's not easy to accept it but we should initiate the process of changing our mentality. We too are human beings and we should have the same rights as straight people to live a free life and choose the one we want to live with.

**Kaish**

I am gay and I am Muslim. This is natural and nature doesn't follow any religion. God made me like this and I am not a culprit. Then why do all people hate me? I have the same hands, legs, eyes and everything. I am a human but why not treat us gays like human?

**Sameer**

Main hamesha apne dream pe faith rakh ke ussey paane ki koshish karta raha. Isse mujhe sukoon milta tha. Maine hamesha yeh sapna dekha ki mere life mein koi aisa banda aaye jo bahut loveable ho or jo mujhe samjhe, jo sabse different ho, jisse dekhte hi pyar ho jaye. Isi liye hamesha search karta raha ek achcha partner kyunki mera family bahut conservative hai. Aaj TV par ye episode dekh kar parents uth kar chale gaye. So how I convince them that I am gay? Aaj parents ka reaction dekh kar main unko bata nahin saka.

**Amar**

# STILL IN THE CLOSET



Episode guest: Deepak Kashyap

“

**When I was in the closet, I was scared of shaming my parents. I even thought of committing suicide.**

”

**STILL IN THE CLOSET****“Everybody thinks I am straight.”**

I am 19 years old and my being gay is a secret I have kept to myself till this day. I don't know why but it feels like immense pressure is building up inside of me. I am ready to explode any minute. I pride myself on being emotionally strong but now it feels like my defences are failing. I don't want any innocent girl to get emotionally attached to me.

After seeing your episode, I felt that I should at least tell someone about my sexuality but I am scared that the person I talk to will disclose the truth to others and no one will see me in the same way after that. But I have to do it. I have to take the risk and I thank you for giving me this courage. I hope and pray that I find someone right in front of whom I can show my vulnerable inner self.

**Andre**

I am 22 years old and I am gay. I finished my B.Tech. this year and joined a software firm. I am still in the closet and feel sad that I haven't told my friends and family my secret. I always wanted to come out and be myself. Being in the closet is taking my energy away and lowering my confidence. I have been a source of pride for my parents and I am convinced that I need to tell them and will do so soon. After all, my happiness is what my parents want. No parent would like to see their child suffer all through their life.

Since I haven't told anyone about my sexuality, everybody thinks that I am straight. It's the case with other gay men too. Family and friends don't realise the trauma that one undergoes when one is in the closet. I have realised that it is better to keep things simple. Be myself and live my dreams and help the nation with my skills. I don't want to be in this constant struggle of denial and waste my time.

My advice to people reading this: It's not possible to change anyone's sexual orientation. Don't tell anyone that he or she has to become straight. Let your gay and lesbian friends be happy about their sexual orientation—this will make them better persons. And if someone is gay/lesbian, then one shouldn't feel bad about it and be in denial. Accept it and embrace it. Your life will be awesome! You will grow up to be the successful person that you wanted to be without wasting time pondering on unnecessary thoughts and questioning your sexuality. Be happy!

**Surya**

I am gay aur mere parents ko yeh pata nahin hai. Ek din aisa hota hai ki ek bhaiya ko mera problem share karne unke paas jaata hoon to ek alag hi sachai samne aati hai. Woh mera rape karte hai, uss raat ko na koi meri awaaz sunne wala tha na help karne wala. Uss situation ke baad hum so bhi nahin pate. Kya ek gay kabhi khush nahin reh sakta? Kya gay logon ko apni life jeene ka haq nahin hai?

**Anil**

I am gay and from a middle-class family. I have not come out to my family about my orientation. I have faced lots of problems being gay in my society and at my school. I have even tried to commit suicide due to it.

I have a boyfriend. We love each other a lot. But our society and culture do not allow us to love. He is being forced to get married by his family. I love him more than my life. Please fight for our rights so that no one else should face such problems. I am very depressed for my life due to this society and religion.

**Kavish**

For me, realising that I am transsexual was really a strange feeling. Since early childhood, I always liked to befriend girls and usually spent more time playing with them. At the age of 12, when I was in middle school, I still didn't have any guy friends and was very friendly with girls, which sometimes their parents took in wrong ways.

