

Love has no Gender

LGBT has been an on-going controversial topic that existed since the beginning of time. However, it was just at the beginning of the 21st century where people started to fully accept the fact that it is something inevitable and that it is not something that is “strange”. The US. had just recently legalized same-sex marriage in 2015 and so have many other countries. Thailand is especially known for having many transgender or LGBT in its country, yet it hasn’t touched upon any policies that take those people into consideration, one of them being marriage rights. Yes, people today are more socially accepting, but that isn’t the same as being “legally” accepting. Is it time that Thailand, a country full of smiles, would bring a smile to these people? This all boils down to one question that I would like to touch upon: Is it possible that there will be one day where all genders are both socially and lawfully equal in Thailand ? Well, let’s see what the two sides have to say.

Starting off with people who could be said are “ traditional-minded”. These are people like Gen X and Gen Y (not all of them but some), who still aren’t used to the “coming-out” of the LGBTs. It is still clear that some people (all generation) still discriminate gay people even though it is considered to be way more widely accepted than the past. The line drawn between the “straight and normal” and the “gay and abnormal” subtly remains below the surface of the society. A little background on Thai culture is that Thai are known to not be straight forward or confrontational, which is why anti-gay is not obviously seen or shown. It has been a long traditional idea that the male in the family should be a leader, manly, and is the face of the family. (gender roles are less fixed in this present day and there are a lot of female leaders, however, for the sake of this topic, we’ll assume that there are some who still think like this. It has been a firm belief in Thai’s society that the male should be the one who holds the family’s reputation and if the male were to be homosexual, it would bring much shame to his family. The reason being that men loving other men is something that goes against nature and the social norm. “ Normal/ Straight" people, people in the right mind, shouldn’t love someone the same gender as them. This being the case, it makes it more difficult for gay people to live about their daily lives. Another example of subtle discrimination in Thai culture can be seen in Thai’s education system. As we know, Thai culture is known to be pretty conservative when it comes to sexual topics and is not really taught in school. During the rare times when it is mentioned, the textbooks will mostly emphasize on the biological aspect of sexual activity. If they were to talk about sexual health, they will support the idea of abstinence and nothing else more. Even till this day, the textbooks in the Thai schools talk about homosexuality as a form of mental illness. Those who have it, aren’t normal and that other “normal” students should avoid them at all costs. You know it gets serious when something is taught to be despised in education. The only other thing that education teaches students as something “wrong” is being immoral, unethical, or

unrespectful. When homosexual is also considered something bad, it's a sign that the Thai community still does not fully accept it yet.

Another significant factor that shapes people's attitude toward a subject is religion. As we know, Thailand is an extremely Buddhist country and most people live by his teachings. Fortunately in Buddhism, homosexuality is not forbidden, however, they believe that people who are born with this quality is due to karma from what they did in their previous life. Even though they aren't to blame, it is still not considered something positive or normal. This may be another thing that may create bias in the country full of Buddhist.

These cases may raise questions in our head of why these people think and feel this way toward homosexuals when the homosexuals did nothing bad to them. Well, according to the anti-LGBT marriage rights, these people believe that "marriage" is considered a ceremony for men and women for centuries now and is applied all over the world. The reason for marriage is to create a family and to create more future generations. A gay couple does not have the ability to reproduce, hence, it goes against the law of nature**. Some may argue that even heterosexual couples sometimes don't have the desire to have a family, but the anti-LGBT marriage will rebut back by saying that the heterosexual couples still have the capability to have a child and may change their minds when the time comes, but for homosexual couples, whether they want to have a child or not, they are incapable. According to a court paper in Arizona on gay marriage is that "same-sex couples can never provide a child with both her biological mother and father". It is a well-known fact that the environment and how a child is raised is the key factor to determining the adult they become. The love from a father and a mother given to the child is different. Naturally, the child needs both to be emotionally stable and secure. If gay-marriage is legal, it will take away the child's right and opportunity to acquire that kind of love (in the case where he or she is adopted). There was a study done to prove how necessary love from a mother is to a child. The study was done by Mark Regnerus, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas Austin. He found that younglings who were raised by same-sex parents have faced difficulties such as unemployment in adulthood and sexual abuse, growing up rather than children who were brought up in a house with a mom and a dad. The younglings with the same-sex parents will be that they are missing either a mom or a dad in their life and it may lead to insecurities and lack of proper nourishment.

In 2017, Thai Rath came out with a news headline about the Thai media destroying the reputation LGBT people. It claimed that most of the time, society tends to paint a picture that gay people (tut and ga toey in Thai) are mostly good at being makeup artists or comedic celebrities. They don't really get recognized in other professions that give "value" to society for instance, teachers, doctors, or lawyers. Yes, celebrity and a makeup artist are both great positions, however, sometimes, in a society where inequality still persists, they have to face the struggle of working harder than those who are "straight" (I will go into detail in the next paragraph). Not only that, the media tend to only talk about the negative sides of gay people. Mr. Aekalak Sethong, a university student who is an LGBT, said, "Today, media still publishes

negative content towards us gay people in all the wrong ways, whether it be the way the news portray their content, TV series, and movies. Majority of the time, it will focus on topics regarding sexual intercourse, which is something that I feel like is normal for all genders. I don't want the media to only show this side of us because our worth is no less than real men and women." This shows the different standards set for LGBTs. It may not be considered a big deal for a certain behavior if its straight people, but its suddenly a incredibly bad thing just because the people who are doing it are gay. So, yes, not only families that still discriminate against these people, but the media and society as well.

