

LGBTQ+ Activists in India by Aditi Anvita

Activists are people having a strong belief in social change, which they accomplish through several activities like public protests, marches, and demonstrations. They ignite chains of encouragement in society to achieve a particular social reform-likewise in the movement for LGBTQ+ rights that began in America and spread to India activists played a crucial role in initiating the same in India. They spread mindfulness regarding the community across the nation.

Ashok Row Kavi is a popular journalist publishing in print media on homosexuality, LGBTQ+ rights, and health issues like HIV/AIDS across the globe. He is India's first and oldest queer activist. He actively supports an LGBTQ+ organization, 'Gay Bombay'. He was listed in '11 Human Rights Activists Whose Life Mission is to Provide Others with a Dignified Life' by India Times and in 'India's Seven Most Influential Gay & Lesbian Individuals' by Pink Pages magazine.

Kavi founded a non-government organization, Humsafar Trust committed to LGBTQ+ rights and health services, and India's first gay magazine, 'Bombay Dost'. The organization studies sexuality and gender issue and speaks up for the upliftment of unprivileged groups. They organize group works to reach queer people. They operate programs for spreading awareness for sexually transmitted infections like HIV-AIDS, funded by national and international organizations. They support the related communities of the nation and communicate with policy-making bodies.

Keshav Suri is an Indian activist and entrepreneur, popularly known as the executive director of the LaLiT chain of luxury hotels. He is referred to as the 'Cooperate Face of Pride' in India. His petition with four other activists led to the Supreme Court's milestone decision of decriminalizing homosexuality. He founded a queer-friendly nightclub 'Kitty Su' which elevated drag culture. The club was listed in 'Top Six Nightclubs of the World' by GQ magazine and in 'Top Hundred Nightclubs of the World' by DJ Mag. He elegantly uses his personality as an influential businessman to promote the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized sections.

Sonal Giani is an LGBTQ+ activist and filmmaker known for her innovative works on the queer. She is popularly known for her ZEE TV show 'Connected Hum Tum' (about a bisexual woman in India), Bollywood movie 'W', and documentary 'Purple Skies.' She was listed in '8 Inspiring Indian LGBT Individuals' by Better India and in 'Rainbow list of 20 LGBT Role Models' by Cosmopolitan. She co-founded two LGBTQ+ initiatives 'Yaariyan' and 'Umang' with the NGO- The Humsafar Trust.

Onir is an Indian director, screenwriter, and producer. He is popular for 'My Brother...Nikhil' is one of the first Hindi movies dealing with AIDS issues and same-sex relationships. It was based on the life of a swimmer and AIDS patient, Dominic D'Souza, and the cruel attitude of the government towards AIDS patients. It was rewarded with the 'Audience Choice Awards in the LGBT film festival, Milan, and the 'Jury Audience Choice Award in Montreal. His film 'I Am' based on single mothers, displacement, child abuse, and homosexuality won the National Award. He has won a total of 16 film awards for his outstanding works.

Gauri Sawant is a transgender activist. She is the director of NGO 'Sakhi Char Chowghi' which promotes mindfulness for queers and their rights and HIV/AIDS infected people. It is also involved in counselling queers. She was born as 'Ganesh' which never made her comfortable and her exploration of true identity became an inspiration for the LGBTQ+ community. Her petition to Supreme Court legalized the adoption rights of queers and that National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) recognized transgender as a third gender. She was the goodwill ambassador of the Election Commission in Maharashtra.

Anand Grover is a senior lawyer popular for activism on homosexuality and HIV in India. He co-founded Lawyers Collective with his wife. The NGO advocates human rights on issues related to women's rights, HIV, LGBTQ+, corruption, and tobacco. He led the Naz Foundation's case of decriminalizing homosexuality. He is a member of the UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and a Special Rapporteur in the United Nations Human Rights Council. He is involved in promoting the right to physical and mental health.