



# DIALOGUES



A NEWSLETTER FROM CONVERSATIONS-  
CENTRE FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

JULY 2022 • ISSUE 3 • VOLUME 2



*Artwork by Raghvendra Shrikrishna Vanjari  
(Azim Premji Foundation)*

## LGBTQIA+ PRIDE

June was celebrated as Pride Month, which is dedicated to uplifting LGBTQIA+ voices, celebrating LGBTQIA+ lives and supporting LGBTQIA+ rights.

Pride month is a commemoration of the Stonewall Riots that happened in 1969.

Pride has always been a protest, and a celebration. India's first pride was celebrated in Kolkata in 1999. Pride has ever since been held in major Indian cities as well as smaller towns usually in June itself.

Members of our community, including students, alumni and the members of the counselling team, have shared their perspectives and personal experiences in this issue through articles, poetry and artwork. Happy reading!

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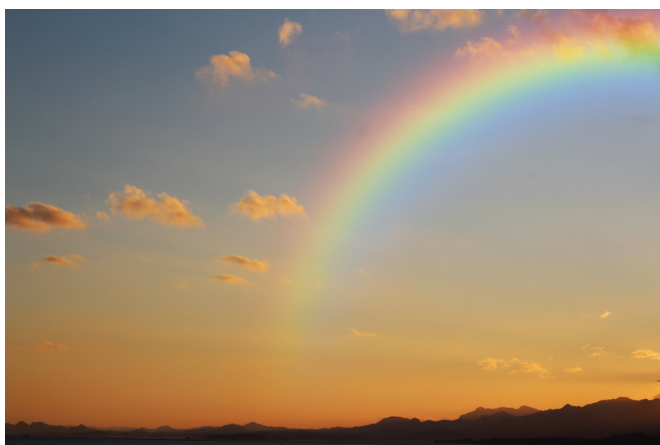
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# CONTRIBUTIONS FROM STUDENTS & MEMBERS OF AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

## I AM THE RAINBOW YOU CAN'T SEE

*by Sowbhagya Varma HS (MAE 2020)*



I, am a rainbow that you can't see,  
Amongst you all, and yet unseen.  
When in public,  
I become the invisible me.  
For the society just hates me.

Some say, I bring luck  
But the majority say, I'm bad luck  
They move away in my presence,  
And I feel petrified.  
I become the attention grabber!  
But then, I never asked for it!  
I become the subject of everyone's  
humour  
But then, I never understood why!

Who am I?

I ask myself, and realize

The world 'sees' only two  
But I don't belong in none.

Something else,  
Something different,  
Something in between...

And so, I'm treated 'different' ,  
And so, I'm seen as 'different'.

But why?

Can't you accept us, like we learned to  
accept ourselves ?  
Can't you see us as the accepted two in  
this world?

I too have a mind,  
That wanders into the world of  
imaginations.  
I too have dreams,  
to fulfill in this lifetime.  
I too have a purpose,  
That needs to be found and fulfilled.

I too deserve love and care,  
to feel alive in this callous world.

Filled in me are the colours of a  
rainbow.

My hues wait eagerly,  
To take its stage.  
For only if you accept me,  
Could I give it some shape.

I am the rainbow, society tries to hide  
I am the rainbow, society refuses see

But I am a rainbow, who cannot be  
bound in shape  
For I am a rainbow, who writes in all its  
hues!

Although I write black on white,  
You will see nearly every colour you  
could ever conceive.  
They are the colours of My Life  
Impatient to spread the light in all  
colours That could be visualised  
between the black and the white!  
That could be experienced between the  
birth and the death!



## A NON-CONFORMING COURT CASE

*by Manasvini Ranganathan (LLM 2021)*

I've been accused of murder  
The victim, my queer self  
My poetic self has turned hostile and  
testified  
That I was scared of public gaze  
And fooling myself to believe  
It was a rebellious phase  
That I was a temporarily insane  
adolescent

The legal self defends my case and says  
The law is often colorable but never a  
rainbow in sight  
It was a hard choice, I, the accused was  
forced to make

Between self-suppression and societal  
oppression  
Between an existential crisis and my  
very existence  
Between losing a part of me versus all  
of me

And when as the accused I'm call to  
speak, I say  
I wish a confession was enough to say  
I'm queer  
I'm tired of being asked to prove it  
So yes, I murdered my queer self  
And I'm always guilty of it.



I have loved sugar and salt,  
Tree and animal,  
Wine and beer,  
Memories sweet and sour,  
Black and white,  
Fire and water,  
Smiles and tears.  
Then tell me, my friends,  
Why can't I love  
Man and woman?  
You say love is natural,  
Is this love not?  
If I can love opposite matters,  
Why can't I love  
What pieces opposites and likes  
together?

*-by Ipsita Misra (UG 2021)*

## ACCEPTANCE

*by Yuga Adarkar*  
*Library Trainee, Knowledge Centre*

Man cannot sleep with a man  
Women neither!  
But it's okay.  
Man can sleep with a woman  
With whom he doesn't feel any desire?

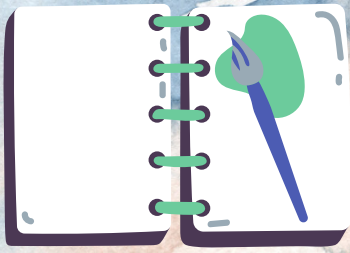
"You are born wrong !"  
"Sssh! Let society not know about it".  
"Hide your desire!"  
"If you don't  
Neither you are my child  
Nor belong to 'this' society!"

What?  
I'm  
Given birth by my parents,  
Hormonal changes in my body, my fault?  
The desire for the same gender shouldn't be my choice?  
Am I an alien?

Though, the supreme court struck down Art 377,  
Legalized homosexuality in India  
And today we celebrate the pride month proudly  
Yet, the Indian stigma  
Finds hard to digest us  
to be among them  
Accept us!  
We're normal just like you!