When I saw guys checking out girls, I longed for the girls' beauty and grace. I felt confused. And then I searched online and found that I was born a man and feel like a woman. After hearing the story of Gazal on your episode, I realised that I might be a transsexual lesbian as I don't feel like any boy around me, even at the age of 25.

Gazal's story inspired me but I'm still afraid to come out to my friends and family. I tried telling some of my friends but they didn't take it seriously. In the past, I had felt suicidal but I controlled myself.

**Piyush**

It's not OK for anyone to demand that people change their sexual orientation. I'm gay and I was born that way. Of course I feel bad about being in the closet. If people get to see LGBT people in their college and workplace, things will get better drastically.

**Ravi**

# AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR ACCEPTANCE



Episode guest: Anjali Gopalan

“

A 20-year-old boy told me that his parents took him to a big hospital and gave him shock treatment to ‘convert’ him from homosexual to heterosexual.

”

## AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR ACCEPTANCE

**“I hate gays and lesbians.”**

Don't be like the foolish frog in the well who always thought and perhaps died thinking that his well was the only universe. If you think you are 'gay', first understand that you are not normal. If one day you feel attracted to your sister or, god forbid, your mother, does it mean that it is normal?

It may be that your mind is twisted, without your knowledge, and this might have happened sometime in the past. God created you to be natural. And the majority will respect you for being natural. If you plan to continue to be gay, and run a 'family' with another gay man and would like to adopt a baby, you are just adding one more abnormal member to the society. I wouldn't recommend that.

First go to a trustworthy and knowing psychiatrist who is not pro-gay or gay. Try to dive deep into your memories and try to forget the past and lead a normal life. Just because a TV show supported the gay or lesbian community doesn't mean that you can be gay or lesbian and be happy forever. Will you accept your mother as a lesbian or your father as a gay? Just think!

**John**

Only what transgenders feel is natural. Lesbian and gay people do what they do for the sake of fun. These people are mentally ill because they are going against nature. If according to your show, gay and lesbian people are naturally a part of society, let me ask you, what if every man and woman turns gay? What will happen to the circle of life? These people are just not in their senses and are only looking for easy fun like easy money. Hope people understand this correctly.

**Aadil**

I am an IITian and we are known to be the best engineers of India. I was sitting in my room and seeing your episode alone when my friends entered my room. I was surprised when they asked me, “Are you gay or what? Don’t see such things or else you will also turn into one.” I was shocked and I realised that we need awareness to make people open-minded as we Indians really lack that trait.

**Agnivesh Narmeta**

Congratulations for a superb show. I want to put forth a new angle to this issue. I have dealt with cases in which the issue of disliking a particular sex or being attracted to another sex is related to foreign energy attachments to the body. When that is removed, amazingly the attraction changes. I am not saying that all people with different sexual preferences have this problem but many do and it can be changed if found.

Work has been done in this field by a few doctors from US. I am continuing this work here in India but there is little awareness and even lesser acceptance. I would like to solicit your support in reaching out to the people who have such feelings. Who knows? Some might want some help in this direction. I can explain more in detail when I hear from you.

**Dr. Mukta**

After watching your episode, I personally felt ‘unnatural’. It was very discomfoting. I support the concept of showing homosexual people’s feelings but because of their pain I don’t believe society should face the consequences. In India, we live within some social boundaries and have obligations. We should not pass any wrong messages to the next generation by supporting such acts. Our society is built with values and rules and because of 1% of society, the 99% should not suffer.

**Nagabhushan**

I oppose gay/lesbian advocacy. I don't think it is natural as per Indian beliefs. It is just a skewed mentality which needs to be addressed at adolescence. I will simply ask a few questions. What is the future of gay/lesbian relations? Will they reproduce? If not, they will by default get secluded in society. And when they age or when one of them passes away, what will happen to the other one? So basically, it will neither be giving back to nature which created sex for reproduction nor to the society which will be left with a few lonely individuals.

**Tilak**

Being a human I can't allow gay or lesbian marriages and their community in India. I would request you not to promote this activity in India; it is a by-product of a Western mind. Lesbian and gay production happens when they are misguided for sex or not corrected properly at the time of hormonal changes. You should study the human hormonal change pattern in lifestyle with effect of atmosphere or family environment of the person.

