

## GATEWAY DOCUMENT 4.6

# Religions and same-sex relationships

### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT TO *REsilience*?

Attitudes towards same-sex relationships vary between and within religions, many of which regard such relationships as raising profound theological and moral issues. Some interpretations of religious teachings which condemn same-sex relationships are in some cases used to justify hate crimes, violence or other extreme action. However, other interpretations lead to taking a neutral or supportive position.

### KEY QUESTIONS

#### Why is this a contentious topic?

Of all the contentious issues being considered by *REsilience*, that of same-sex relationships is perhaps the most immediately relevant, universal and virtually unavoidable in the lives of students. Questions such as those listed below will almost certainly arise at some point in their teenage lives. Working out how to explore and make sense of them can be challenging in both personal and religious terms.

- What views are taken of same-sex relationships by different religions traditions – historically and today?
- What are the reasons that a significant number of people in many religious traditions are opposed to same-sex relationships?
- The law permits religious groups to discriminate in employment on the basis of sexual orientation in certain circumstances 'to avoid conflicting with the strongly held religious convictions of a significant number of the religion's followers'<sup>1</sup>? (quoted from Schedule 9 of the Equality Act 2010). Why?
- Why do people in some religious traditions question whether it is acceptable for people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual to be religious leaders?

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<sup>1</sup> Some religious bodies have exemptions under UK equality legislation, which mean that gay, lesbian and bisexual people do not have the same rights and protections that they enjoy in other employment contexts in cases. Specifically, in certain circumstances, churches and other religious organisations can choose not to appoint a person because of their sexual orientation where the job being filled is, for example, a Minister of the religion and where the appointment of a gay or lesbian person would conflict with the religion's doctrine or would offend a significant number of its followers. This exception only applies where the job in question is closely connected to the core purpose of the organised religion.

- Should faith communities carry out civil partnership ceremonies in their places of worship?
- Should same-sex couples be treated comparably with heterosexual couples when it comes to such matters as adopting children, having fertility treatments and using surrogate mothers or donor sperm to have children?

Almost everyone, including the teacher, will have their own opinions, thoughts and beliefs about same-sex relationships. These could be based on a variety of factors including: the individual's own sexuality, their confidence about this, moral views and/or religious beliefs. Family and upbringing, culture, peer influence and the media will also play their part.

Irrespective of personal opinion it is very important for teachers to communicate clearly to students that civil partnerships are now an established feature of British society, with full legal recognition. Teachers need also to emphasise that whilst some religious groups (or strands within them) contest the morality of same-sex relationships, and while strong opinions are likely to be found in every school, and perhaps every classroom, nothing can justify hostility or bullying on the grounds of disapproval of such relationships.

There is a continuing debate about whether sexual orientation is a genetic or a lifestyle issue - the nature/nurture debate. Some people see having an orientation towards people of the same-sex as a 'condition' that can be changed or 'cured', or as a matter of personal choice. The overwhelming majority of medical, psychological and scientific opinion takes a different view - that sexual orientation is not a matter of choice and cannot be changed.

### **Why is RE relevant to this topic?**

As has been made clear, religious attitudes towards same-sex relationships vary between and within religions and it is important that students are able to recognise both that there is a spectrum of views within and between faiths and that there are also humanist views (see the Appendix for greater detail).

Most religions do not regard a same-sex orientation as intrinsically wrong. It is the physical expression of such sexual attraction that is widely condemned by religions. Opponents of the legal and social acceptance of same-sex relationships often cite religious arguments to support their views. However, for many individuals and groups within all religions there is a greater acceptance of same-sex relationships. Here the emphasis tends to be on religious teachings that emphasise compassion and love and afford dignity and worth to people irrespective of sexual orientation.