## VEDA'S VISUAL VERSES

AS JULIA CAMERON ONCE SAID, "ART OPENS THE CLOSETS, AIRS OUT THE CELLARS AND ATTICS. IT BRINGS HEALING."  
WELCOME TO A SPACE WHERE I EXPLORE MENTAL HEALTH THEMES AND CAPTURE EXPERIENCES THROUGH ART AND POETRY!



### A HANGING PLANT

Leaves and stems  
growing outside the pot.

Represent living and  
thriving beyond the  
prescriptions of the  
cisheteronormative  
'Charmed Circle'.



## PRIDE IS PERSONAL

### A VISUAL COLLECTION OF PERSONALLY MEANINGFUL SYMBOLS OF PRIDE

Queerness and pride mean different things to people and is profoundly personal. I asked some really lovely people I know who identify as queer, "What does queerness and pride look like to you?"

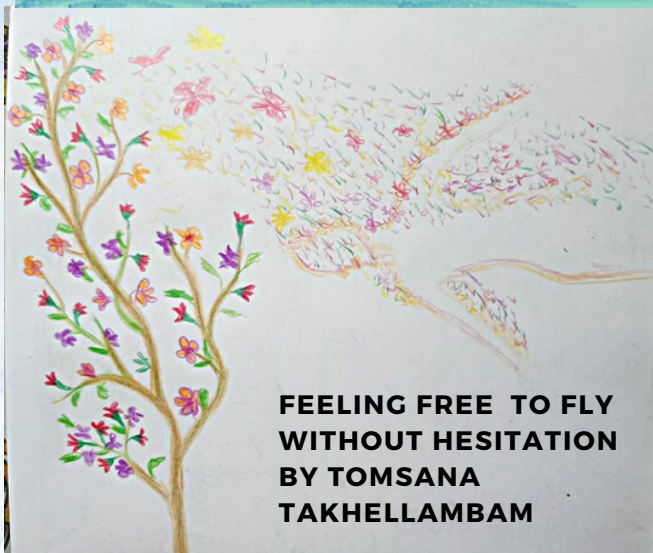
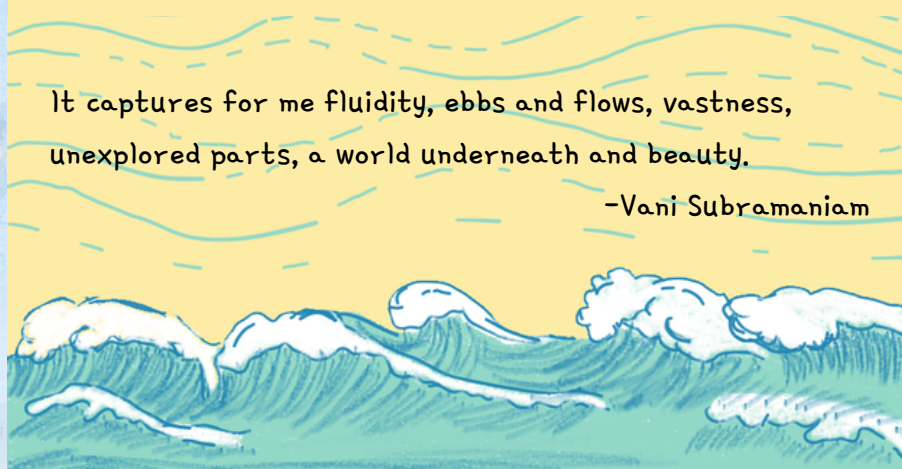
Here is a co-created collection of drawings of what symbols, images and visuals came to their minds and mine.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO  
SHARED TO CREATE THIS  
COLLECTION!

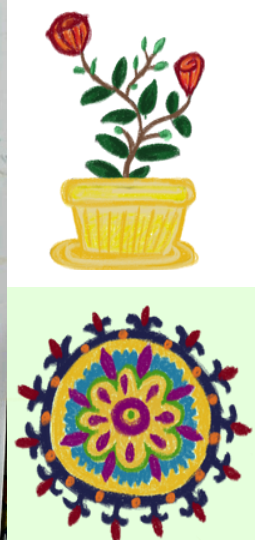
### THE OCEAN

It captures for me fluidity, ebbs and flows, vastness,  
unexplored parts, a world underneath and beauty.

-Vani Subramaniam



FEELING FREE TO FLY  
WITHOUT HESITATION  
BY TOMSANA  
TAKHELLAMBAM





# SWATI'S STORYBOARD

COLLATING VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

- Shows with queer characters
- Being a movie lover, seeing the Hijra community's representation in cinema made me curious
- Discovery Channel had at one point aired a documentary of trans people marrying gods.
- L Word, the show, was my first proper introduction



Social Media

It was through the internet and social media that I dug deeper, and made my understanding more nuanced than a simple 'what label means what' sort of awareness

People, readings, books and movies- all have helped me to be a part of discussions that have helped me understand this better

In school for a long time I was called "Tomboy" and I had no clue why. I later discovered that it was because I was more into 'doing things boys did'...like hang upside down on a monkey bar

My first experience should have been thanks to the Mumbai locals and the Mumbai streets. There were people who others laughed at, looked down upon. Why was this? What was I missing?

Much later in school I had a friend who was open about sharing that he is gay



What has this gotten you to question/look at/think more about, in your life?

Over a period of time, through interactions, reading and more awareness and feeling more informed has definitely helped me. I think it's so so important to be informed and sensitised. Cannot stress enough on this

In the earlier days, we were all asked to present a certain way, butch, femme, andro etc, and the show we all watched together became a way we began to see ourselves as the characters. Over the years though, finding myself, without external influences has been the journey that I have enjoyed

- My interaction with various people who knew about the community
- Social traditions, self autonomy and awareness
  - To acknowledge and appreciate unity in diversity more than ever before

It has made me question the assumptions I make about others and even myself, the urge to classify everyone and everything with a label. I find that people's experiences can be as different as they are similar, and expecting someone to fit into a box because of some label is unfair, and possibly a burden on them

~|Being in love with the  
spectrum of being Human |~  
How would you react/ behave/  
take it if the person you like  
reveals, on the day you confess  
your love to them, that they do  
not conform to the gender you  
think they are?