**Yogesh**

Please bring scientific ideology in and see the results. If results come positive then accept homosexuality. As far as God's creation is concerned, he created a male and female in humans and animals to fulfil sexual desires for a reason. The reason is to bring a new life in the world. By having same-sex relations, the end result does not come out. Imagine if everyone turned gay and lesbian, the world would come to an end in a few years. Well, I am in big favour of bringing their real existence out in the society but when it comes to physical relationships with the same sex, I can't support it because that's just a desire and it will bring harm to the individuals and to society.

**Santosh**

As humans, we are the most intelligent breed and we can find a way to solve the homosexuality problem with medical means. If today, 2% of the population is gay and after some years, 50% of the population is gay, how will we reproduce? If I have said anything offensive, I didn't mean it that way!

**Atharva**

Please explain this. If you are trying to legalise same-sex marriage, then we should also legalise bestiality and other types of unnatural sex. Legalising same-sex marriage is like destroying society. A person is not born a sodomite or lesbian but can be born sexually deformed and we should respect them for who they are. If you really are a scientific and logical person, you should know that there is no such thing as being naturally gay or lesbian. Such misconceptions should be cleared.

**Akarsh**

I'm living in the UK. Gays become gays because someone abused the boy in childhood and he gets that habit and he looks for boys for sex. Also, my colleague became gay at the age of 45. He had a wife and kids and he was normal till the age of 45 and then they broke up. So he was angry with women and decided to become gay. Do you think this is right?

**Abhay**

A homosexual is someone to be cared for mentally through counselling. Please research the cases of homosexuals becoming heterosexuals. Respecting LGBT individuals as human beings is totally different from the recognition of LGBT individuals.

Also, as I read from the confession of a former homosexual, the way he or she chooses a partner is totally different from how a heterosexual does. A homosexual chooses based on so-called taste. If they had a lack of love of the father, their taste is fixed on fat middle-aged man, for instance.

**James**

I can say that accepting the bisexuals and transgenders as normal human beings is possible but the persons (complete males and females) pursuing gayism and lesbianism are just abnormal. As per biology, there is no same-sex reproduction in human beings. Living together is not a crime but sexual intimacy may be one. So as per my view, Section 377 may only be relaxed for transgenders and bisexuals.

**Amaresh**

I don't understand why lesbians and gays need to come out in public and like common individuals. They can have their boyfriends and girlfriends like common individuals have or do they also wish to get married?

**Karim**

If somebody is doing a sin or robbery or any other wrong deed, will you help him or punish him? I hope you will not help him but will make him leave all bad things and encourage him to do good things. In the same way, LGBT is a big sin and I will not support them.

**Satyan**

Till now, no scientist has proved that homosexuality is natural. This is a myth and I wonder how any doctor can say it is natural! Einstein said, "Science without religion is lame." Now tell me, why will God want a child to be born as gay or lesbian? There is no logic in that—gays and lesbians are never born; it's a misconception that the media creates and it is depression and pornography that are causing this.

Even if we believe that this is natural and is God's gift, why didn't he start the world with homosexuals instead of with Adam and Eve? It is everyone's job to guide gays about what is wrong and what is right. May God forgive them and show them the right path.

**Iqbal**

I don't agree with this. This is one of the worst crimes in humanity. I strongly condemn gay marriages because this is inhuman.

**Nazneen**

Please stop discussing topics on gays and homosexuals. It's killing me. It's affecting my life very negatively. Please stop. Please spare me.

**Sachin**

Don't you think that if we give freedom to LGBT or amend Section 377, it can spread to normal people and they can also have a tendency (say, in the future) to be attracted towards the same sex? For example, you must have seen a group of students staying together and some good and well-mannered students among them start taking drugs due to the mischievous students in the group.

Amending Section 377 will act as a fuel to create fire. I don't intend to hurt any members of the LGBT group. I strongly protest against the torture they face. But still think that we should not promote them also.

