

ANBU UK Ain't nothin' but a She thing event- Interactive questions and answers



Saturday 17th November 2018 @Crypt on the Green

Compiled by ANBU UK (a multidisciplinary team including doctors and psychology professionals) and guest speakers Bava Dharani and Meera Narendra.

No	Question	Answer
1	How much support do you get now?	Answered at event
2	Thank you so much for sharing	Thank you
3	DO you feel like your abuse has impacted your future potential relationships?	Answered at event
4	What was your turning point? - when did you finally go, this is not right and I need to tell someone?	Answered at event
5	Jumani: did your uncles get arrested? Did you report it??	Answered at event
6	Not a question but just wanted to say you're both amazing and incredibly inspirational! Carry on what you're doing! x	Thank you
7	Thanks for sharing. Was this teacher prosecuted?	Answered at event
8	We need to have more conversations like this. Thanks so much	Thank you
9	A. - It seems like your mother was really supportive from the day you told her and offered outlets and learning- how did she know how to support you?	Answered at event
10	What does closure look like to you?	Answered at event
11	Regarding someone else sharing the story of another's individuals, what do you think about the action of 'thesocialbutterfly' called, time to talk taboo	Answered at event
12	Do you think you can forgive them? And have they accepted their actions?	You may hear that you should forgive and forget, and this can become a pressure. There is no right or wrong way of healing or in fact dealing with a perpetrator. It is important not to put too much pressure on the journey. It is a personal choice to forgive, and it is a place you may or may not come to. The most important thing is to focus on your own healing and coming to a place of self-compassion. You can then decide what is best for you – no-one else can walk your path or make those decisions for you.

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13	Have the people you were abused by faced consequences?	See Q12
14	Have both of your abusers been punished?	See Q12
15	How do you feel after breaking the silence as suppose to before that?	Arathi: When I first told my mother I felt relieved. Felt so free and felt like I was saved from death. I slept peacefully after. This all was possible as my mother trusted me and believed me. I did feel a bit low in confidence of thinking if my mom decides to tell people how can I face them. But the path was so easy as my mom handled it so well. When I first told my story to others I did regret thinking what they may think about me and how will it affect my relationship with them. Later I learnt to accept that not everyone will take your story to heart and treat you with respect. Sometimes people will use it as a way to bring you down, make you feel uncomfortable and doubt yourself. Now I have started to heal so learnt to let go of all negative people and negative thoughts.
16	Did you ever have feelings of seeking revenge? Or wishing bad karma/consequences on them? How did you overcome this?	Arathi : Yes at a young age I did wish bad for a man who hurt me in ways I could not understand. I wish he will vanish so that I will not see him again. Later as I was unable to do nothing I satisfied myself wishing karma would get him. God will punish him. Later I felt I wanted revenge as I am the one to suffer and he moved on with his life and potentially hurting another innocent girl. But now I have realised nothing will change what has happened. Trying to hold on will only keep me unhappy and hurt me more. I have realised other than trying to change what has happened I can start to learn how I can use my experience to help others with their experience.
17	I went through a similar story to Jumani what is the process anbu helps survivors?	Currently we support survivors by signposting them to organisation we know and trust that are able to offer information, counselling, and other services that may be needed. From next year we hope to run groups for survivors focusing on talking group therapy, art therapy and yoga. We are also hoping to get our ANBU helpline up and running next year.
18	how does the "community" influence differ here to back home and do you think we are progressing to a more open approach to discussing these topics?	The community here (particularly London) is influenced by a multitude of different cultures within a Westernised context this is quite different to Sri Lanka where there are fewer influences. Unfortunately, we don't have baseline information to know whether we are progressing to a more open approach, however if we take event turnouts, social media participating and the collaboration work we do - it would certainly seem that we are heading in the right direction!
19	Have you confronted your abusers?	See Q12