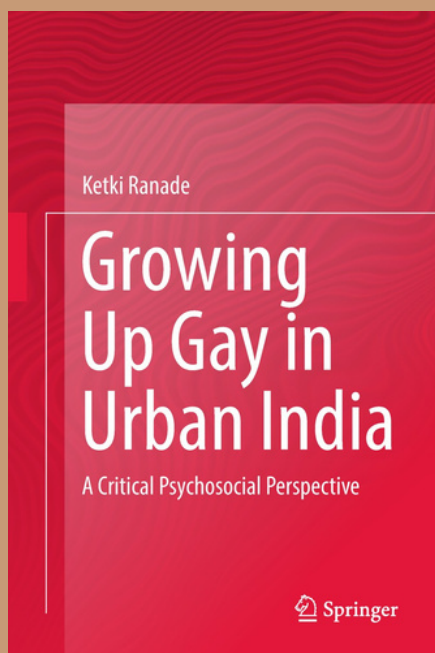
Will it/ how would it change  
your relationship/ bond/  
equation with them?  
Would you still choose to be in  
love with them? If yes why? If  
no, why?

What do you  
understand/feel/know/ realise  
about yourself as an individual  
now, to have thought about  
this?



Is there a quote/poem/popular  
personality/Instagram account you  
would recommend that you resonate  
with and could influence others to start  
listening to voices of, celebrating lives of  
and supporting the rights of the  
LGBTQIA+ community?





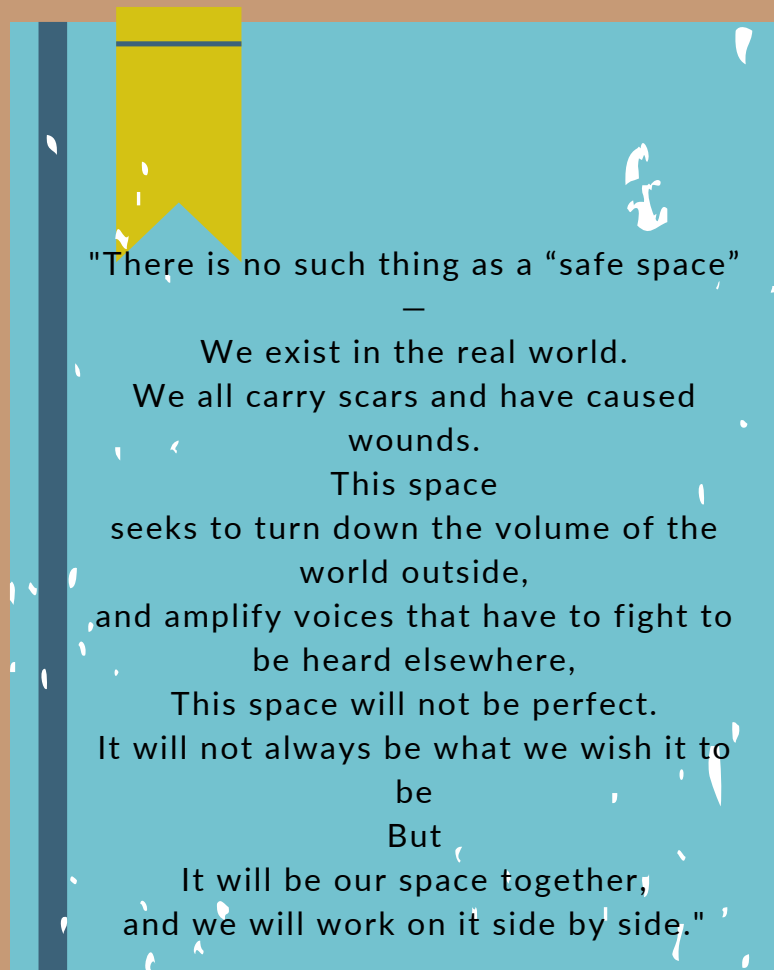
The book is based on the author's research on the experiences of gays and lesbians growing up in Mumbai and Pune during the 1980s and 90s, offers us a rare insight into the emotional and psychological experiences of LGBTQ individuals in urban India. This is one book I'd like to recommend!



Hannah Gadsby's stand-up piece titled "Nanette" is a very passionate and strong statement. It might not be relatable for all, but it definitely will give food for thought



<https://twitter.com/nishthanishant>



There is a lot of debate about who wrote this poem, but in any case, it has helped me, and made me grateful for the community I have



to all of you who contributed!



## THE GAY 'SCIENCE'

Until the 19th century, the situation was bad for pretty much... everyone. The situation was grim, with a new war starting every other day, scores of epidemics of which there was no known cure, and shortage of food across the globe. It was also a time where religion had taken over all aspects of the society. Like the pendulum that swings towards either science or supernatural, psychology was then going through its supernatural phase. To be fair, psychology was not really a thing then. But man, things were bleak then. People were being persecuted, incarcerated, and executed just for being and expressing themselves - people from the LGBTQ+ community, women who were accused of witchcraft, lepers (pro-tip: do NOT trust your neighbours). There was no concrete evidence to prosecute people from these communities, because the 'proof' was absolutely ridiculous.

Since we just passed Pride month, it is thus important to talk about how we came about to understand gender and sexual diversity. The Church was really big back in the day, and had outlawed a number of sexual practices, such as pre-marital sex, oral and anal sex, and masturbation. Gay men were persecuted through and through, because there were Biblical passages in the Old Testament dedicated to condemning them. Being gay was a crime.