In contexts where same-sex relationships are condemned by religious groups, a distinction is sometimes made between practice (which may be forbidden) and people (who should be treated with respect). However, some religious responses to same-sex relationships are very negative and at the extreme end of the spectrum there are examples of religious websites that incite hatred towards people who are in same-sex relationships, although these generally represent minority groups within the religious traditions (see Gateway 2.13). In some parts of the world, violent acts against lesbian, gay and bisexual people are carried out under a religious banner. This includes stoning to death, beheading and hanging. In Uganda, proposed anti-homosexuality legislation has been condemned by some, but not most, Christian denominations. The rejection by influential religious groups

of the view that same-sex orientation are natural and morally neutral may well contribute to homophobia in society and to bullying and disrespectful attitudes.

### **What classroom challenges might arise in RE?**

Should all mention of same-sex sexual orientation and relationships be kept out of the RE classroom? Given the diversity of religious and non-religious beliefs and viewpoints about sexuality, and its great importance and relevance to most students in their teenage years, that is a hard argument to sustain. Discussion of same-sex orientation in a religious and philosophical context is not only acceptable, it is necessary; it contributes to our knowledge of the world, can help to combat homophobia and homophobic bullying, and exemplifies how theological and moral debate can have a direct impact on how people live their lives.

How might this affect staff and students? In every school there will be a proportion of students who are recognising their same-sex orientation or struggling to come to terms with it (the same may be true for members of staff). Individuals, still at a stage of exploring their own sexuality, may feel intimidated or threatened if they feel themselves to be different but are unable to express their identity. This may be compounded if they belong to a faith that teaches that same-sex relationships or sexual acts are wrong. It may also be an issue if there are others in the group who belong to such a faith or are unsure of their own sexuality. Amongst adolescents, non-conformity, difference or 'otherness' are often triggers for prejudice, discrimination or bullying and studies have shown that homophobic bullying is a major issue in schools. Use of the term 'gay' to imply 'poor' or 'less valued' should be confronted because of the casual homophobia it represents. Similar usage of terms with a racist connotation would not be accepted. This is both a curriculum and a pastoral issue.

### **How can teachers address such challenges?**

Student discussion needs to be informed, not based on guesswork or hearsay. The Appendix gives an overview of the teachings of some religious groups, and suggests where further information can be found. However, no teacher can be an expert and comprehensively well informed on all theological, sociological and scientific aspects of the subject so an exploratory approach is helpful here as in many of the *REsilience* curriculum issues. Further, teachers need to be sensitive to the personal feelings of individuals and cannot know the background and current circumstances of everyone in the class. Guidelines for handling discussion can be found in Gateway Document 2.7.

## NEXT STEPS

### Signposts for further reading

Footnotes to the appendix give details of a range of websites that deal with gay and lesbian issues from the perspective of different religions and beliefs.

### Signposts for further resources

The Stonewall website gives help, advice and useful information and guidance on dealing with homophobic bullying

[http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education\\_for\\_all/guidance/3002.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/guidance/3002.asp)

*Faith, values and sex and relationships education factsheet* (2004) Sex Education Forum

Blake, S and Katrak, Z (2002) *Faith, values and sex and relationships education* National Children's Bureau (available from [www.ncb.org.uk/pubsearch\\_27\\_.htm](http://www.ncb.org.uk/pubsearch_27_.htm))

A recent news item on the interpretation of the law on same-sex relationships

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/8413196.stm>

### Signposts for further action

Consider developing ways in which P4C or other discussion and enquiry techniques could enable students to express their beliefs and viewpoints, whilst at the same time respecting and valuing the different beliefs and viewpoints of others (for further information and guidance see Gateway 3.1).

Consider discussing issues surrounding high profile cases in the media, for example, the ordination of a gay bishop in the USA or the registrar who was disciplined for refusing, as a matter of religious conscience, to officiate at civil partnership ceremonies.

Review the extent to which the school provides a safe environment for all students irrespective of their sexual orientation. Homophobia, like any form of discrimination, should be tackled through a whole school approach.

## APPENDIX

### Same-sex relationships - religious and moral perspectives

In any discussion of sexual morality including same-sex relationships, students are likely to draw on religious teachings or deeply held moral positions based on non-religious beliefs. This appendix

1. draws attention to a number of points that it may be important for teachers to bear in mind, and in some cases share with students.
2. briefly outlines the position within major religious and belief traditions concerning same-sex relationships.

