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INDIA

Indian state proposes sweeping LGBTQ policy

Judge calls for one set of Tamil Nadu guidelines

Published 23 hours ago on February 15, 2025
By **Ankush Kumar**



(Washington Blade photo by Ernesto Valle)



The government of Tamil Nadu in southern India has proposed a policy that is designed to improve the lives of LGBTQ and intersex people in the state.



The Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission introduced the [“Draft Policy for the Welfare of LGBTQIA+ Persons”](#) in July 2023. Key provisions include a 1 percent quota for transgender and

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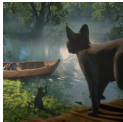
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intersex people in education and employment. Progress to implement the policy has been hindered because of the government's fragmented approach of developing separate policies for different groups within the community.



The Madras High Court in January 2024 acknowledged Tamil Nadu's proposed policy and commended the state's efforts.

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The court highlighted key recommendations, such as establishing a State Commission for Sexual and Gender Minorities and introducing quotas, while stressing the need to combat discrimination and violence. The court this month, however, raised concerns about the government's [separate policies](#) for trans people and the broader LGBTQ community.

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh stressed the need for a single, unified policy to effectively address the challenges the LGBTQ community faces. He directed the Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department to submit a separate proposal for trans people and a consolidated LGBTQ one by Feb. 17 that would allow stakeholder input and improvements.

The Madras High Court has been actively guiding the Tamil Nadu government towards formulating a unified and comprehensive policy for the LGBTQ community, rather than separate policies for different groups within the community.

Tamil Nadu's proposal offers several advantages aimed at promoting inclusivity and equality. [It](#) would provide healthcare inclusion, recommending the extension of the Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme to cover trans-specific medical procedures, such as gender-affirming surgeries, to ensure essential healthcare is accessible. The proposal calls for nondiscrimination policies in all government departments and public authorities that seek to protect LGBTQ people from bias and violence.

The proposal calls for educational institutions to adopt policies that raise awareness and address issues of violence, abuse, and discrimination against students with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. It also suggests the creation of bodies like the Tamil Nadu Council for LGBTQ Persons and District Level LGBTQ Welfare and Justice Committees to coordinate efforts across government departments.

"Tamil Nadu is the first state in India to develop a unified policy covering sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, based on a recent Madras High Court directive," said [L. Ramakrishnan](#) from SAATHII, an organization that works to create an inclusive healthcare system, and a member of the policy drafting committee. "This is important because critical sensitization interventions for inclusive education, healthcare and employment require understanding of sexual, sexuality, and gender diversity,"

“At the same time, recognizing the added vulnerabilities of trans and intersex individuals, provisions such as horizontal reservations and free land allocation are proposed only for transgender and intersex individuals,” added Ramakrishnan.

The proposal, among other things, calls for gender-neutral bathrooms and hostels. It also seeks to protect LGBTQ people from family violence and from corrective rape and so-called conversion therapy that medical providers and faith healers carry out.

The proposed policy would also acknowledge and support relationships outside the traditional marriage framework. It proposes a Deed of Familial Association that would legally recognize queer relationships as the Madras High Court ruled in a case of a lesbian couple who sought protection from harassment. While the deed would offer protection from family and societal harassment, it would not extend legal status or rights associated with marriage or civil unions.

The Indian Supreme Court on Oct. 17, 2023, ruled against marriage rights for same-sex couples.

“We have long been working and sensitizing the government for a policy,” said [Kalki Subramaniam](#), a trans activist and artist who founded the Sahodari Foundation, an organization that supports trans people in India. “It seems to be happening. We, the trans community, demand a separate policy for us because we are the most marginalized and poorest community in the entire LGBTQI spectrum.”

“I insist on two different policies: One for us, trans and intersex persons, and the other for the LGB community. Practically, it is very much possible,” added Subramaniam. “The state government, months ago, held public meetings with the trans community in all districts, and the community’s overall demand is a separate policy. I welcome the commission and insist it should have representatives from trans women, trans men, and intersex communities.”

She told the Washington Blade the proposed policy is something for which the community has been waiting for years, and is happy to see it on the table. Subramaniam noted the quota, in particular, will ensure equal opportunities in jobs and education.

“Tamil Nadu government’s laudable efforts in building equity for the LGBTQIA+ community stands as a magnificent beacon of hope,” said [Harish Iyer](#), an Indian LGBTQ activist. “In times of absolute disregard across the world, this effort puts not just the queer community, but India in the forefront of humanitarian efforts.”

