

Gay marriage

Sociology



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Homosexuality and gay marriages are topics that have gained a lot of importance in the recent decades. The issue of gay marriages has become the hottest debated topic in the North America over the issue of rights to abortion. While a good part of the western world has become more open to gay orientation and marriages, a lot of work still needs to be done towards integrating gays into the mainstream lifestyle.

It is a different story altogether in Asian countries. The Asian culture has a conservative outlook to gay relationships. Gay sex is often categorized along with drug addictions and sexual promiscuity- something to be shunned. It is looked upon as an unnatural tendency and associated with shame and guilt. As these cultures lay emphasis on the welfare of the collective over the individual, a person's homosexual inclination becomes a matter of shame to the family. Subsequently it is suppressed and the individual forced to lead a closeted life. It is also common for the gay to be forced into heterosexual relationships.

However Taiwan has adopted a more open approach to gays compared to other Asian countries. The Gay Times¹ reports that, since the end of the martial law, Taiwan has seen increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians. The first gay pride march took place in 1988, the first lesbian group was formed in 1990 and there are about 30 gay and lesbian groups in the country now.

I support gay marriages from the point of view of human rights. Marriage is an agreement of very deep nature between two consenting adults. If it can be allowed between two adults of different genders, it should also be allowed between individuals of the same gender. Denying gays the rights to raise a family would be an outright case of discrimination based on sexual

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orientation.

A lot of the objections to gay marriages stem from the conventional belief that homosexuality is a learnt behavior and not a natural inclination.

However this issue is still being debated in scientific circles. Fitzgerald, F. in her celebrated work *Cities on a Hill* (The Castro, p. 29) says that many of the gays she spoke to said they knew they were attracted to the same sex very early in life. The American Psychological Association² also supports the view that sexual orientation is not a matter of choice.

The conservative opposition to gay marriages also claims that gay marriages are detrimental to social security and the well being of the children a gay couple may choose to raise. In this context I would like to quote a case cited by Rosato, J. in her article *Same-Sex Marriage: For the Children* (Human Rights Campaign website). An unmarried couple opted to have children from the egg donated by one of the partners. The couple raised the twins till their breakup. After the breakup the partner who was not biologically involved was not part of any rights or responsibilities towards the children. In this case as in countless others the children would have clearly benefited if the couple were married, as it would have granted them protection both the partners.

There is also no evidence to the claims that same sex couples cannot be good parents. Any caring and sensitive individual can be a good parent. As gay couples become parents out of choice and not accident, they are likely to be better equipped for the task at hand.

Another objection to gay orientation in general and gay marriages in particular is on grounds of health hazards. There are experts who are of the view that gays are more prone to contract HIV and other sexually

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transmitted diseases. However there is no evidence to prove that gay sex per se contributes to acquiring HIV. The APA3 says that this has more to do with a promiscuous lifestyle and use of drugs. From this point of view, granting legal sanction to gay marriages would encourage commitment and reduce inclination to risky behavior.

As scientific research indicates that homosexuality is a deep situated individual preference over which the individual has no choice, it is time we set aside our prejudices. History has seen mankind move ahead from several prejudices based on color, race and creed. Legalizing gay marriages would be putting an end to just another such discriminating act.

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