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20	How do you feel it affected your personality as a young woman? How did you overcome feeling guarded?	<p>Life experience invariably will have an impact on our personalities as we develop mechanisms to cope with trauma. These may be helpful at the time for survival, but later in life we may find these mechanisms don't support us in same was as change and grow. This takes time and self refrection to unpick the complexities of trauma and its impact. if you feel ready and want to challenge any thoughts and behaviours holding you back, there are many different approaches available for you. Some people find talking in a non-judgmental group is helpful, or 1:1 counselling. Befriending groups like MyNanbee are great spaces to talk about feelings in an informal setting. Sometimes reading books and podcasts can help show a new way forward that works best for you now. Please see ANBU UK signposting links.</p>
21	What's your advice on how we speak about these issues with young children growing up in Tamil communities?	<p>We encourage open and transparent communication with the next generations. We are completely aware that these can be difficult to have especially when this may not have been taught to us so it's important for us to think about ways of communication. These can include using children's books, parenting advice websites or videos to help teach them about safe touch.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Book: My Body! What I Say Goes!: Teach children body safety, safe/unsafe touch, private parts, secrets/surprises, consent, respect - Jayneen Sanders. 2. http://familyhelpcenter.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/18-Teaching-Good-Touch-Bad-Touch1.pdf 3. https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule
22	For Bhava: would you agree that Due to colonisation/westernisation caused that we are not LGBTQ+ inclusive anymore?	<p>Bava: I definitely think colonisation, specifically British colonisation is an important reason for why we are less inclusive of LGBTQI+ people. You can see this from the laws like section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in India, which was directly imposed on Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka (where it is section 365/365 A). However, many of these countries have internalised the idea that homosexuality is a western concept that the global South is not ready to accept. I have seen this in Singapore- where many of our politicians claim that we need to safeguard our "Asian values" and not allow western ideas like acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people be pushed in our community and disrupt our social fabric. However, these laws just highlight that homophobia was the true western/colonial import, not homosexuality- as there was no clear pre-colonial law in any of these cultures prohibiting or punishing Queerness. There has been a lot of work in India about this idea, which was highlighted in the very recent Indian Supreme Court judgment on the successful repeal of section 377. This is a great example of how if we acknowledge the role of colonisation, there can be better push for change.</p> <p>On the other hand, I also think the impact of legal reform and repealing of colonial laws should not be overstated. The internalised homophobic and transphobic mind-set in our community needs to be addressed in our everyday lives as well. Even young Tamils have internalised transphobic/homophobic language like Camp, kambi or onbothu into everyday conversations. This is only made worse by our blind following of Tamil cinema and songs- most of which only include Queer characters for comic relief. However, I must admit there have been a few films recently that have given more agency and character development to Queer characters. For example, Aruvi (2017), a Tamil film that centres a female protagonist</p>

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		<p>that explores a range of issues such as, misogyny, discrimination against HIV positive individuals and transphobia.</p> <p>I will end with saying that colonisation is definitely an important reason for our lack of inclusiveness, but other factors play a role as well- some of these factors being: toxic masculinity, film culture, marking female sexuality as a taboo subject, etc.</p> <p>This is just my opinion and I am very happy to clarify or further discuss any of the issues discussed above.</p>
23	<p>What was the film called about lgbt+ in the Tamil community?</p>	<p>Bava: These are the Tamil films/documentaries from the list: My Son Is Gay (Tamil film) : a film about the relationship between a mother and son, who comes out as a homosexual. Ladies and Gentlewomen (Tamil documentary) Content warning: suicide. The documentary narrates the tale of Tija and Bija, a lesbian couple believed to be from Rajasthan, and is also about a Tamil folktale that features the lovers Pappathi and Karupaayi. It is broadly about love, life and suicide among lesbians in India. Is it too much to ask? (Tamil documentary) The documentary revolves around two Tamil trans women (Thirunangaigal) who face different issues such as transphobia, sexism, casteism and classism when trying to find a place to rent out in Tamil Nadu</p>
24	<p>For Katherine/Praveen: how do you think we can empower males to show affection, feelings and emotions?</p>	<p>Praveen: I feel like a lot of this relates back to the previous ANBU UK event from late May (Tamil male in contemporary society). Before feelings and emotions can be expressed - of any gender, we should create a safe environment conducive to this. Listening actively with care and no judgment. It doesn't necessarily mean flat out asking how a man feels or what makes him sad, but not mocking someone when they start expressing. It's about shutting down toxic masculine behaviours and language that can belittle a person's experience.</p> <p>When anyone starts expressing themselves, recognising emotions and possibly relating very similar experiences will only act as positive feedback loop. Reaffirming the value of this.</p>

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25	Praveen: do you think that the oppressions of male Emotions of our parent generations lead to the lack of affection they Show towards us?	<p>Praveen: In short yes. Before I continue, it's important to recognise while there are many (problematic) things that have been propagated by the 1st generation into the second generation, we can only put so much accountability on the 1st generation. From my experience emotions have been very repressed within man within the 1st generation. As a result of the struggle for self-determination back home and being one the younger diaspora communities, Tamils generally have adopted a very stoic attitude to survive and consequently rise within London/English society.</p> <p>This has transcended into what I feel is a very utilitarian approach to showing affection/emotion. The affection I received from my amma and my relatives only came out in times of deep trouble and hardship. In fact, the most affection ironically, my sister and I received from amma, was the couple years we were going through our worst troubles when we left my father. Emotion & affection come out intensely and infrequently which necessarily isn't healthy. I do agree that in the 1st generation men in my life, there is very little emotion and affection exhibited. The two men that do, I have noticed have children that are very adept and communicating feelings and ideas even from a very young age.</p> <p>This is very much based on my observations & interpretations of the Tamil community.</p>
26	How do you help men to emotionally share?	See Q24
27	How has the civil war in Sri Lanka affected the Tamil community when it comes to abuse? Does war trauma contribute to sexual and domestic abuse?	<p>This paper summarises some findings by Dr Daya Somasundaram where he outlined the state of communities in the Northern province a few years after the end of the war in Sri Lanka.</p> <p>http://ices.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/psychosocial-assessment.pdf</p> <p><i>'..a vicious cycle where socio-cultural disruptions lead to psychological distress, which in turn prevents socio-economic participation. He suggested that data indicated high levels of trauma among all sections of the population, with many suffering from PTSD, anxiety, depression, and somatoform disorders (the manifestation of psychological distress in the form of physical symptoms); much of which was connected to the direct experience of violence, torture, and imprisonment, as well as from living within what he calls a 'repressive ecology.'</i></p> <p><i>'A repressive ecology is characterized by a lack of security (coupled with generalized terror), and a lack of confidence in institutions and one another.....Furthermore, he suggested that unpredictability, low efficacy, low levels of control of anti-social behaviour, anomie, learned helplessness, and thwarted aspirations can be witnessed through increased levels of alcohol and substance abuse and addiction, child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse and suicide or attempted suicides. Additionally, he reported that rates of teenage pregnancy and domestic abuse are increasing. In general, he termed the general social disintegration and collective psychological distress thus experienced as a collective trauma.'</i></p>