**Naseem**

Your episode about the LGBT community is a total misconception. Who are we to allow such sins to happen around us when our creator has commanded us to not get involved in or support such acts? All I can say is, just because we don't know how to cure such disorders doesn't mean it should be allowed and promoted. God shows us the right path and wisdom to distinguish between good and evil. I agree that people with such disorders should have rights but I don't agree about the marriage or sex part.

**Anna**

Yeh LGBT wale log bimar hai. Kyunki aapko ilaaj nahin mil raha hai, aap yeh bimari ko natural keh rahe ho. Agar bimari ke nazariye se dekhenge toh hum iska ilaaj kar payenge.

### **Virat Sinh**

Nowadays so many young people are changing themselves to become transgender. That kind of sexuality I do not support.

### **Sangeeta**

In my opinion, every child is born male/female. It's the childhood circumstances that make the feelings of the child change. Therefore, it's the responsibility of parents to be friendly with their child and tell him/her that being a gay/lesbian is a sin. We should not promote homosexuality. In fact, we should help them come out of the astray path.

### **Moin**

It is fine if one has gay inclinations which may not be in his/her power to control but acting upon it is in his/her power. Thus, such a person must live a life of abstinence just as many heterosexual men or women live celibate without acting upon their sexual desires.

### **Chad**

Homosexuality and bisexual orientation are not a born tendency. Rather, few studies suggest that such tendencies in LGB community are developed out of their curiosity to try out a different thing.

### **Virendra**

It's a misinterpretation of feelings of attraction. Maybe gay people want to become like the men that they are attracted to but they misinterpret it as a sexual feeling. Logically, sexual relationships with the same sex doesn't make sense as it won't result in the production of baby. So, it shouldn't become a marriage but it can be called as a longterm friendship.

**Joe**

Gay marriage or lesbian marriage will just be a curse for the future and basically it is impossible.

**Arif**

Although I missed the first 20 minutes of today's episode, I want to ask, how the hell you are claiming on national TV that homosexuality can be by birth? Do you have any proof? Are you a biologist? Have you done a survey of new-born homosexuals?

**Shahzaade**

I don't support you on this. God has created men and women to live as a couple and it has been like this and will continue to be like this generation after generation. Imagine if only boy to boy and girl to girl love remains in this world? The world will end in a few years! Hope you understand. This is stupid. I hate gays and lesbians.

**Abbas**

# GAY AND HAPPY



Episode guest: Divya

“

I am living  
my dream  
today.

”

**GAY AND HAPPY****“I am not going back.”**

I was born to a very caring family. As a child I was extremely shy and polite. As I grew up I realised I kind of never fit in. I was different from other guys. At the age of 14, I started to realise I wasn't into girls, like other guys were, but liked guys. At that time, nothing seems 'wrong' or 'right', you are just discovering yourself, knowing yourself.

But it wasn't long before I realised what people called me—'gay'. I must have heard classmates talking about it, verbally abusing each other using the same word. When I learnt more, I came to know how much hatred there is for people like me. Cases of caning gay people in some countries horrified me. I was scared, I couldn't talk to anyone. As a child, you are scared of being robbed of your parents' love and since then I always tried to change, but I never could.

At 15 or 16, I must have planned suicide, never attempted though. I remember standing before a mirror with a knife in my hand. I took it from the kitchen but I couldn't do it as my mom's crying face would appear in front of my eyes. Every moment I carried a burden on my chest and every night my pillow would be soaked in my tears.

I'm 17 now, and you know what I've achieved today? I've fought those feelings. I've fought depression and now I have hope of a better tomorrow. I still get suicidal feelings but I beat them every time and now the new me is ready to fight anything and anyone, not only for my rights as a gay person but for all the innocent childhoods being locked into closets for being themselves. And this time I'm not going back.

**Divyesh**

My family lives in Nandurbar. I requested my mother to watch the episode and added that I have a message for her. After watching the show, I couldn't gather the courage to tell her the truth then, but a few hours later, I asked her how she'd react if her son told her he was gay.

She said, "Don't worry, kuch bhi ho, tu mera beta hai. I'm there for you." I was speechless. Had not expected this response at all. This is a big deal for me. She told me that when I go home next, she will help me come out to my father.

