



8401 Sixteenth Street #304, Silver Spring, MD 20910-2830, USA  
Phone: +301-589-4462 • Email: shaktivideo@gmail.com • Website: www.shaktiproductions.net  
Employer ID: 03-0473237

June 15, 2009

I am writing in support of Parivarthan Counseling Centre in Bangalore, India. My first experience with staff and volunteers at the Centre was through someone I respect greatly, Dr. Shekhar Seshadri, a child psychiatrist who I was interviewing for a project on child sexual abuse prevention work in India. Through Dr. Seshadri, I had the great privilege of meeting with Parivarthan staff members like Ms. Malini Sridhar who was a key point person in assisting in the local coordination of a video shoot at Parivarthan.

Since then, I returned to Parivarthan in 2001 to conduct a workshop for mental health counselors, social workers and staff of faith-based organizations. This half-day workshop, organized by Parivarthan and NIMHANS was hugely successful and resulted in valuable dialogues about a deeply closeted issue—incestuous child sexual abuse. My more recent visit in 2007 brought me to Parivarthan in my capacity as the Asia staffer at the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, of which I am currently the Regional Coordinator for Asia. I was impressed that Parivarthan was open to learning about and using the Yogyakarta Principles, which are 29 principles created by world renowned international human rights experts from the global North and global South. The Yogyakarta Principles call on governments, state institutions, non-governmental organizations as well as civil society to recognize sexual orientation and gender identity as human rights, and therefore to protect these rights and prevent violence and discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Parivarthan staff and trainees engaged in a spirited discussion about the value of including rather than excluding services for people who are vulnerable because they might be gay, bisexual or transgender people. Despite differences in personal belief systems among participants of the workshop and discussion, the leadership of Parivarthan encouraged respect for diversity and difference.

My work as a filmmaker, community activist, human rights defender and trainer relies on civil society partners like Parivathan who are willing to take concepts, theories and ideas and translate them into day to day application, while challenging stereotypes, damaging myths, and fears of inclusion. I am happy to support the work of the Parivarthan Counseling Centre and encourage others to support and sustain them in their efforts to assist individuals and groups in their quest for personal and community change—be it helping people to transform experiences of childhood trauma into resilient healing or helping to create an environment that facilitates acceptance of human rights for everyone everywhere.

In the spirit of community change,

  
Grace Poore

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