The late 19th and the early 20th century were good times for medical science, in general. I mean we had discovered virus, sanitation and hygiene through soaps and antiseptics, and there was this gentleman who surgically transplanted goat testicles onto multiple human beings to cure impotency (seriously, Google him). Naturally, one would assume that psychology and psychiatry would follow suit and come up with solid, evidence-based research for the same.

The answer to that, well, is not that simple.

I mean, see, psychologists in the pre-Freudian era were kind of clear in saying one thing, which is that being homosexual, or having gender diversity was a mental disorder. Can you believe that the disorder model for homosexuality and gender diversity was created to protect the people under that umbrella? It's hard to digest, I know. Think of the alternative though;

to be declared blasphemous by religious organizations and face certain death. Practitioners then thought that it being thought as something treatable would invite benevolence and stop persecution. Of course, they also believed that they were in fact disorders, because we lacked the apparatus to do proper research. This was also a time when gender and sexual identities were often conflated with each other, like gay men having an innate 'femininity' to them. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825- 1895) was a gay lawyer in Germany, and he had a term for himself and other gay men - 'Urnings'.



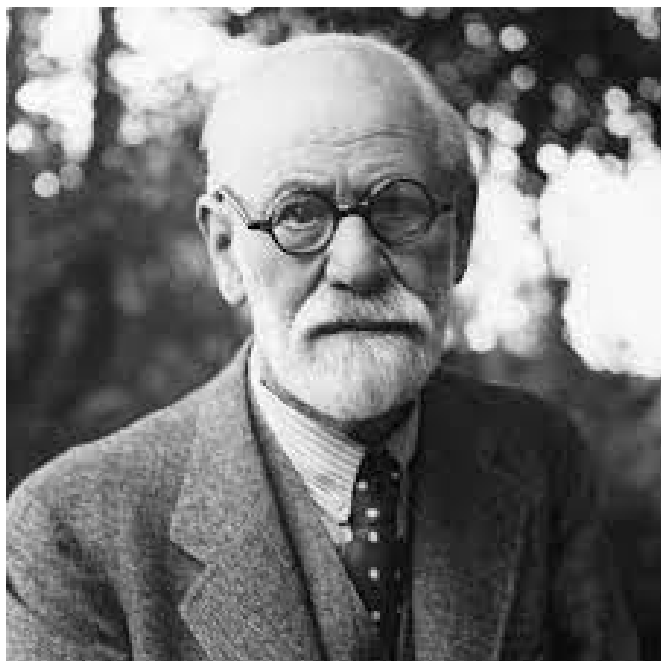
**Karl Heinrich Ulrichs**

He argued that all Urnings were psychosexual hermaphrodites, essentially having a female soul in their male body. He was also one of the first

people to advocate for civil rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Other early psychologists, such as Arrigo Tamassia and Jean Martin Charcot introduced a term that will remain in the psychological literature for decades to come - homosexuality being a form of sexual 'inversion', which essentially implies having an upside-down or an 'inverted' quality, which was non-reflective of 'true' biological characteristics. Hence, a gay man was really a woman trapped in a man's body, and a lesbian woman was a man trapped in a woman's body. I know, I hate this too.

Charcot's theories on sexual inversion inspired a little-known psychologist called Sigmund Freud to come up with his own set of theories around homosexuality. He caught on to the inversion theory but had his own set of conclusions. He claimed that all of us had innate bisexual tendencies, and the inclination towards either gender was decided by the kind of traumatic experiences the person undergoes as a child. He theorized that family relationships, especially a boy's attachment to his mother caused homosexuality, something to do with penis-envy and castration anxiety (to be fair to Freud, he did a lot of cocaine). He eventually said that homosexuality was not an illness that can be cured. I mean, it's good that someone was finally moving away from the disorder model of sexuality, but at the same time, pinning a natural inclination to something like traumatic experiences does more harm than good. Other contemporary psychoanalysts, such as

Sandor Rado, claimed that heterosexuality was the only nonpathological outcome of human sexual development. Yup, this was said less than a hundred years ago. You have all the right to feel enraged.



***Sigmund Freud***

Now, we talk about better things.

The question is, how did we come about with more acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community? Of course, social movements played a huge, huge role in this. Events like the Stonewall riots in 1969 encouraged more people and communities to demand for their rights. Before that, we have one hero to thank for. Evelyn Hooker, an American psychologist published her breakthrough study, 'The Adjustment of The Male Overt Homosexual', in 1956. The study clearly demonstrated that there was no difference in terms of mental adjustment between homosexual and heterosexual men, thus clearly

disproving the myth that homosexuality was a mental illness, and that there was no so-called developmental inferiority that caused a person to have a different sexual orientation. Her studies were taken up by the LGBTQ+ community to demand for equal rights and fair treatment. This also paved the way for more research in the field of gender and sexuality studies, leading to every archaic presumption being dispelled. Her study was landmark in the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual by the American Psychiatric Association... which they did in 1987 (CAN YOU BELIEVE IT???).



***Evelyn Hooker***

There is no lesson here. This was a dark, dark time in our history. I just have questions. What was the purpose of all this 'research'? This was nothing but the 'othering' of a community that was not quite understood, as the purpose of the research was to find the pathology and 'cure' it. Witch doctors did it back in the Dark ages, and in the more



contemporary times, witch doctors wore white lab coats. The 'research' ostracized the participants, and prevented communities from forming, which ultimately helps the individual more than anything. There was no science involved here, in any shape or form. The science, in fact, says that the sooner we accept the individual, the more they thrive.

That's it. Instead of putting money and time on research that tries finding the 'cause', maybe we should invest the same resources in creating better laws and environments based around non-discrimination. Do better, do better.



Many in the community face discrimination, prejudice, denial of civil and human rights, harassment and family rejection which can lead to new or worsened symptoms, particularly to those with intersecting identities.

Kirti [ Name changed], who belongs to a small town in Uttarakhand, tells her outlet that one of her cousins who is a lesbian came out to her parents, but did not get acceptance.