### **Nadim**

I was married for some years and I have children as well. Even though my husband and I lived under the same roof, it never felt like we lived together. Later in my life, I embraced my sexuality and I was in a relationship with a woman for 15 years. I lived with her and had a peaceful time. My children are also supportive of my sexuality. My son-in-law and his family have also accepted me and I am touched by their support. I managed to overcome problems with my own strength. I am happy that I lived life on my terms.

### **Sabina**

Being gay, lexicons tell us, means to be happy. In India, it often means the opposite. For far too many, to be gay is to live a shadowed life—of unhappiness, depression, fear and stigma. But there are exceptions and my story is perhaps one of those. At 33, I am out, and have been so for almost 7 years. My parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins—all those who matter—have accepted me and love me for who I am. It is an unlikely story but I am writing to say that it's possible, even in India.

Coming out is never easy; it wasn't for me either. I did so in phases. I told my siblings. They told our parents—first mom and then dad. Understandably, it wasn't easy for them. The early months were perhaps those of disappointment and hope. Disappointment at the prospect of a son who wouldn't marry (a woman), and hope that he would change enough to make a marriage possible.

But much of that changed in a matter of months. And many things helped make this transition. My siblings offered unwavering support. More than anyone else, they helped to make my parents understand that orientation isn't something one can change. The media made a difference too. Discussions on equal rights for LGBT people have enjoyed prominent attention in ways India has hardly seen before. I can't be sure but I think some of those debates on TV and newspaper editorials helped shape how my parents think about these issues today.

Coming out to my grandmother remains a memorable moment. At 75, and with no more than higher secondary education, she isn't someone you would expect to understand. But she did; she needed no introduction. She knew what it meant to be gay, and what it means to have a gay grandson. "Do you have a boyfriend?" she asked. I didn't (then), and told her so. "You should," she replied. "Later in life you will be lonely."

Many of us choose not to come out in the fear that our families won't understand or approve. Perhaps we should take more chances. Perhaps there are others waiting to show similar love and affection, only if their children or grandchildren can summon the courage to come out.

Like in any other family, marriage is a frequent topic of conversation in mine. "When will your son marry?" is a badgering my parents are often confronted with. A couple of years ago, to a similar question from a family friend, my dad replied, "My son is gay. We are looking for a guy." His journey towards unconditional acceptance was complete and I couldn't have been prouder. Two years ago, they made a proposal: "Tell us what sort of person you want and we shall put a matrimonial advert in the newspapers." An arranged gay marriage—that was their plan.

Acceptance is wonderful. And in case you were wondering, I turned down their offer!

**Shubhankar Dam**

I came out to my mom and she said she always knew it. She accepted me the way I am. I told her I always had the confidence that she would accept me and she was very happy to know that. I just hugged her with tears in my eyes and thanked her for accepting me.

**Shweta**

It was at a cyber café that I found out that people like me are called gay and I realised I was not alone. When I told my parents that I am gay, my mother was judgemental and aggressive and asked me why I didn't die when I was born. My father was silent. However, I feel free and happy just because I have told them.

**Shashi**

My mother used to think that upbringing and sanskaar determine whether someone becomes gay. But after I told her that I'm just like a few of the guests on the show, she didn't react much and said "It's okay. Jisko jisse pyaar hai usko ussi ke saath rehna chahiye. Parents ko zabardasti nahin karni chahiye."

I knew that my mother will be accepting of me being lesbian because she loves me but I couldn't get myself to come out to her earlier. After we watched the show, I thought yeh time sahi hai and I told her. I'm so happy.

**Sneha**

I myself am gay and trust me, it's really tough but I'm happy. And if I'm gay, it does not necessarily mean I'm effeminate. I'm an athlete too. :)

**Zahur**

One caller on your live show asked Aamirji what he would do if one of his children came out to him as gay to which he responded that he would first give him/her a warm hug. It brought tears to my eyes. That's how my parents also love me—their gay son.

Only in homes where the parents do not provide an environment to be honest, children will, out of shame and guilt, hide their sexuality or any other matter from their parents.

**Phil**

I am gay too and I know how difficult it was for me to accept it but now I am happy and I am married to my lover.

