

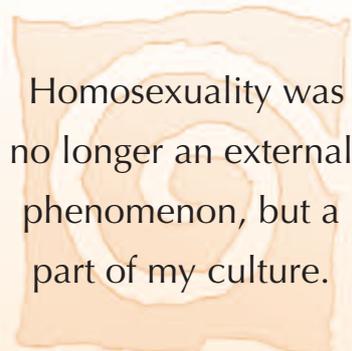
# Evolving into Self

*“I find it challenging, especially when I meet people who twist scriptures and quotes from religious books to promote hatred.”*

I was born into a very religious family, and for as long as I can remember weekends were about spiritual discussions, prayers and feeding the poor. My mother is a very caring person; she took care of the homeless, abandoned animals and the needy. But above all she had an insatiable need to find peace through meditation, which involved extended sessions of prayers in a congregation at the gurdwara, at our house, or through pilgrimage.

All I wanted was fun and play and naturally I rebelled. Homosexuality was never discussed in any conversation, and I started to grow up with the idea that it is a phenomenon external to my culture - this was a very lonely feeling. But things changed, I noticed one of our family friends was in relationship with a man – he was

married and had a beautiful, loving wife who I admired. This had a huge impact on me. Homosexuality was no longer an external phenomenon, but a part of my culture. Seemingly it was never discussed and as long as you got married and had children then it was almost excusable. I did not want to grow like that and cheat someone, and even more importantly I did not want to cheat myself. I had to rebel! I had to flee. This came about through education and by moving abroad - I moved to the UK 12 years ago. It gave me space and time to fend off any marriage offers, and to be myself. Eventually I told some of my family members, most of them were cool about it and for some it was hard reality check, as they had no point of reference, as most homosexual men lived their lives as bisexual.



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# “Manas Ki Jaat Sabhe eke phechanbo - Treat all humankind as one”

But all along I had a deep faith in myself, and an unflinching love for god. I developed a unique relationship, which was not prescribed by anyone but self developed. I became more casual about religion. I never hated what it preached but questioned what was being practiced and propagated by the institution which runs it. I have grown closer to god now; I try to pray regularly and practise some of the basic principles of Sikhism – love, and to care about all humanity without any distinction.

Sometimes, I find it challenging, especially when I meet people who twist scriptures and quotes from religious books to promote hatred. But I remind myself every time that at the end of the day we are social animals - we prey on the weakest and bully them in

the name of sex, gender, caste, colour and class. We can all easily judge others, and we do. The culture in which we grow up, or that which we adopt, can have a deep impact, directly and subconsciously, on our thinking. So it is very important to remind ourselves of the values of love and care, and I got these through my mother and her own quest for god. I find peace in my religion but on my own terms. I will never take something off the shelf and practise it. It took a long time for me to relate to god and I am still on that journey, but a very pleasant one this time - I don't feel inferior to anyone. As the scriptures says “Manas Ki Jaat Sabhe eke phechanbo - Treat all humankind as one” I have the license to be who I am.



Sarbat was founded in 2007 as a means of promoting the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) Sikhs in Britain and globally. Sarbat is a social, political and support group for LGBT Sikhs. We offer a platform for likeminded Sikhs from all walks of life, and aim to promote the LGBT Sikh cause in a fair and courteous manner. We also want LGBT issues to be discussed openly within our communities without the taboo or any awkwardness attached to it. We hold regular social events in London, and as often as

possible in other UK cities. These events provide opportunities for LGBT Sikhs to meet others in a safe and friendly environment.

The Sarbat website - [www.sarbat.net](http://www.sarbat.net) - also hosts a discussion forum, where members can meet and interact as well as post articles of interest. The name 'Sarbat' is taken from the final couplet in the Ardas or the Sikh congregational prayer of supplication, where Sikhs pray for the happiness and goodwill of the whole of mankind.