"This made me realize how vulnerable I am. Now, how do I tell my parents I am lesbian, too, and don't want to marry a man? What if they don't accept me either? I realize my cousin has the option to escape these things, since she lives in the US; I don't have that luxury as I want to settle in Uttarakhand only".

She adds that she and her girlfriend for the sake of their "mental peace" follow their hearts and spread love to the society by doing lots of things together, like feeding cows, dogs etc.

"We are working on our dreams and surrounded by loving people. Though our lives are complex, we believe in seeking professional therapy if needed, talking to friends for their light and support."

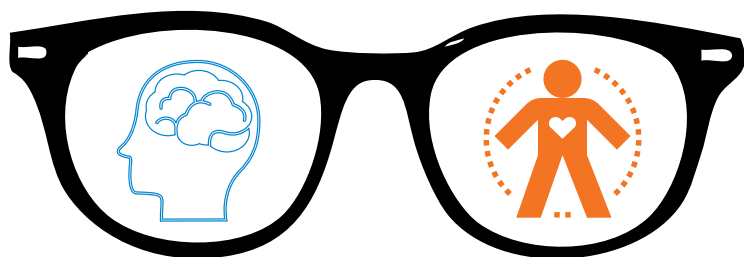
Ultimately, it boils down to the fact that the pain, hostility, and rejection members of the community experience can make them feel worthless as a result of this internalized emotional pain and the helplessness that one experience.

Family and friends can help by using kind words, and by not shunning them for their sexual preference.

"Often, we write things off that we cannot comprehend maybe because we have not been through that experience, are unable to empathize or simply do not have the interest [in learning about it] But, the core of humanity is love; we don't have to comprehend something to have compassion for it."



# LAKSHMI'S LENS



## HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ALLY

### TAKING A LOOK AT THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION



**ALLYSHIP-** “A lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people”. (FORBES)

Every society presents various contexts and influences that have a psychosocial impact on its members. Our society is no exception. It's a complex society with a vast diversity across a wide range of intersectional identities, including, gender, caste, social class, religion, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, family types, and regional variations in cultural practices. As mental health professionals, it is therefore important for us to decolonize our approach and use approaches and interventions that are culturally relevant and affirmative.

We can't choose where and to whom we are born or the kind of privileges that we are born with. But we can choose to stand for and with the less privileged and

marginalized communities who are targets of oppression by taking tangible and consistent actions to dismantle the systems of oppression. Be it women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, caste, colour, race, or socioeconomic levels. As humans, we may all be equals but we all need to check our privileges and be aware of and empathize with the struggle, obstacles, and barriers that some people experience in this journey of life. Allyship is about confronting othering, privilege, bias, and prejudice. We can be an ally.

An ally is a partner who works in solidarity alongside the members of the marginalized communities.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ALLY?

Being an ally is not an identity, allyship is a process of building a relationship based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals or groups of people. It is not self-defined but must be recognized by those seeking to ally.

**LISTENING:** Allyship involves deep listening. It's the first step toward being an ally. Listen to people's lived experiences. What are they saying, when you meet them or on social media, or in the articles you read? Listen to these experiences while keeping your feelings and opinions aside. Reflect and empathize.

**INCREASING AWARENESS:** Seeking, reading, and understanding the history as well as the present issues that people are facing and the struggle in which you are participating. Your education is up to you and no one else.

**SPEAK UP:** Silence allows oppression to continue, so, when you hear someone say something hateful or ignorant call them out, even if they are friends, family, or co-workers. Allyship is about standing up and speaking out on matters of social justice.

**INTERVENE:** Intervene if you see someone being targeted, verbally or physically. But seek their permission first and focus on supporting rather than showing aggression.

**DISCOMFORT:** If you feel uncomfortable about something, sit with it and use it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Acknowledge the pain you may feel but know that the conversation is not about you.

**MISTAKES:** We are bound to make mistakes while navigating an unknown path. Own your mistakes and de-center yourself. When someone calls you out on your mistake, listen, apologize, and change your behaviour going forward.

**STAYING ENGAGED:** Oppression is constant and the oppressed do not have the privilege to "turn off" so, when things get difficult, stay engaged.

**AMPLIFY:** Use your privilege to amplify historically suppressed voices.

Being an effective ally can be hard and is an ongoing journey.

### **Some points to be aware of and avoid:**

- Don't expect to be taught about being an ally.
- Don't compare or compete with "whose struggle is worse".
- Do not assume that oppression is experienced the same way by every member of the marginalized community
- Remember that you are not the only ally. A lot of work has been done before you stepped in. You cannot take the credit.
- Being inclusive and being an ally is a lifelong journey of learning, unlearning, and keeping an open mind.



## CHOSEN FAMILY



***"...queer as not about who you're having sex with, that can be a dimension of it, but queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live."***

***- Bell Hooks***

This was something I made in the presence of some friends. One had control of the music. The other was cooking something in the kitchen. By itself, the painting has no meaning or purpose. I mindlessly splashed around whatever colour I felt like. But this painting means something to me because it happened in the intimacy of just existing with my friends. We didn't have an agenda when we met, we didn't have a goal for our gathering.

This painting captures a moment I had with my some of my chosen family.



## PRATIK'S PARABLES



**THIS SECTION INCLUDES SOME FASCINATING STORIES OF FOLKLORE WHICH WILL INTRIGUE AND INTEREST READERS AT THE SAME TIME!**

Ancient religions had adherents of different beliefs and philosophies. Moral values and concepts of love and sex, as well as good and evil, differed from culture to culture. Some might be surprised to find that in many old religions, mythology is full of gay relationships!

### THE TALE OF SHIKHANDI

According to mythology, Shikhandi was born as Shikhandini, the daughter of Panchla King Drupada and was raised as a son. She was believed to be the reincarnation of Amba who wanted to avenge on Bhishma.