**Anshul**

## CHANGING MINDSETS



Episode guest: Rani Sharma

“

Apne aap  
ko badaliye!  
Sabko aage  
aana chahiye  
in bacchon ko  
support karne  
ke liye.

”

## CHANGING MINDSETS

### “I’m sorry and I miss you.”

I am 42 and live in the US. I have a successful counselling practice and I love my work. I was born in East Africa and moved here in 1981. Two months after I moved, my father passed away and my mom raised my brothers and me. It was very hard for her to be in a strange country and be mistreated by her employers like a third-class citizen. She changed when my father died and became withdrawn and very angry. As a therapist, I now realise she was grief-stricken and in shock.

When I was 11 or so, I realised that I was attracted to women. I didn’t understand what I was feeling. I had got the ‘message’ from other people’s behaviour in society, on the television and in the playground that what I felt was dirty, nasty, vulgar, etc. I learned to hide what I felt and eventually met a very handsome man in college, fell in love with him and married him.

I watched a film called *Losing Chase* starring Helen Mirren about a married woman who went mad because she was hiding that she was gay. This was my life. I loved my husband very much but as the years passed, I couldn’t cope with the feelings in my heart. I wanted to be in a relationship with a woman; I wanted to know in this lifetime what it felt like to have a woman’s arms around me. However, I was terrified of my mom’s reaction because she was very homophobic. I truly thought even into my late twenties that she would kill me. As simple as that.

I had completed my Master's degree by now and went to work in my old secondary school. I was in the darkest period of my life and I was now 29! After 2 years in therapy, I found the courage to tell my husband, and his response was simply, "I know".

I then found the courage to tell my mom. She dismissed it as a phase and ignored me. When I pushed the point, she took my husband's side and disowned me and told me that God would punish me for all eternity. I thought at that point that it would be better if I just died. She was my best friend whom I had counselled and supported since childhood, and now when I needed her to be a mother, she abandoned me completely. We didn't speak for two years.

She has tried to understand, but until May this year when I visited her and my lovely stepdad in Tanzania, she still struggled. None of her friends know that I am gay. So, when we visit her we have to lie to people and then be forced to get into discussions about how I really should get married! But this year, I sat with my mom one morning at 2:00 a.m. and I explained to her gently, with all the love and understanding I could manage, that I LOVE women. I tried marriage for 13 years to please her and destroyed my husband's life—something I will have to carry to my grave. I explained that I have done everything in my power to make her proud and honour her but that I HAD to be allowed to live my truthful life. I have realised since this May conversation that in my heart I do want to get married. I want a beautiful Indian bride that I can spend forever with and I am sure that will happen! Love is all there is of any value, why should it matter whom I love?

So you can imagine my complete shock when I received a text about your show from my mother. Since your show, my mom has emailed me to say that both her and daddy are in turmoil about not realising and not helping me. I have to say I am in shock that this is the same woman who threatened to rip me into shreds as a child if I dared mention ‘this dirty, evil thing’.

I can’t begin to imagine how many souls you have freed and championed, and how many closed hearts you have opened around the world. You have certainly changed my parents’ lives!

**Rachna**

Four of us friends have started a small IT firm in Bangalore. We believe that there are a plethora of problems we face as a people (some of it is unique to India and some, universal). We also believe that the solution for such problems resides inside us.

After watching the plight of hijras in your episode, we would like to contribute. Contribution for us would translate to employing deserving candidates in our company. Obviously, we will not just hire because they are hijras! The problem we have is we don’t know how to go about it. We are more than happy to go the extra mile to find such resources, and would appreciate some guidance in this regard. If you could point us to an organisation/s which can help us achieve this, it would be much appreciated.

**Gopal**

We watched the show. As a family, all of us learnt a lot, including my 9-year-old daughter who was always making fun of a boy in her class (and we never stopped her either). Thanks for bringing up the issue. It helps to understand others, definitely making us sensitive.

**Alpinder**

I am a 30-year-old gay man working in a central government organisation. My parents are no more. I am alone in this world though I have some friends. I am tired and frustrated and I had decided to get married because I felt no guy would stay with me for my whole life. But after seeing this episode, I feel I can't marry a girl and spoil her life. So I will now wait for my Mr. Right!

