



| June 2013 |

**Media Release:** For Immediate Release

**For more information:** Call Jaya 98418-65423 (Tamil) or Ramakrishnan 98415-57983 (English)

**Email:** orinamwebber@gmail.com, go to <http://chennaipride.net> or follow us on Twitter @chennaipride

Chennai hosts its FIFTH annual Rainbow Pride beginning June 2013, celebrating visibility of alternate sexualities and gender identities. In India, the first Pride march took place in 1999 in Kolkata. Subsequently, Pride Parades have become a fixture of the Indian sexuality/gender rights landscape, with marches having taken place in thirteen cities to date - Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Bhawanipatna (Odisha), Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Madurai, Mumbai, New Delhi, Pune and Thrissur

In 2009, local groups and collectives working in the areas of sexuality, gender-identity, human rights and health/HIV groups came together under the banner of the Chennai Rainbow Coalition, and organized a series of events in the city culminating in the first march, held in the last Sunday of June. The march was a precursor to the historic July 2, 2009, verdict of the Delhi High Court in the Naz Foundation case, decriminalizing consensual sexual relationships among adults.

The Pride marches in Chennai have been part celebration, part demands for recognition and rights, and part expression of gratitude to the Tamil Nadu state government for its social welfare benefits extended to Thirunangais (transwomen), the most visible segment of the LGBT community in the region. Consistent demands from 2010 onwards have been for the Supreme Court to uphold the Naz Foundation 2009 verdict.

This year, Pride events in Chennai will commence in June and continue through July 2013. They will include cultural performance festivals, sensitization of self-help groups and other stakeholders on sexuality and gender identity issues, a meet of parents of LGBT children, poster and placard-making sessions, and film screenings. The Chennai Rainbow Pride march will be held on June 30th, 2012. These events are listed at <http://chennaipride.net>

This Pride, we have the following key demands:

- 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 ask that the government of Tamil Nadu respond to the October 2012 writ petition from the National Legal Services Authority asking all states and union territories to grant equal protection and rights to transgenders as every other citizen of India. We further ask



that both male-to-female and female-to-male transgender people be included in all aspects of national development and access to social welfare schemes.

- We ask that families accept their children of alternate sexual orientations or gender identities, 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 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 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 request the Tamil Nadu Government to continue and build on the work of the Aravani Welfare Board, which remains a unique initiative 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 condole the recent passing of health activist Shivananda Khan and film director Rituparno Ghosh, and acknowledge their immense contributions to LGBT visibility and rights movements in India.

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; healthcare 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.

**For more information:** Call Jaya 98418-65423 (Tamil) or Ramakrishnan 98415-57983 (English)

**Email:** [orinamwebber@gmail.com](mailto:orinamwebber@gmail.com), go to <http://chennaipride.net> or follow us on Twitter @chennaipride