## Considerations when looking at religious texts<sup>2</sup>

Religious believers, from some traditions more than others, will sometimes quote what appear to them to be decisive verses or passages from a holy book and believe that they thereby settle all arguments. In such cases a teacher might point out that:

- not all members of the class share the same religious beliefs and that the holy book being quoted is not relevant for some people in the class, therefore students can be challenged to produce alternative arguments which are not based on religion alone
- no scriptural texts were originally written in English and if religious quotations are to be discussed it is important to look to reliable commentaries to see whether there are discussions relating to the translation, or to alternative possible translations given the historical and cultural conditions within which the text was written / revealed
- even where texts appear quite straight-forward there are always issues of interpretation: it is a reasonable supposition that religious believers will not hold God to be confused or inconsistent so where one religious text appears to contradict or be inconsistent with another from the same source then the religious tradition is likely already to have generated numerous, often incompatible, accounts of how the texts can be reconciled. Particular criteria may be used to justify the favouring of one interpretation over another
- students need to be alerted to the challenges of putting oneself in the place of the original readers of religious texts. Most religious traditions have within them procedures for understanding and responding to historical and intellectual developments that were not foretold or obviously foreseen by their scriptures or its earliest interpreters.

Where beliefs are strongly rooted in a community it is natural for people to assume that these beliefs derive from, or certainly are supported by, their religion. Holy books are pored over for evidence of God's approval or condemnation of ... whatever. And so, for example, some Christians have found, and some continue to find, biblical support (amongst other things) for the domination of women, for slavery, for racial segregation, and for condemnation of same-sex relationships. But when, for whatever reason, social mores change, then after a period of time more and more Christians find that the Bible no longer supports the position they previously took, even though not a word has changed. Given this history it is worth looking at three of the most often quoted Biblical passages seen as condemning same-sex relationships:

### **Leviticus 18: 22 and 20:13**

*Leviticus 18:22 "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."<sup>3</sup>*

*Leviticus 20:13 "If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death - their bloodguilt is upon them."*

The first thing to say here is that there is widespread agreement that in the first of these quotations the original Hebrew is difficult to understand and therefore all translations involve some guesswork. Different academic commentators have suggested that these

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<sup>2</sup> These considerations would be useful when looking at religious texts generally and their relevance is not restricted to the present case.

<sup>3</sup> All Bible quotations taken from the New Standard Revised Version (1989) - widely held to be a high quality and close to literal translation of the original Hebrew and Greek text.

passages only refer to Jewish men resident in the land of Israel, participating in anal sex. Some commentators have added that these verses relate to a state of ritual purity necessary only for those involved in Temple sacrifices whilst others, on the basis of Leviticus Ch 18, verses 3 to 5 state that what is at issue here is the separation of Israelite practices from those of Egypt and Canaan.<sup>4</sup>

An obvious question to raise with students is that if these verses are directed at Jews, Christians and others living in the twenty-first century, what about all the other laws to be found in the book of Leviticus (or elsewhere in the Bible) e.g. ch 19 verses 27 & 28 “You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard. You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you.”

### **Romans 1: 24 – 27**

*“(24) Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (26) For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, (27) and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”*

Looking at these verses it is very clear that when the apostle Paul wrote about same-sex relationships he had no conception of a loving, equal, lifelong, committed relationship between two people. Paul is concerned here with people manifesting ‘degrading passions’. It is reasonable to ask whether this passage has anything useful to say about same-sex relationships in the twenty-first century.

## **Religious approaches to same-sex relationships**

It is hardly news that many believers, across most religions, have difficulties in fully accepting same-sex relationships. Of course, many non-religious people have similar difficulties and it is worth remembering that male homosexual practices were forbidden in the UK until the passing of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, and in America it was only in 1973 that ‘homosexuality’ was dropped from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. What follows is an effort to summarise the many complex and multi-sided discussions currently ongoing within major religious and belief traditions. In each case footnotes give details of websites where these questions can be explored further.

