

Project  
**Bolo**

*A collection of oral histories  
of Indian LGBT persons*

Supported by



*Producer: Vivek Anand*

*Concept, Interviews & Direction: Sridhar Rangayan*

Produced  
by



Associate  
Producer



[www.projectbolo.com](http://www.projectbolo.com)

Download a 15 min film  
[Project Bolo – About Indian LGBT Movement](#)

## About PROJECT BOLO

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For the first time in India, 20 LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons in four cities open up in a candid manner to offer an inside view into their lives, views and accomplishments in PROJECT BOLO, meaning 'Project Speak Up'. These in-depth video interviews walk us through their lives - their growing up years, sexual explorations, coming out to family/friends/media, their romances and relationships, their fearless career paths and their pioneering accomplishments.

This multi-generational, pathbreaking Indian LGBT Oral History Project also flagposts important milestones of the Indian LGBT movement from the early 60s to today - where did people meet, cruising places, the early efforts at forming groups in Mumbai and New Delhi, the first gay newsletter, the first lesbian book, uncovering historical evidence of same-sex literature and iconography, the formation of LGBT organizations and various advocacy efforts leading to the historic Delhi High Court verdict on July 2nd 2009 decriminalizing homosexuality.

Project Bolo Vol1 contains interviews with 20 LGBT persons from Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi, Lucknow & Hyderabad:

Aditya Bandopadhyay  
Ashok Row Kavi  
Betu Singh  
Bindumadhav Khire  
Dalip Daswani  
Gauri Sawant  
Geeta Kumana  
Giti Thadani  
Hoshang Merchant  
Jehangir Jani

Lachi  
Laxmi Narayan Tripathi  
Manvendra Singh Gohil  
Nisha  
Parmesh Shahani  
R Raj Rao  
Ruth Vanita  
Saleem Kidwai  
Shivananda Khan  
Sunil Gupta

Each of them bring a different slice of life experience, a different piece of history, a different tile of India... to form a rich mosaic, a rich tapestry of Indian LGBT life, history and movement that is 'Project Bolo'.

Project Bolo is produced by The Humsafar Trust in association with Solaris Pictures and supported by UNDP (India). Producer for The Humsafar Trust is Vivek Anand and Concept, Interviews and Direction is by Sridhar Rangayan.

The Project Bolo video-interviews and films can be seen online at [www.projectbolo.com](http://www.projectbolo.com), alongwith profiles of the all the 20 interviewees. They will be also available on DVD for libraries and archives. A book containing the interviews will be published soon.

## Director's Statement

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India has an estimated population of 1.21 billion. According to studies in the modern West, 2 - 13% of the population is homosexual. However, a 2006 study in India suggested that 20% of the population anonymously reported some homosexual feelings. So that leads to a staggering figure that is even beyond the bounds of imagination. Is it true, can it be? I would leave this question open ended...

I remember, in 1990, when we started publication of Bombay Dost, the general perception was that there are no homosexuals in India and it was a Western concept. In fact, it was even alleged that gay men existed only in the head of one 'out' gay man - Ashok Row Kavi!! When we went asking for facilities, services and rights for LGBT persons, the constant question was - where are they, we don't see them. The LGBT community themselves were still fraught with doubt and anxiety, 'what happens if I come out?' So, a majority of LGBT persons have largely remained in the closet and, till recently, people who were out could be counted on one's fingertips.

Through in-depth interviews with 20 wonderful LGBT persons across four cities in India, I have tried to bring to light their growing-up years, family, coming to terms with their sexuality, meeting people with similar preferences or identities, how did they fall in love, how did they negotiate their sexuality in their workplace, did they come out in the media and to their families, what have been the repercussions, what have been the personal victories, failures, regrets and moment of happiness. These interviews further our understanding of what it means to be a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or a hijra in India?

These interviews also flagpost the important milestones of the Indian LGBT movement from the early 60s to today - where did people meet, cruising places, the early efforts at forming groups in Mumbai and New Delhi, the first gay newsletter, the first lesbian book, uncovering historical evidence of same-sex literature and iconography, the formation of LGBT organizations and various advocacy efforts leading to the historic Delhi High Court verdict on July 2nd 2009 decriminalizing homosexuality.

Each of them bring a different slice of life experience, a different piece of history, a different tile of India... to form a rich mosaic, a rich tapestry of Indian LGBT life, history and movement that is 'Project Bolo'.

~ Sridhar Rangayan

2nd July, 2011 | Mumbai

## Collaborators

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### Producer

#### **The Humsafar Trust**

The Humsafar Trust works with sexual minorities providing counseling, HIV testing and treatment facilities. Its center for Excellence (CEFE) emphasizes on research, capacity building of communities and media advocacy. The Advocacy unit of Humsafar works on creating awareness and sensitization on issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS through street plays, IEC materials and films. [www.humsafar.org](http://www.humsafar.org)

### Associate Producer

#### **Solaris Pictures**

Solaris Pictures is the only Indian film production company that has consistently been making award winning films on LGBT themes. Its award-winning films like 'Gulabi Aaina', 'Yours Emotionally' and '68 Pages', all dealing with gay and transgender stories, has pushed the boundaries in queer portrayals in Indian films. [www.solarispictures.com](http://www.solarispictures.com)

### Supported By

#### **UNDP (India)**

UNDP is committed to help India achieve the global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the national objectives articulated in consecutive Five-Year Plans. The goal of the organization is to help improve the lives of the poorest women and men, the marginalized and the disadvantaged in India. [www.undp.org.in](http://www.undp.org.in)

## Team

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*Concept, Interviews & Direction* : Sridhar Rangayan

*Producer for The Humsafar Trust* : Vivek Anand

*Executive Producer for Solaris Pictures*: Sridhar Rangayan

*Director Of Photography, Sound Recordist & Photographs*: Subhransu Das

*Editors* : Biren Jyoti Mohanty & Girija Sankar Tudu

*Title Music*: Suresh Iyer

*Chief Assistant Director* : Sonal Giani

*Transcripts* : Kissmago Services, Dicky Baruah, Anup Tripathi, Anubha Singh, Paras Sharma

*Transcripts edited by*: Sridhar Rangayan, Dalip Daswani

*Website Design*: Sridhar Rangayan

## Links

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### **Project Bolo**

Website: [www.projectbolo.com](http://www.projectbolo.com)

Email: [projectbolo.voll@gmail.com](mailto:projectbolo.voll@gmail.com)

Videos: <http://vimeo.com/channels/projectbolo>

### **Humsafar Trust**

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

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Contact person

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### **Solaris Pictures**

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### **UNDP**

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Email: [info.in@undp.org](mailto:info.in@undp.org)

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This video contains excerpts from the 20 Bolo interviews where the interviewees speak about the important milestones of the Indian LGBT movement from the early 60s to today - where did people meet, cruising places, the early efforts at forming groups in Mumbai and New Delhi, the first gay newsletter, the first lesbian book, uncovering historical evidence of same-sex literature and iconography, the formation of LGBT organizations and various advocacy efforts leading to the historic Delhi High Court verdict on July 2nd 2009 decriminalizing homosexuality.