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28	How do we recognise hidden oppression in ourselves as women?	Answered at event
29	How do we build a community of women online?	Answered at event
30	Do you think we as females, find it difficult to own/have our own space? Would we always look for Male validation, how can we move away from this?	This is an interesting question, especially since the theme of the discussion panel was hidden oppression. It could be said that it is this hidden oppression experienced by women (knowingly or unknowingly) that restricts women from owning spaces and seeking validation from the dominant gender. Perhaps also because there are not many women-only spaces to challenge this concept, finding other like-minded women can help explore and challenge any internalised oppression and contribute to finding strength and empowerment from our own voice without seeking any outsider validation.
31	Bava- how do we balance cultural expectations and our own wants in life	Bava: This is something I am still trying to figure out as well. I do think we need to stop thinking that Tamil cultural expectations and our wants in life- be it living an open queer life or anything else, are polar opposites of a binary. I think it is possible to live out both fully and wholly, without feeling too pressurised to strike a balance between both. This idea of trying to strike a balance has affected my mental health, and definitely many others. To think you can only be half queer and half Tamil, that is just such a destructive way of compartmentalising your whole self. And this is why although it is great to have these identity markers, sometimes relying on these words to define us to ourselves can leave us feeling more empty than full. I think an important step would be to create a space for Tamil queers, where we can meet others and share our stories and our differences. I am sure there are very different contexts and stories within the Tamil community – for example the experiences of mainland Tamils (in Sri Lanka and India) will obviously be very different to Tamil diaspora in Europe, let alone Tamil diaspora in Singapore, Malaysia or South Africa. Maybe if we acknowledge the nuances within the experiences of Tamil queer people in a space meant for us, we can better understand what it means to be Tamil and Queer. This is just my opinion and I am very happy to clarify or further discuss any of the issues discussed above.
32	Question for Meera -if you were aware of a victim of revenge porn, but this person has not spoken out about it, what do you believe is the best course of action	Meera: This question is quite difficult to answer as there are many aspects involved. For one, how close are you to the victim? Often bringing it up to the victim may have a negative impact and the victim may feel a type of way. However, if it was me, and I became aware of someone who was a victim of revenge porn, but the person had not spoken about it, I would let the victim know I am aware that they are a victim and offer the individual as much support as needed but not to the point I am pressuring them or making them feel awkward, offering them a chance to talk if they feel they would like to. If they do, listen with care and try to provide information on options available to them so they take full ownership of what they would want to do next etc. I definitely wouldn't suggest going to the police without the victim's knowledge as that can lead to more trauma.

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33	Do you think the detrimental effect of colonisation has had a direct impact on our parents' views re interracial marriages?	Everyone has a different experience of colonialization, some people have positive experiences and some are negative, this may play some part in views of marriage, but hard to say in relation to the question.
34	Praveen: Being male brought up by woman, did it cause any friction in getting into a relationship? If so how did you overcome it?	<p>Praveen: Being brought up by women, didn't cause any more friction for me getting into a relationship compared to friends that had the standard family dynamic.</p> <p>When in a relationships, I think my relationships have generally been healthy - while in them and once they have ended, I owe that down to my amma and periamma giving me fairly frank (sometimes strange) advice and recalling's of their experiences. Without this I wouldn't have navigated my early experiences as well as I did.</p> <p>What did cause friction was the difference in expectations of what a relationship should bring. This, however, is more of an issue for the Tamil community at large. I've found that in my experience, relationships can be viewed in a very utilitarian way by the 1st generation i.e. what earning potential does the potential partner command? Can they have kids before 30? Some 2nd generation views & expectations have moved away from this, exploring compatibility on things such as views on society, personality traits etc.</p> <p>As a result, relationships and interactions with girls in my younger years were deemed unnecessary.</p>