In cases where same-sex relationships are in theory accepted there may nevertheless be a difference between the ideal and the reality; this is clear from websites where religious adherents from particular traditions discuss their situation.

## **Bahá’í attitudes to same-sex relationships**

The Bahá’í faith is absolutely clear that sex is only acceptable within the traditional marriage situation of the union of a man and a woman. Homosexual activity is not, in principle, seen as worse or worthy of greater condemnation than other forbidden

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<sup>4</sup> “You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the Lord your God. You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the Lord.”

behaviour such as the drinking of alcohol or gambling and a Bahá'í who is actively gay may be subject to sanction only if her or his life-style brings opprobrium onto the Bahá'í community. Commitment to the Bahá'í faith involves acceptance of the infallibility of the rulings of a governing body, the Universal House of Justice, so there is no option for individuals to seek ways of interpreting the Bahá'í scriptures to support same-sex sexual relationships.

## Buddhist attitudes to same-sex relationships

Buddhism teaches that people should refrain from sexual misconduct, but does not explicitly specify that same-sex relationships constitute misconduct. It is regarded in some schools of Buddhism as a barrier on the spiritual journey.

## Christian attitudes to same-sex relationships

An Anglican priest summarised Christian attitudes recently by saying, 'We are not of one mind on this.' It is though the case that Christians worldwide are overwhelmingly opposed to same-sex relationships with the contrary position only significantly represented in western Europe, north America, Australia and New Zealand. Nevertheless, some churches or religious groups, most notably the Methodists and the Religious Society of Friends, have taken an institutionally positive stance towards same-sex relationships, whilst openly gay Christians find, in practice, a warm welcome within many Anglican congregations and some Roman Catholic ones although institutionally both Churches are opposed to such relationships.<sup>5</sup>

## Hindu attitudes to same-sex relationships

Unlike any of the other religious traditions regularly taught in schools Hinduism can lay claim to an historical tolerance of diverse sexual identities both in its scriptures and cultural artefacts.<sup>6</sup> The "Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association" (GALVA) has sought statements from a number of leading Hindu religious leaders and published them on its website.<sup>7</sup> Some extracts from one of these statements, which is typical, include:

*"Being non-dogmatic and non-institutional, there can be no official Hindu dogma or position on the subject of homosexuality or 'gay marriage.' ...*

*'Firstly, to judge whether something is morally wrong or right we need to establish that there was free will and ability to choose in the matter. The Hindu scriptures declare homosexuality an orientation that is karmically predisposed and not a matter of choice:*

*'The Self, which is enveloped by ignorance, is sometimes embodied as a male, sometimes as a female and sometimes as a homosexual (ubhaya). According to its deeds and the nature one acquires thereby, one may be born as a god, a human or a beast.' (Srimad Bhagavatam 4.29.29) ...*

*...'One of the greatest of the Sri Vaishnava Acharyas—Pillai Lokacharya—was of the view that all forms of sensuality and self-enjoyment are incompatible with our essential nature, which is to find our delight in and be a source of pleasure to Krishna alone.*

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<sup>5</sup> Religious Society of Friends (Quakers): <http://www.quaker.org.uk/>; Methodist Church <http://www.methodist.org.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> Hindu Council UK <http://www.hindu counciluk.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.galva108.org/otherperspectives.html>

*'But in an imperfect world we should at least try and maintain the highest Dharmic standards in all our relationships with whomsoever they may be.'*"

Hindu religious literature has long recognised a third gender that is a mixture of male and female natures and since 2008 the Indian state of Tamil Nadu has recognised this on an official document on which people are required to register their gender. Some Hindu priests have been happy to bless gay unions and a frequent explanation is that as the soul has no gender in Hinduism; when two men or two women wish to marry this is because they are souls who in a previous incarnation, as a man and a woman, were married.

None of this is to say that all Hindus interpret their traditions similarly. Gay people in Hindu society have not always found their situation easy or received social or familial acceptance.