**Rana**

I came out to my family in 2012 and I've also written a few articles on LGBT issues and worked on advocacy efforts. My parents would not react to my articles and there was distance between us all these years.

After watching your show, my mother called me and said, "I am sorry and I miss you". I think this show helped bridge the distance between us immensely. My mom will now have a reference point when others ask her about me or when she learns more about my work and my writings.

**Aditya**

Why do we use the word 'gay' to insult someone? I have used it so many times to make fun of my friends but now I understand how wrong I was. We need to educate ourselves. Thanks for opening my eyes—I am not afraid of homosexuals or transgender persons anymore.

**Sahil Bhargav**

I am an Indian settled in UAE for my livelihood. I call myself educated and modern but watching this episode has really made a difference to the way I perceive myself. I had a very different outlook towards homosexuals and never thought it could be something okay or natural. I still don't know if that notion of mine has changed but after listening to the guests who came on your show, my heart goes out to them.

I still have tears in my eyes thinking about what they must have gone through as a child, as an adult or rather, as a human being. Thanks for making me understand that it is not a choice that they make after watching someone else or some English movies; it is a battle that they are fighting since the time they realise their sexuality.

**Nahid**

It's almost morning 5:30 a.m. and I am unable to sleep. I just want to cry and shout at the top of my voice. Yesterday, after dinner, my mom called me, started crying like a baby and asked me to forgive her. She saw your episode and realised she should take a stand for me. She told me, "Beta, I don't know about your father or anyone else but I am with you until my last breath." A few of the guests who came on the show have saved and changed my life! Lots of love and respect.

**Sanjana**

I always used to make fun of the LGBT community! Learnt a lesson! Respect them! #MumkinHai

**Siddhant Chalke**

Though I am a doctor, a cancer specialist from Ahmedabad, I was not aware that alternative sexualities are natural. I thought it was a psychological problem and never discussed it with my colleagues without a specific reason. I also never ever realised that hijras beg because they are never offered any employment by this society.

**Dr Jignesh Goswami**

Let me tell you one thing frankly—before watching this episode, I always made fun of homosexuals and had negative thoughts about them. Now I am ashamed of myself. They are also human beings like us and they are born the same way we are, then why the hate? Our Constitution says that we all are equal. Then why do we try and ‘cure’ them and mistreat them? This is not a disease—it is natural. In India, we do not talk about these topics so such knowledge gets hidden!

**Atul**

I was never against LGBT individuals but I would say that I never accepted them either. Currently, I live in Scotland where everyone greets each other, whether they know each other or not. I do the same but I always ignored if a gay or lesbian couple passed by. I just looked past them and never said anything. Today I feel I am their culprit. I will never do this again. I will confidently accept them from today onwards.

**Nishtha**

I have started my own business recently and would like to give an opportunity to a transgender, gay or anybody who is looked upon as not being ‘normal’.

**Rosaline Ann**

I used to get nervous when I saw transgenders and also had an opinion that homosexuals become the way they do because they haven’t been brought up properly. This episode changed my opinion.

**Ramani**

My perception about gay persons has changed right from this moment! Now I will respect them as I would like to be respected!

**Anu**

I have been living out of India for 25 years now but I have also been against gay and lesbian persons. After watching today's episode, I changed my mind and now don't have anything against them. Thanks for educating me.

**Abdul Shakoor Chaudhry**

The entire episode touched me and removed many misconceptions from my mind. I had a lot of confusion about the issue for many years. We have to end discrimination and violence against the LGBT community. Once we do that, we will find that many people will come out, without being afraid of being penalised.

**Vicky Sharma**

Before watching this episode, I had a low opinion about lesbians, gays and bisexuals. I had even banned their entry in my friends circles on social sites. I thought that they were involved in activities which are against nature. After having heard Gazal and others, my views about these people have completely changed and I have opened the doors of my friendship to all of them!