On the tenth day of the war between the Kauravas and Pandavas at Kurukshetra, Bhishma was the biggest challenge for Pandavas. To stop Bhishma, Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to use Shikhandi as a shield.

After facing the Shikhandi in the battlefield, Bhishma, who knew that she was Amba, lowered his weapons. Seizing the opportunity, then Arjuna killed Bhishma.

In one of the Mahabharata versions, you can read about Arjuna's gender variance story. When Arjuna refused Urvashi, she cursed Arjuna, followed by which he was a trans person. The opportunity was used by Arjuna as the perfect disguise during his last year of exile. Arjuna took the name Brihannala and dressed in women's clothes and went to the city ruled by king Virata, where she taught the arts of music, singing and dancing to the princess Uttara and her female attendees.

In another story as per the Padma Purana, one can see Arjuna physically transformed into a woman to take part in Krishna's mystical dance, which only women may attend.

These references to the LGBTQ characters in Indian scriptures go beyond instances of curses leading to the change in gender and one can see the Gods deliberately switching between genders on many occasions.

### THE MIGHTY IILAANDI

Ila was the daughter of Vaivasvata Manu but had to live the life of a man and. Vaivasvata Manu and his wife Shraddha did not have children after several years of marriage.

Manu asked Sage Vasishta to conduct a yajna to get a son. As a result of yajna a daughter was born to Vaivasvata Manu and his wife Shraddha. The newborn was called Ila. Vaivasvata Manu wanted a son who will take over his kingdom. So he complained to Sage Vasishta who immediately changed the girl into a boy and he was called Sudyumna.



A young Sudyumna once entered the cursed forest of Kumaravana near Kailash. This forest was cursed by Shiva and Parvati. Once, Sage Sunaka and others had entered the forest when Shiva and Parvati were making love. The divine couple did not tolerate this intervention and cursed that in future men who will enter the forest will become women. As a result of the curse young Sudyumna became a woman. She again took the name of Ila. Budha, or mercury, one of the Navagrahas fell in love with Ila. They got married and a son named Pururavas was born to them.

Ila once met Sage Vasishta and explained how she had become a woman again.

Sage Vasishta asked her to worship Shiva. Shiva pleased with her devotion gave her the boon that she will be a man every alternate month and a woman during the other months.

## GREEK MYTHOLOGY

### ZEUS AND GANYMEDE

Zeus was quite the personality among the Kings of the Gods in the ancient world. Among his other quirks, he is known for straying from his wife Hera on a number of occasions. One of his lovers was the young man that Homer described as the most beautiful of mortals, Ganymede. It is said that Zeus saw him tending sheep in the field, and was immediately entranced. Morphing himself into an eagle, he swooped down and kidnapped Ganymede, and once he brought him to the heavens, he made him immortal and gave him the duty of cupbearer to the gods. In fact, as Plato points out, Ganymede was so beloved by Zeus that he was the only among his lovers to be granted the gift of immortality. Today, their story is immortalized in the stars - Ganymede is one of the moons that orbits Jupiter (the Roman name for Zeus).

### IANTHE AND IPHIS

Iphis' father wanted a son so badly that when his wife became pregnant, he threatened to kill the child if it were a girl.

When Iphis was born, her mother, in despair, decided to conceal her true gender and raise her as a boy - even her name is gender-neutral. The ruse continued until Iphis reached adulthood, when she arranged to marry the lady lanthe. The two fell deeply in love from the moment they met. Iphis, worried about the marriage in regards to her still-secret gender, prayed at the Temple of Isis the night before her wedding. The goddess turned Iphis into a man, and lanthe and Iphis had a happy marriage thereafter.



## QUARTERLY MENTAL HEALTH CALENDAR

### JULY

- MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

### SEPTEMBER

- SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH
- WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY (SEP. 10)

**TOGETHER LET'S SPREAD AWARENESS AND FIGHT STIGMA!**

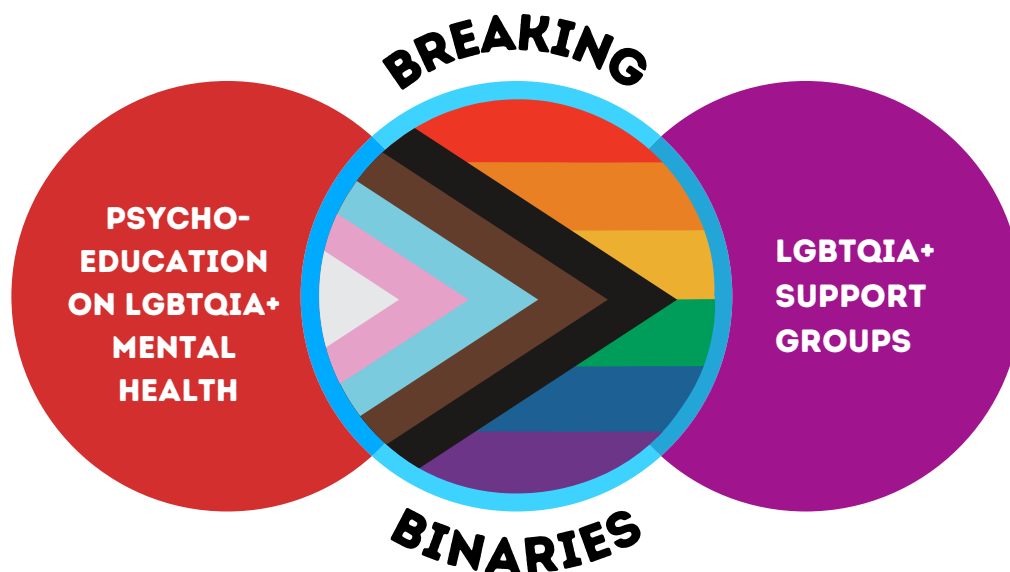
# BREAKING BINARIES

## AN INITIATIVE TOWARDS CREATING A SAFE AND AFFIRMING UNIVERSITY CAMPUS FOR QUEER STUDENTS

Azim Premji University is a vibrant, diverse educational institution which strives to be inclusive, with a strong queer community presence both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Considering the confluence of diverse backgrounds on campus, there are cultural clashes and challenges in the assimilation of various students and members regarding matters of gender, sexuality and queerness.