## Humanist attitudes to same-sex relationships

'Humanism' is a word with many meanings, by no means all implying atheistic beliefs. However, in the context of religious education the word is generally taken to imply the broad set of beliefs and values espoused by the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) as represented in the United Kingdom by a number of organisations, most prominently by the British Humanist Association (BHA).<sup>8</sup> All member organisations have to accept the IHEU Minimum Statement on Humanism:

*'Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.'*

It follows from this statement that Humanists are fully supportive of same-sex relationships and indeed there is a Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA) which describes itself thus:

*'GALHA provides a voice for the many non-religious in the lesbian and gay community in the United Kingdom and elsewhere and promotes a rational humanist approach to homosexuality and to lesbian, gay and bisexual rights as human rights. Founded in 1979 in the aftermath of the Gay News blasphemy trial, GALHA is the only autonomous national organisation worldwide for gay and lesbian Humanists. It has members in many parts of the UK and in other countries.'*

## Jain attitudes to same-sex relationships

Very similarly to Buddhism, the ideal state for spiritual development is that of the monk or the nun who has renounced all sexual relationships. For those not leading a monastic life Jain teaching prescribes,

*'partial celibacy - no premarital or extramarital sexual activity, for laypersons'.<sup>9</sup>*

The same writer in 2004 explained that for Jains, homosexuality and transvestism

*'stain one's thoughts and feelings because they involve sexual passion'.<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> British Humanist Association <http://www.humanism.org.uk>

<sup>9</sup> *Jainism: An Introduction* (Reality Based Ethics) by Duli Chandra Jain; <http://www.jainstudy.org/jsc1.04-JainismAnIntro.htm>

## Jewish attitudes to same-sex relationships

Broadly it might be said that 'Orthodox' Jews are opposed to same-sex relationships, progressive Jews (Reform and Liberal) are open to them, and the Masorti (known as Conservative Jews in the USA) are somewhere in the middle. However, this easy formula hides some nuances worth drawing out.

Jewish law is about what people do, not about what they think or feel. So the emphasis within Orthodox Judaism is about discouraging same-sex sexual activity, rather than about persecuting people because of their orientation. A small minority within the Orthodox community has maintained that the scriptural prohibition is on anal intercourse only and that therefore others forms of sexual activity between men are not prohibited.

Generally the Orthodox world has been clear in its rejection of same-sex relationships, and reluctant to discuss the matter, but recently there has been the publication, on July 22, 2010, of a 'statement of principles on the place of Jews with a homosexual orientation in our community' with 170 signatories made up of Israeli and American rabbis, teachers, psychologists and community leaders.<sup>11</sup> The statement proclaims:

*'All human beings are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect ... Embarrassing, harassing or demeaning someone with a homosexual orientation or same-sex attraction is a violation of Torah prohibitions that embody the deepest values of Judaism.'*

The statement goes on to insist that an

*'obligation to treat human beings with same-sex attractions and orientations with dignity and respect'*

and includes,

*'affirming the religious right of those with a homosexual orientation to reject therapeutic approaches they reasonably see as useless or dangerous.'*

Progressive Judaism is, in principle, much more open to gay and lesbian people within congregations, and indeed as rabbis.<sup>12</sup>

## Muslim attitudes to same-sex relationships

In many ways it is striking how similar the situation in Islam is to that within both Judaism and Christianity. On the one hand there is scripture and a traditional understanding of that scripture that has been unchallenged for, in the case of Islam, more than fourteen hundred years. Then there are emerging groups of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people coming together in organisations to support one-another and to campaign for recognition and acceptance<sup>13</sup>. These groups turn to small numbers of religious scholars from within the tradition willing to question traditional understanding of the Qur'an and the validity of certain hadiths. And as with Judaism and Christianity there are voices within Islam wanting to uphold absolutely traditional teaching whilst advocating a more understanding, sympathetic and supportive attitude to those drawn to same-sex relationships.

