

First Gay Pride Walk in Kochi will see a healthy heterosexual participation

The Fifth Kerala Queer Pride March, interestingly titled Queerala, will take place in Kochi on July 26

Shiba Kurian, TNN | Jul 23, 2014, 12.00 AM IST

On July 26, Kochi will play host to yet another campaign to fight injustice against a section of humanity — the Gay Pride Walk. Like every year, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals in Kerala will take out a rally, and this time in Kochi, trumpeting their message — ‘love is beyond gender and sexuality’. However, what makes this year’s queer walk, its fifth edition in Kerala, different from its previous years is the active participation of a big bunch of heterosexuals with no homophobia. These bold supporters will join hands with their fellow beings to tell society that it’s okay to be different.

They have the right to love

Hasna Shahida, a law student, who believes that every person has the right to love and live with the person they are attracted to, is a frequent supporter of LGBT movements. Despite the constant criticisms, she and her friends continue to protest. “Our college had once organised a talk protesting the criminalisation of Section 377 of IPC on Valentine’s Day. When everybody was incessantly glorifying the love between a man and a woman, we wanted to draw attention to the fact that love between two men or two women can also exist without causing any imbalance in society. We received a lot of flak for this; some even asked if we were homosexuals. However, that did not deter us from organising more such campaigns.”

Sreedeeep P S, who works at a radio station in Kochi, says he does not fear raising his voice for the rights of homosexuals. “If I have all the fundamental rights to lead a normal life being a heterosexual, then the LGBT community equally shares the same rights. Every person has the right to make his or her own choices. Besides, I am not causing any menace in society by supporting them,” he says.

Anju John, a law student, supports the cause as friendship matters to her the more than one’s sexuality. “A few of my lesbian and gay friends had to face situations where their parents abandoned them. They had to support themselves financially and deal with such debilitating situations on their own, all because of their sexual orientation. I don’t think that is right,” she says.

Unfazed at being falsely labelled

Hasna feels that it is only natural for people to react and stamp straight people as gay or lesbian if found supporting an LGBT cause. “I have no problems with that as I don’t think it’s a bad word. I debate and talk in favour of the LGBT community on Facebook and other social media platforms.

I have also shared a few Queerala posters online. But soon my friends and relatives started questioning my sexuality. I was not surprised. I do not have to prove to them my sexual orientation. When I stand up for a human rights cause it is not necessary that I should be in a similar situation," she says. Anju agrees with Hasna and says, "The people that I am supporting are my friends who deserve to be treated rightfully."

Gay people need to open up to their straight friends

Lohit, who is not ashamed to disclose that he is gay, feels it is important for gay people to open up to their straight friends, as they have a lot of misconceptions about the LGBT community. "Think of homosexuals, and the first thing that pops up in one's head is sex. A relationship between two people of the same gender is more than about just sex; it is as normal as a relationship between a boy and a girl; we share emotions and feelings too with each other," he stresses, adding that it might come as a shock, when you tell people. "This is due to personal and emotional attachments. They will understand you eventually," he feels.

Sreedeeep reveals that he initially had his set of queries and apprehensions about the whole community. "I used to wonder if being a homosexual is a crime as inscribed in the religious books or is it a psychological problem they are born with. But after constant interactions with a lot of gay men and lesbians, I realised that, just like how I can't discern how and why I am straight, they too cannot figure out what made them homosexuals."

According to Jijo, who is gay, many homosexuals are still reeling under the fear of the Section 377 of IPC, and hence succumb to societal and parental pressures to get married to a person of the opposite sex. This sends out a wrong message about the institution of marriage to today's generation as well as to the LGBT community, he says.

"There are a lot of youngsters in Kochi who are living in a confused state of mind about their sexuality. They are pressured to get married. They don't open up for fear of being ostracised. Ultimately, he or she ruins not only the spouse's life but his/her life as well. What's more, some even cheat on their spouses by having an affair with a gay person or resort to prostitution. This will only add to the number of divorces and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, it will only send out a wrong message to the LGBT community, who will misconstrue that this is how it is done," says Jijo.

Increasing awareness garners more support

Sreedeeep points out that the increasing awareness among the youth today has paved way for the growing, intrepid participation of heterosexuals. "I feel there is a fair amount of awareness happening in our society these days. Recently, at a film screening as part of the Queerala, I was quite surprised by the presence of many higher secondary students, who were not gay. I later learnt that they are aware of the LGBT community.

Additionally, with movies and celebrities extending their support, the cause has only gained momentum over the years," he says.