To address mental health concerns of LGBTQIA+ community members on a social level, the Conversations team has designed an initiative to help create a safe, affirming university campus, called 'Breaking Binaries'.

The Conversations team has 2 counsellors- Veda Dandamudi and Anjana Moraes- who have undergone the Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP) training conducted by Mariwala Health Initiative (MHI). They will be conducting psychoeducation sessions and support groups in the upcoming year, with the help of Peer Support Team (PST) members.



**Psycho-education on LGBTQIA+ Mental Health:** We will be conducting and organizing sessions on LGBTQIA+ mental health and wellbeing with the aim of reducing the negative impact of stigma and minority stress on queer members. They will include activities, discussion and reflection on:

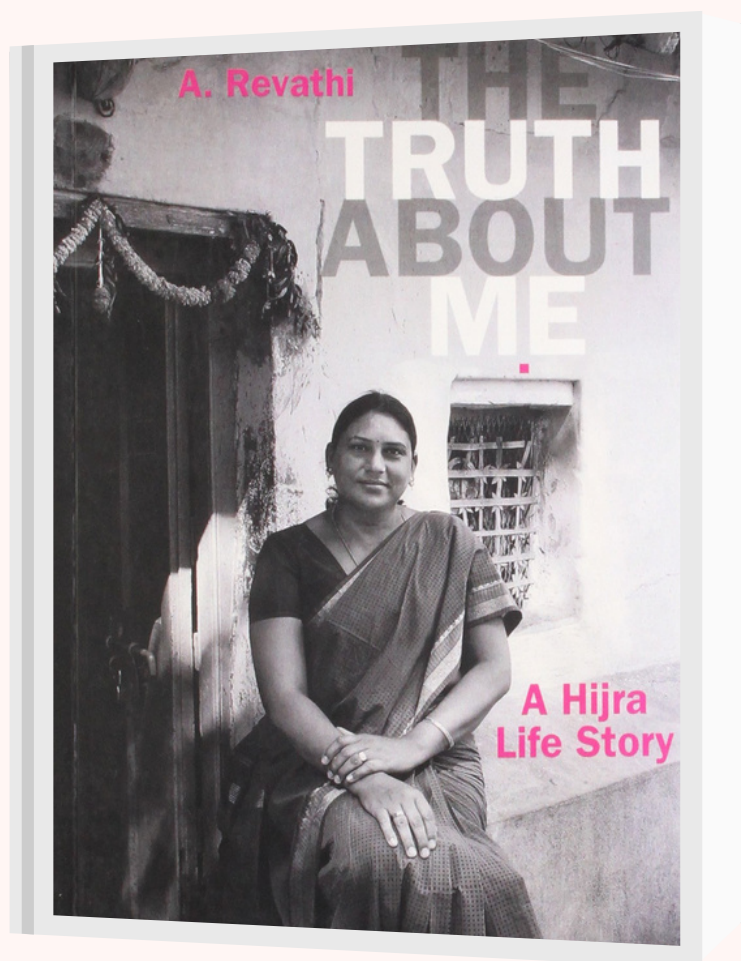
- Adverse impact of erasure/invisibilization, stigma and discrimination on LGBTQIA+ community members mental health
- How to be affirmative and support queer students wellbeing on campus

**Support groups:** Apart from one-to-one counselling, we will also be conducting support groups for LGBTQIA+ identifying students. This space will be held for students to share their concerns and support one another. All members of the group will have to keep what is shared in these groups confidential to ensure a safe space.





## LGBTQIA+ book recommendation

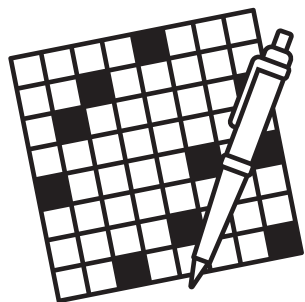


### **THE TRUTH ABOUT ME: A HIJRA LIFE STORY BY A. REVATHI**

**Trigger warning: Sexual and physical abuse, harassment, trauma**

A. Revathi wrote this book to share her life story as a hijra, navigating her transition, societal discrimination and her journey working with Sangama- a sexual minorities, sex workers and people living with HIV human rights organization (and also a partner NGO of the Azim Premji Foundation). If you're interested in queer narratives in the Indian context, do give this book a read!