Lastly, I want to briefly talk about the views of LGBTs in the areas* of employment. Bangkok Post article in 2018 wrote, " While Thailand has become more tolerant towards the LGBTI community, it still has significant level of idscirmination and exclusion in various forms according to the new World Bank report." Reports fromt the World Bankin 2017 shows that there is discrimination very much so exists in the process of employment, access to education, property rights, and healthcare. From an online survey consisting of 3,502 Thais (1,200 non-LGBTI participants and 2,302 LGBTI) aging 18-39 years old (mainly) living in Bangkok, found that discrimination in the work community is still plenty. 77% transgneders, 49% gay, and 62.5% lesbians reported that they felt like they have been rejected from a job application because there were LGBT.

On the other hand, there are has been an increasing number of people who started to accept LGBTs, hence all the new policies like legal same-sex marriage in many different countries all over the world. These people who support this believe that LGBTs have the same exact right as any of us. They are, afterall, human. The pro-LGBTs argue that these people shouldn't be shunned based on their sexual orientation but rather on their actions. So what if they are gay? If they don't violate others rights or disrespect others, then why should it matter? In another buddhist point of view, they think that Buddha has taught us to be open and love one another no matter the gender. According to Buddha, they aren't bad people as long as they act responsibly and do good deeds to society. On the brighter side of things, currently there has been a lot more acceptance and support for LGBTs whether it be in the entertainment industry where almost every TV show, movie, or even books, contain at least an LGBT couple, or in some workplaces with more of an open mind.

"As part of its national transformation and promotion of the new, modern 'Thailand 4.0' at home and internationally, Thailand has the opportunity to advance and foster the inclusion of LGBTI people in its economy and society," said Ulrich Zachau, World Bank Director for Thailand, Malaysia, and Regional Partnerships. "Only by including LGBTI people can Thailand mobilise the strengths and full productive potential of all its people. LGBTI inclusion is the right thing to do, and it's the smart thing to do." Even world leaders are taking this subject into consideration, it shows that there has been a big step taken to help support these people. There are a lot of skillful people who are LGBT. These leaders believe that discrimination will simultaneously take away their right to living and our right to equip the best perosn for the job.

Rebutting the argument that the anti-LGBT has proposed on same-sex marriage, the pro-LGBT would argue that their reason of homosexuals not being adequate parents is irrational. There has been so many cases where a heterosexual family have conflicts that many times lead to divorce or even child neglect. It is very ignorant to generalize that all gays to not have parenting skills the straight have. There may be like one out of a hundred cases like that and so does a heterosexual couple. The anti-gay just use their sexual orientation as an excuse used against the LGBTs. Why don't the media praise all the wonderful gay couple that are able to raise a perfectly normal child? Why only focus on the rare cases where the child grows up to have issues? Also, LGBT supporters do not believe in the traditional gender role. A very recent Bangkok Post article claims that there has been a major change in people's attitudes towards LGBT in Thailand. As mentioned above, people have recently started to enjoy homosexual partners in movies, etc. The cabinet of Thailand has just approved that there will be a bill that will legalize same-sex union, which has similar rights as a married couple, however, there is no bill that goes as far as approval same-sex marriage. Notice that I used the word "similar" rights not "same" because there are still some restrictions. Some of the similar rights are the right to adopt a child and to own land, which is still a big step to show a nation-wide increase in acceptance.

So where do I stand in all of this? I would definitely have to say that I am pro-LGBT. I truly believe that no one should be judged based on their sexual orientation and I know it's easier said than done. I think that especially in today's world, where everything is dynamic, people should be versatile. They should stop being so traditional and move on. What has worked in the past, doesn't mean that it will work in the present. If one were still to believe in the traditional conservative culture, it will be difficult for one to grow because he or she will close himself to expose to the reality. Another thing that I think people in Thailand should change is some of the attitudes and the mindset that we have towards LGBTs. Not hating on the Buddhist beliefs that said that these people were reincarnated to be homosexual because they did something wrong in their previous life, but I feel like we should look past everything, even their "past" life. There is no actual reason that one is born to be one, and it's not their fault or their choice to be this way. We should put ourselves in their shoes. I wouldn't want to live a life where people look down on me or feel "bad" for me because of my sexuality. I want them to judge me based on my actions and what I am capable of doing. As for families, I truly believe that the traditional gender role should be abolished and replaced with a no-gender role society. I think there is no reason to not legalize same-sex marriage. It doesn't violate others' right to get marriage, in fact, it doesn't have to do with other parties other than the married couple. With more policies supporting these people, I believe that it is inevitable for people to comply because that's the norm and most of us follow the norm as part of our nature. With more acceptance, from the society and family, I think that the community of Thailand will be at a much happier place. Think about it, the LGBTs are already pressured by society, even worse they aren't accepted in their own family. Lastly, I would like to recommend for the leaders to take this topic seriously by changing the negative

view of LGBTs in education, in media, and in the news. Its a small start but those three things are the foundation that makes up the whole economy.

Many countries in Asia are slowly starting to legalize many rights for the LGBTs to be the same as straight people, which is a very good sign. In the near future, there is hope that one day every country will get to this point and that these people get to live a life that they deserve. As Abhijit Maskar said,

“Love has no gender-compassion has no religion-character has no race”.

Reference

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