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அன்பிற்கும் உண்டோ அடைக்குந்தாழ்? - திருவள்ளுவர்

“Can love be shackled?” - Thiruvalluvar

Chennai hosts its fourth annual Rainbow Pride in June 2012, a month celebrating visibility of alternate sexualities and gender identities. In India, the first Rainbow Pride March took place in Kolkata in 1999, and currently Pride is celebrated in nine cities and towns of India: Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune and Thrissur.

Several formal and informal collectives have joined hands to organize a month-long series of events in Chennai this June. These include a panel discussion on parents and their LGBT children; a cultural festival; a three-day film series, performances in memory of LGBT people who have lost their lives, and poster and placard-making sessions. The Chennai Rainbow Pride march will be held on June 24th, 2012. These events are listed at <http://chennaipride.net>

We invoke the words of Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar to ask அன்பிற்கும் உண்டோ அடைக்குந்தாழ்? (Can love be shackled?) Our loves and identities fall outside of the norm of exclusive male-female desires, gender identities and expectations, and are reviled as unnatural and foreign. However these loves and identities are natural to us and have existed since ancient times in our own cultures. That we are not contained within the common definitions of permissible sexuality and gender expressions does not make us undeserving of equal human rights.

This Pride,

- We call upon the Supreme Court to uphold the historic Naz Foundation verdict of July 2, 2009, that read down IPC Section 377 to exclude consensual relationships among adults of the same sex. We urgently need the Supreme Court to secure the fundamental rights of India's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens to lives of dignity, equality, and free expression.

- We heartily commend the Planning Commission, Government of India, for recommending inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in its approach to health care, social equity and reach to discriminated groups in the upcoming [12th national five-year plan](#). We ask that these plans translate into tangible results such as inclusion of sexuality and gender

issues in medical and other educational curricula, in stringent anti-discrimination laws, and in all relevant social welfare programmes.

- We appreciate the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, for its draft National Youth Policy 2012 that proposes interventions to counter stigma faced by LGBT youth, a timely and much-needed move.

- We request the Tamil Nadu Government to continue and build on the work of the Aravani Welfare Board, which remains a unique initiative for transwomen in the country, and to expand its scope to include sexual minorities who face harassment and discrimination because of their gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation.

- We mourn the loss of activist Mariya/Anil in Kerala and countless other LGBT people in the country, and call for an immediate end to the epidemic of violence and discrimination perpetrated by individuals and institutions such as the police, judiciary, and families against LGBT persons and others marginalized on grounds of sexuality. We express grave concern at the escalation of arrests of sexual minorities and sex workers in Chennai over the past year.

- We seek affordable and appropriate healthcare for all, and condemn unscientific and unethical attempts by some in the medical and mental health professions to change sexual orientation through drugs, electro-shock therapy, and other means. We draw attention to the urgent need for professional and peer-led psychosocial support services and safe spaces to help our communities cope with the stress of living in a society that is largely hostile towards alternate sexuality and gender expression

- We ask that our families value our desires as natural and normal, allow us the freedom to choose our expression in terms of attire, romantic and life partners, and not to force us into heterosexual marriages against our wishes.

- We appeal to educational institutions and policy makers to provide non-discriminatory environments for LGBT students, and penalize bullying, ragging, and sexual harassment regardless of the students' sexual orientation, gender or gender-identity.

- We exhort the media to be fair, inclusive and responsible in telling our stories; and not invisibilize or trivialize us and our issues. We urge the film industry in India to stop perpetuating stereotypes and depicting caricatures of our lives.

- We appeal to businesses in the private and public sector to ensure equality in the workplace in terms of policies, benefits and workplace climate and include sexual orientation and gender identity issues in diversity training for staff

- We thank all those who have been supportive to our struggles - people from other social movements; parents who have been exemplary in their expression of love and acceptance; teachers who have been caring and supportive; health-care professionals who have refused to stigmatize us; celebrities who have expressed their solidarity openly; all the lawyers who aid our work; and journalists who have been sensitive and just; to mention a few.

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