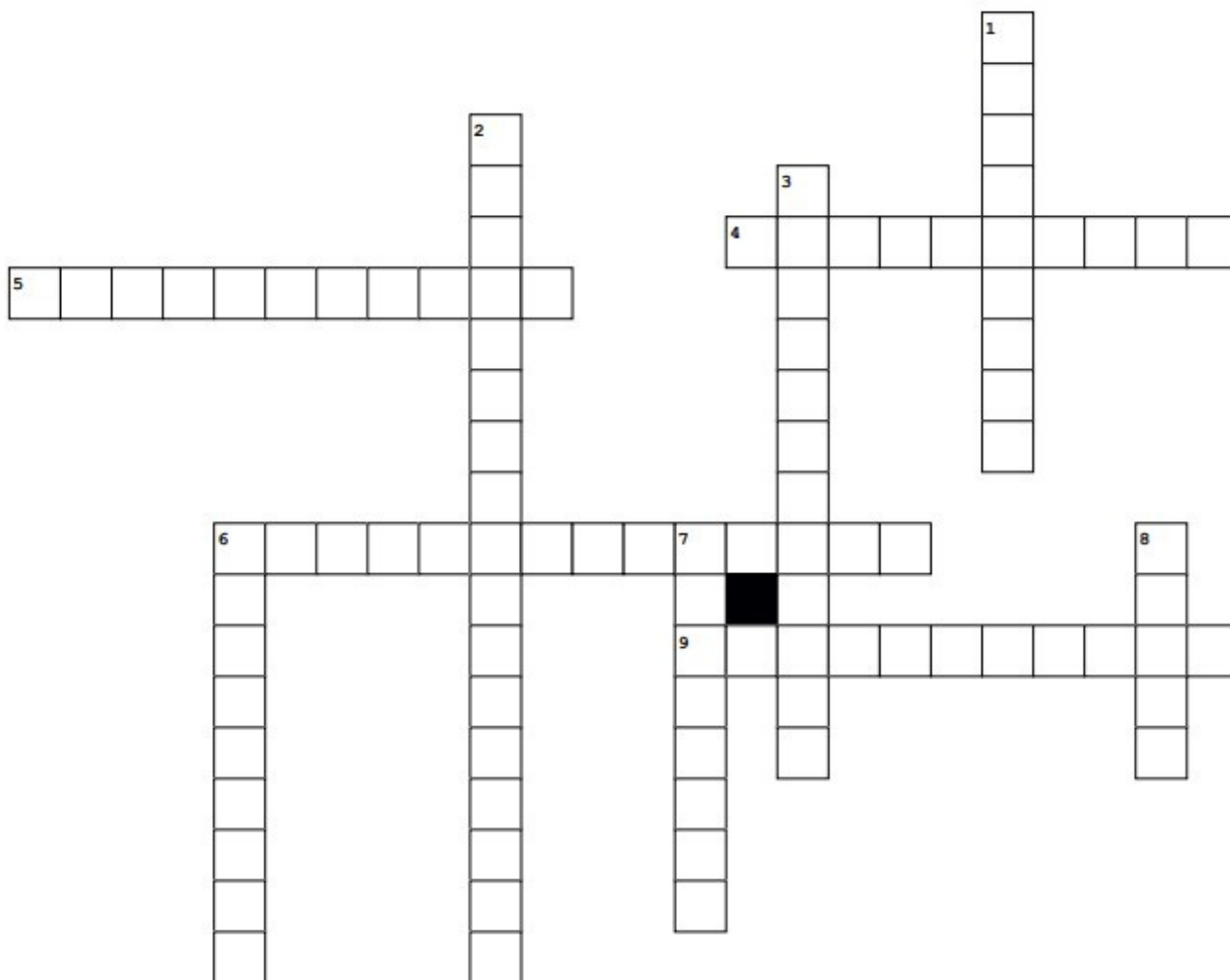
**AVAILABLE TO BORROW FROM THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY!**



# LGBTQIA+ CROSSWORD

Go to the following link to fill out this crossword online!

<https://crosswordlabs.com/view/2022-06-08-698>



## Across

4. Referring to someone via their assigned name rather than their self-identified name
5. When an LGBTQIA+ person comes out and their identity is not acknowledged publicly even though it is known to many people
6. Assumptions that everyone's sex assigned at birth and gender identity are the same
9. Umbrella term referring to someone whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are different

## Down

1. Also known as ethical or consensual nonmonogamy
2. Assumptions that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is the only valid or natural sexuality
3. A system of gender classification in which all people are categorized as being either men or women.
6. The process that people who are LGBTQIA+ go through as they work to accept their sexual orientation or gender identity and share that identity openly with other people
7. According to the WHO, this is an umbrella term used for people who are born with physical or biological sex characteristics that do not fit the traditional definitions of male and female
8. A label that was initially derogatory which the LGBTQIA+ community has reclaimed and now uses with pride

## KEEP EDUCATING YOURSELF!

LGBTQIA+ terminology is vast and continuously evolving in such a way that we need to keep educating ourselves. Here are some resources you can check out to keep learning:

- <https://genderspectrum.org/>
- <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/>
- <https://mhi.org.in/qacp/>
- <https://transstudent.org/graphics/>

## ANSWERS

- Across**
4. Deadnaming
  5. Glass closet
  6. Cisnormativity
  9. Transgender
- Down**
1. Polyamory
  2. Heteronormativity
  3. Gender binary
  6. Coming out
  7. Intersex
  8. Queer

# APPLICATIONS FOR PEER SUPPORT TEAM 7



At Azim Premji University, our approach to Mental Health & Wellbeing is Proactive, Preventive & Supportive. Our objective is to create awareness and destigmatize Mental Health concerns among the members of our community. To achieve this objective, we involve, collaborate and work with all the stakeholders in the community. The Peer Support program is one such initiative that involves the student population to create another layer of support for our students in addition to the Conversations team of counsellors.

Peer Supporters are a voluntary group of students, both UG & PG, who are selected, trained, supervised, and mentored by the Conversations team to provide emotional support to their peers.

## The Objectives:

- ✓ To create awareness to seek help for emotional distress, mental wellbeing, and personal development.
- ✓ To identify and help students in distress.
- ✓ To identify and refer students to the Conversations Team to seek professional help if needed.
- ✓ Equip students to support each other and to build a caring community.

## Eligibility, Selection Process & Training:

We will start and complete the training in November 2022.

## Eligibility:

- UG: 2nd & 3rd year students (as of January 2023)
- PG: 1st year 2nd-semester students (as of January 2023)

We follow a 3-step selection process:

1. **Application to volunteer:** If you are interested in volunteering as a peer supporter, we will be sending an email with an application form.
2. **Face to face interview:** Once we receive your responses, the selected students will receive a mail from the Conversations Team for an interview.
3. **Training:** Selected students will undergo peer support training in basic counselling skills, supervision, and mentoring.

Once the training is completed, the final batch of peer supporters will be announced.

If you are interested in applying to be a part of the seventh batch of peer support, kindly fill in the application form that we have emailed.

Looking forward to your responses!

**NEWSLETTER DESIGN AND  
LAYOUT CREDIT: VEDA DANDAMUDI**