

Butterflies under the rainbow sky: Discrimination and criminalisation of the LGBTIQ community in Sri Lanka

Abstract

Under the socio-cultural, religious, and political conditions of Sri Lanka, LGBTIQ-related matters are, in general, not an issue to discuss openly. As a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, and like other South Asian countries, Sri Lanka has criminalised homosexuality and third gender identity through sodomy laws written into the Penal Code. Being a member of the LGBTIQ community is not easy, attractive or valued in conservative Sri Lankan society. This thesis argues that research about the LGBTIQ community is limited and most studies have focused on the community's legitimacy. The paper aims to fill the academic gap when looking at the discrimination and criminalisation faced by gender and sexual minority groups in the island nation. As young and Colombo-centred activism, the Sri Lankan LGBTIQ movement campaigns for their rights and introduces queer culture to the broader community. Activists and scholars have urged past and present Sri Lankan governments to amend the legislation and decriminalise homosexuality, but it is still only a dream due to the opposing views of the Sinhala-Buddhist majority. Finally, this thesis suggests that policy reforms are implemented, and further research be conducted to create a conducive environment for the LGBTIQ community to openly express their desires while enjoying equal freedoms in society.

Key words: LGBTIQ, Sri Lanka, Penal Code, Discrimination, Criminalisation.