**Akshay**

I came out to my mother years ago as a gay man and ever since, I could see in her eyes that she was worried about me. Whenever we talk about this topic, she would become uncomfortable and hence I didn't try to bring this subject up for discussion. But I told her about what your episode talked about and she said she had also watched it. And I could see no worry in her eyes for the first time. Maybe she has now understood that there is nothing to worry about in me being gay. And all this became possible only because of you guys! No matter how many times I thank you, it won't be enough! :-)

**Lohit**

Being gay, I was thinking of committing suicide but when I saw this much love on national TV from the ones who are straight, I decided to live and serve my country.

**Meer Shanaay**

As a gay person, I have always lived life in darkness trying to hide myself and protect every inch of my identity from this alpha heterosexual society. But something unusual happened the day your episode aired. Imagine my surprise when I realised the show was discussing the very sensitive subject of alternative sexuality! The episode taught me to love myself and gave me the strength to come out and fight for my rights.

**Devashish Sharma**

I pledge today that I will never crack jokes on homosexuals or transgender persons.

**Divyaraj Gadhvi**

I am conservative but this episode has changed my thought process. I support the LGBT community.

**Aakanksha**

After watching today's episode, I want to help LGBT individuals lead a respected life by offering them jobs in my company.

**Pawan**

Mujhe bhi in logon ko dekh kar dar sa lagta tha par ab aapka episode dekh kar mera thinking change ho gaya hai.

**Shital Patel**

Jab main homosexuals ko dekhti thi, main hasti thi aur mere dost bhi mazaak udate the. Aaj yeh show dekhne ke baad mujhe sharmindgi mehsoos ho rahi hai. Main promise karti hoon ki aaj ke baad aisa bilkul nahin karungi. Main LGBT individuals ke saath baatein karungi, dosti karungi, aur mere friends ko bhi main yeh kahungi.

**Moumita Sarkar**

Iss episode se aaj meri soch badli hai. Main pehle hijra community se darti thi par ab main unka respect karungi. Thanks ki aapne meri soch badaldi.

**Deeksha Porwal**

In 2013, I came out to my 70-year-old parents living in Pune. It was difficult for them to assimilate all the facts. Since I work in Hyderabad, I too had been trying to explain to them over a period of time with some difficulty. After watching the show, mom thinks that my being gay is not an abnormality.

**Raunak**

My mother who stays in Virar, Mumbai watched the repeat telecast of the episode. I had come out to her six months ago but she was not accepting me. Even though there is not much change in her attitude, my aunt, uncle and cousin have become far more comfortable with my sexuality. My uncle has even offered to come and volunteer with The Humsafar Trust.

**Rohan**

This episode changed my attitude towards homosexuals. I respect them as they are one of us and I can feel their pain and suffering. Thanks for changing my mindset!

**Jigisha Sai**

This show has changed my point of view completely. I will also try and change others' views. We will amend this Section 377! Mumkin hai!

**Neha**

My mother just said that your show changed her mind about LGBT individuals! It's working!

**Arya**

Great job because now my family is ready to accept my brother. He is homosexual and I am proud of him!

**Khushboo Sinha**

I am gay. I like guys, no doubt about that, but I did feel some shame or thought I was wrong because of what is expected from me by our society. I am over it now and this episode has given me more strength and a clearer view of myself and what I should do and how I should live.

**Sundeep**

Your episode on homosexuality was very effective for me because I am gay and I had lost all hope but now I've got a new will to live.

**Dipankar**

## CONNECT WITH US

We would love to know how you felt after reading this booklet!

### SATYAMEV JAYATE

Email: [satyamevjayate@akpfilms.com](mailto:satyamevjayate@akpfilms.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SatyamevJayate](http://www.facebook.com/SatyamevJayate)

Twitter: [@SatyamevJayate](https://twitter.com/SatyamevJayate)

Website: [www.satyamevjayate.in](http://www.satyamevjayate.in)

### THE HUMSAFAR TRUST

Helpline for LBT individuals:

+91 9930095856 (Monday-Saturday, 4 p.m.- 8 p.m.)

Helpline for LGBT individuals:

+91 22-26673800 (Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.- 8 p.m.)

Email: [info@humsafar.org](mailto:info@humsafar.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/HumsafarTrust](http://www.facebook.com/HumsafarTrust)

Twitter: [@HumsafarTrust](https://twitter.com/HumsafarTrust)

Website: [www.humsafar.org](http://www.humsafar.org)