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<sup>10</sup> *Religious Ethics: A Sourcebook*, edited by Dobrin, Dr. Arthur B.; published by Hindi Granth Karyalaya, Mumbai, 2004

<sup>11</sup> [www.statementofprinciples.blogspot.com](http://www.statementofprinciples.blogspot.com)

<sup>12</sup> Reform Judaism <http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk>

<sup>13</sup> Imaan and the 'Safra Project' in the UK; 'Al-Fatiha Foundation' in the USA;

Mainstream Muslim opinion asserts that the religious prohibition relates entirely to practice, not to feelings or inclinations, although Muslim writers insist that Muslims drawn to that which is not permitted to them must resist rather than indulge their thoughts about forbidden actions.<sup>14</sup>

## Sikh attitudes to same-sex relationships

Whilst the Guru Granth Sahib and other scriptures are silent on the subject, traditionally Sikhism has been opposed to same-sex relationships amongst Sikhs. Partly this can be accounted for by the central importance of the family within Sikhism. When, in 2005, a 'Gay Marriage' bill was being debated in the Canadian Parliament Giani<sup>15</sup> Joginder Singh Vedanti, Jathedar of the Akal Takht<sup>16</sup> issued a report stating that:

*'the basic duty of Sikh MPs in Canada should be to support laws that stop this kind of practice [homosexuality], because there are thousands of Sikhs living in Canada'*<sup>17</sup>

When one Canadian Sikh MP argued against this, the Giani responded by saying, *'Nobody would support such a person having such dirty thoughts in their mind because it is against the Sikh religion and the Sikh code of conduct and totally against the laws of nature.'*

However, as with other religious traditions a movement of lesbian and gay Sikhs has emerged in western countries<sup>18</sup>.

## Zoroastrian attitudes to same-sex relationships

The Zoroastrian / Parsi religion is small in numbers but like all religions has a wide diversity of opinions about such things as the relative status of its different holy books written over a period of at least several hundred years. This is of particular importance to the question of same-sex relationships as the earliest scriptures, attributed to Zarathustra (Zoroaster) himself, are silent on the matter whereas a much later religious writing, the Vendidad, says,

*'The man that lies with mankind as man lies with womankind, or as woman lies with mankind, is the man that is a Daeva [demon]'*

and a commentary on the Vendidad says that the sodomite is one of four types of sinners who can be put to death without the permission of the Dastur (senior priest).

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<sup>14</sup> An interesting and troubling theme that emerges reading accounts on the web of the lives of gay and lesbian Muslims is the extent to which they encounter hostility within the gay community if they wish to maintain an open allegiance to Islam through such things as dress or observation of festivals and the fast.

<sup>15</sup> 'Giani' is an honorific title given to Sikhs who are knowledgeable about Sikh scriptures and traditions

<sup>16</sup> The 'Akal Takht' - the name means 'throne of God' - is in principle the leading seat of authority in Sikhism: as Jathedar (leader) of the Akal Takht, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti was at the time the man most able to speak with the authority of the whole Sikh community

<sup>17</sup> Story can be found on the website of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2005/03/28/sikhguy-050328.html>

<sup>18</sup> In the UK an organisation named 'Sarbat' (the word is found in the last line of the Ardas - a universal Sikh congregational prayer - and means something like "peace and prosperity for all") organises social events and provides other resources for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Sikhs through its website <http://www.sarbat.net/>

Zoroastrians have traditionally regarded same-sex relationships with abhorrence but some are now questioning the validity or relevance of the later writings. To some extent this debate has connections with another: traditionally Zoroastrianism has not accepted converts so that only those born to two Zoroastrian parents are Zoroastrians. However, this is a policy that would be likely to lead to the Zoroastrian religion dying out, unless Zoroastrians increased their birthrate dramatically, something not helped by same-sex relationships. Some within the community are actively encouraging the acceptance as Zoroastrian of both converts and those born with a single Zoroastrian parent; this discussion may well lead, and already has in some places, to the rise of what might be thought of as a reform movement within Zoroastrianism that is likely to be much more open to same-sex relationships.