

Nirangal Colours

The Shakti Resource Center and Orinam/MP present **Nirangal**, a two-day LGBT performance festival in Chennai on 19 and 20 June 2010. This festival is the second annual event of its kind, and is part of a larger series of events scheduled to raise the visibility of lesbian, gay, bi and transgender people (LGBT) and issues in the city.

Rationale

LGBT groups have historically used cultural performance, fine arts and literature as a means for articulating their vision, rights, aspirations and apprehensions, and for drawing attention to the universality of the human experience. Whether through queering traditional forms or forging new and hybrid forms of the arts, cultural practitioners from the LGBT communities embody a diversity of expression and performance.

Despite recent successes in the LGBT movement in India, such as the Delhi High Court decision of 2009 that decriminalized consensual sexual expression among adults of the same sex, an increasingly conservative section of the mainstream public tends to view alternate sexualities and genders as alien to Indian culture and as products of Western influence. A strong element of the backlash to the *Naz* decision comes from self-proclaimed upholders of Indian tradition who use their prejudices to feed the anxieties of India's growing middle-class and proclaim the alleged cultural inappropriateness of discussing or according rights to LGBT people.

Nirangal aims to challenge these homophobic-xenophobic notions of alternate sexuality and genders by showcasing a variety of LGBT artists and their performance work through a two-day event during the Chennai Rainbow Pride month celebrations of June 2010.

Objectives

The Nirangal LGBT cultural festival will

1. Bring LGBT practitioners of traditional folk, classical and modern arts and performance together in an attempt to dispel notions that people of alternate sexuality and gender are alien to Indian tradition and culture.
2. Attempt to bridge divides that exist among individuals of alternate sexuality/gender with respect to identity, class and rural/urban origin.
3. Counteract the idea of tradition and culture as being the sole heritage of the hetero-normative mainstream.
4. Provide a platform and audience for LGBT artists to share their work.

Performers

Viduthalai Kalai Kuzhu is a dance and music troupe formed by underprivileged transgender women working with Sahodari Foundation. **Kalki's** long cherished dream of transwomen performance group has become a reality, thanks to a lot of hard work on their part and support from the Directorate of Social Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu. Performing in the Republic Day Parade in Chennai was a recent highpoint in Viduthalai Kalai Kuzhu's work.



Sahodaran, founded in 1998, is one of the oldest and most successful male sexual health projects in Chennai. Its vibrant performing group, Sahodaran uses dance, music and theater to raise awareness of health needs and human rights of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)



J Taejha Susheel is a visible and vocal member of the LGBT community in Chennai. He is a trained Bharatanatyam performer and choreographer and is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Polymer Technology at Anna University, Chennai.

Lotus is one of the few groups working with MSM in rural and semi-urban spaces, that is entirely community-owned and managed. With a recent grant from the World Bank, Lotus has developed a theatre program in and around its base in Tamil Nadu. The program uses cultural performance to change stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes towards MSM and transgender persons. The program has successfully sensitized local self-governing bodies (Panchayati Raj institutions) on issues of alternate gender and sexuality. It has motivated Panchayat leaders to ensure lives free of harassment for the local MSM and TG populations, and provide non-legal avenues for them to seek redressal when faced with harassment or violence, in the focal villages of Tanjavur and Tiruvarur districts in Tamil Nadu.



Sumathi is a queer activist and a trained Hindustani vocalist based in Bangalore. She has travelled and performed widely. One of her recent productions, *Sanchari* (2009), a play that tells the story of raga Kalyani, was performed to critical acclaim before audiences in Chennai and Bangalore.

L. Ramakrishnan is a trained Carnatic veena artist based in Chennai. He has helped start up such collectives as *Trikone-Tejas* (Austin, Texas) and the *Orinam.net* portal, and is also involved in training, research and advocacy in public health and HIV/AIDS.

Kanavin Kuzhanthaikal (Dream's Children) is a new theatre group that brings together **Srijith Sundaram** (theatre activist), **Sankari** (Sangama, Chennai), **Kiran Keshavamurthy** and **Aniruddhan Vasudevan** (The Shakti Resource Center) to present a new theatre work based on contemporary Tamil poetry.

Organizers



The Shakti Resource Center is a non-profit organization working towards creating new models of engaging with gender and sexuality. Shakti's current work is towards setting up support services for LGBT people, and a resource center for gender, sexuality, sexual health and reproductive health and rights.

Orinam.net is a bilingual resource website (Tamil and English) with information on alternate sexualities and genders. It is a non-profit resource created and maintained by members of MP, a support group for LGBT people connected to Chennai that was established in 2003. Do visit www.orinam.net and support our Campaign for Open Minds! For more Chennai Rainbow Pride events visit <http://orinam.net/chennaipride>



If you are interested in volunteering at or contributing monetarily to this event, please email LRamakrishnan.lists@gmail.com or aniruddh.vasudevan@gmail.com