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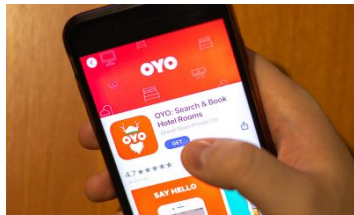
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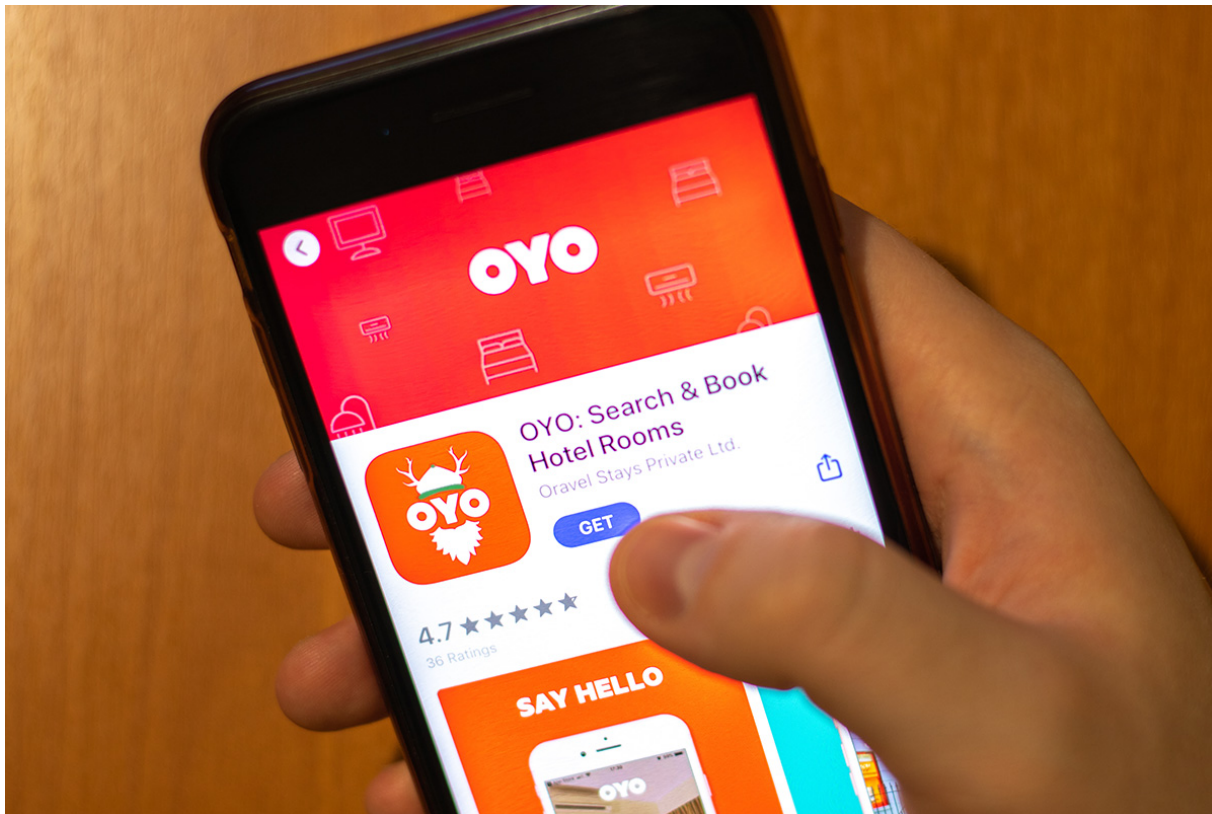
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India hotel chain policy allows for cancellation of unmarried couples' reservations

OYO Rooms issued directive on Jan. 9, requires proof of relationship

Published 4 weeks ago on January 22, 2025

By **Ankush Kumar**



(Photo by Postmodern Studio/Bigstock)

Traveling in India is becoming increasingly challenging for unmarried couples, with LGBTQ partners facing even greater hurdles.

[OYO Rooms](#), a major hospitality chain, on Jan. 9 issued a directive to its partner hotels in Meerut, a city that is 50 miles from New Delhi, that allows them to refuse to allow unmarried couples to make reservations.

The chain now requires all couples to present valid proof of their relationship at check-in, even for online bookings. The company stated the decision aligns with local social sensibilities and hinted that the policy might be expanded to other cities based on feedback from the ground.

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INDIA

Indian Supreme Court rejects marriage equality ruling appeals

Judges ruled against full same-sex relationship recognition in 2023

Published 1 month ago on January 14, 2025

By **Ankush Kumar**



The Indian Supreme Court (Photo by TK Kurikawa via Bigstock)

The Indian [Supreme Court](#) on Jan. 9 rejected a series of petitions that challenged its 2023 ruling against marriage equality

A 5-judge bench — Justices Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, Surya Kant, Bengaluru Venkataramiah Nagarathna, Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha, and Dipankar Datta — said there were no errors in the ruling that justified a review.

A [five-judge Supreme Court bench](#), led by Chief Justice Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud, on Oct. 17, 2023, in a 3-2 decision ruled against recognizing the constitutional validity of same-sex marriages in India.

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Harish Iyer continues his fight for LGBTQ rights in India

Long-time activist challenged sodomy law, continues marriage equality fight

Published 2 months ago on December 20, 2024

By **Ankush Kumar**



Harish Iyer (Photo courtesy of Harish Iyer)

The Indian LGBTQ community has long grappled with systemic neglect and societal prejudices, but significant victories like the striking down of Section 377 in 2018 and progressive Supreme Court verdicts have sparked hope. The fight for equality nevertheless remains arduous.

Amid this struggle, Harish Iyer has stood out as a beacon of courage, leading the movement with unwavering commitment and inspiring others to unapologetically embrace their identities.

Iyer, with a slight smile, noted to the Washington Blade during a recent interview that he was born into privilege. As the first male child in a patriarchal society, he explained this status came with inherent advantages.

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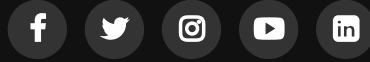


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