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PRAVARTAK REQUESTS ANY READER TO REPORT PRINTING ERRORS WHICH MAY HAVE CROPPED UP IN THIS PRINT EDITION.
THE NEW AVATAR

Dear Readers,

Hi! Hopefully some of you remember the Pravartak of more than a year ago. Well, here begins its second year with you after a “hibernation”.

For those of you for whom it’s a first date, Pravartak hopes to involve you into a long-lasting relationship. A lot happened in the year gone by which has a bearing on the present and future of gays: a gay demo and a conference on sexuality in New Delhi, the emergence of new groups in various cities nationwide; an AIDS conference, also in the capital, where gays made their presence felt.

Beyond the borders, recognition for gay marriages in Norway, and the gay march in Washington are notable milestones.

More immediately, friends have been coming out to their close ones!

But in many other ways, it’s been status quo for gays, especially in India. Forced marriages, suicides, extortions by police in pubs, snags and condescending tolerance at best. Has anything changed?

Capping all this there’s now an Arvind Kala who poses to be an authority on gays and homosexuality more after a “fashion” rather than sensitivity.

In this context, of a stillness arrived, this lies the answer to “why Pravartak?” (for maybe “why Pravartak again?”).

Pravartak is part of the flow which wants to become powerful enough to dissolve the mountains of resistance to change.

Pravartak wants a change in attitudes of gays towards themselves, of non-gays towards gays, of the media towards gays. And a change in the law of the land and the attitude of its keepers.

In India, homosexuality has always been there everywhere. And knowledge of its existence has also been widespread - in the minds of village sarpanches, grandmothers, policemen, kings and school teachers. But it’s all been on a hush-hush, no acknowledgement basis. Rather comfortable for all - but those who had to stifle their feelings.

But times have changed. This is the age of information and openness. So an acknowledgement and acceptance of homosexuality is due. Which means attitudes have to change.

This change will not come about easily. But it’s a struggle which Pravartak feels is worth the while. And readers must participate in this struggle - even if you just flip through the following pages and read what’s written in them.

Pravartak sincerely hopes to provide all information concerning gays, a forum for debate and self-expression on issues which affect them - a stimulating exercise to make you get up and act. Of course, entertainment and safe sex info are also on its agenda too.

How did Pravartak come into its “new avatar”? It was nothing short of a miracle - that is the coming together of the team which has put this issue together. But the key factor was a lot of hard work. And that, readers, is what is ahead of all of us: if we must gain the acceptance, respect and love we deserve.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

Pravartak 1993

Sincerely,

[Signature]

ED

A big thank you Ashok for always being there. Pravartak, our labour of love wouldn’t have been, without all our friends who worked so hard behind the scenes...

An Indian Original

Gutsy and provocative, Ashok Kumar has always challenged the social status quo.

[Image and text]
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Lesbians fail to get married

RAISING HAKKLES?

Gaiety in verse

Sir - Aggregates Mr Jit Gupta’s letter "Lost word" (June 6), this is what we have to say:

Of course, freaks or perverts;
Call us what you may;
We’re human too,
And we’re not going to go away.
For this is everybody’s word,
And each can choose his way to be gay,
If we’re gay the way we are.
Why can’t you be gay in your own way?

Yours faithfully.

Several gays, Calcutta

Last word

Sir - I strongly resent the fact that homosexuals and lesbians have to hide and talk in a beautiful word like "gay" to avoid their persecution. Can these be called "normal"? They are not. In the United States, or "homos", faggots, perverts or "freaks", the government must be done in its former quality.

Yours truly,

Jit Gupta, Calcutta

Acceptance or Tolerance?

It seems to me that what is going to succeed this sentence may raise a lot of hackles among some of us. But I feel the time has come for us to decide what we want. Acceptance? Or mere tolerance?

India already has a proliferation of projected categories that divide people into favoured Muslim or Brahmin. And we all know the results of these essentially political classifications.

Do we want to be treated the same way? A special status is certainly something we do not want.

The basic answer lies in the fact that we must fight first to promote decency. To expose persons who demeanize us. To provoke anti-homosexual conversation on homosexuality. But we must face the demand for special programmes. And we must come out.

Are we a ‘special’ species? I think not. We are citizens, humans, like any other. And therefore, we should reject any talk of special status. What we demand is equality.

What did the Gay March in Washington show? That America’s gays can mount an impressive demo. But, it also revealed that deep divisions over homosexuality remain within the heterosexual population. This barrier has to be overcome.

Let’s flip back the pages of time. To the terrible and incident in the Kerala town of Palakkad. A gay couple took the suicide route. A direct result of the non-acceptance of their marriage. Obviously, society should be held responsible for these deaths.

This incident underscores that it is necessary for us to show more than mere tolerance that we must fight for.

As an example, the gay protests in Trivandrum. These boys are well known in that town. And society...
tolerates them. But they have not been accepted on equal terms as yet. And so these boys are forced into the shadows of flickering halogen street lamps.

Some of us may be partly at fault for our shadowy status in India. Take for instance the man who knows his true inclinations but allows himself into heterosexual marriages and children. Because of an assorted number of reasons, he leads a double life. Then seeks out a fellow gay—be it "massage" boy on Chowpatty beach or a Cubbon Park cruiser. If any of us are 'ashamed' of our sexual orientation, how can we expect society to accept equal status—our main demand?

We must accept and distinguish and learn society to accept and distinguish the following: My sexual orientation and behaviour are none of your business, and I demand that you acknowledge (accept) my sexual choices as the exact equivalent of yours.

This is the difference between tolerance and acceptance. The former is the attitude we agree to go along with you regardless of your sexual orientation. But, do we want that condescension? I think not. What we must fight for is: I accept you for what you are. For this, we must also make a concerted bid to come out, though I accept that this may be difficult but not impossible.

Many heterosexuals in the West have been urging gays towards the view that tolerance is right fine. US columnist John Leo also wrote: "A policy of tolerance rather than (acceptance) is warranted." This is the crux.

What does it all translate into? Would tolerance automatically mean the abolition of anti-sodomy laws? Would it mean legalization of gay marriages? Would there be less discrimination?

Society at large must be forced to answer that one. It also means that we gays have to clear our minds on the issue as well. We must come out. If we want acceptance to come.

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**FIRST PERSON**

**THEY WANT TO MAKE ME A 'MAN'**

Did you know that a gay can change his sexual orientation by a mere hormone shot? If you don't know this, just ask father! Though even he will admit that such an idea is as harebrained as it is vainglorious. Because of the legal implications of such a bizarre thought.

Dad says hormone therapy can set one 'straight'. The law says that forcible administration of steroids is punishable. And I say that it can drive me to suicide. So then what will father say? Do do?

It was Tuesday, July 27. My mother's birthday and it was just after the plates had been cleared away at upmarket restaurant when I came out. Dad had set the ball rolling with oblique hints at my sexual orientation—he suspected but did not know.

And while my mother sat silent through the whole jest, my father suddenly came up with a question: "King or queen?" he asked. I said that I did not understand such terminology.

Later, while driving home, Dad said he admired my honesty. Then, unable to resist a jibe, asked me if I had refused to speak to a friend recently because he had been crude in bed.

One thing bled into another and he soon ordered me to stop meeting my gay friends. He suggested I join a gym so as to set me on the path of becoming a 'straight man'. And doctors consultations later decided to administer me hormone injections to speed up the process.

At the moment things are pretty loose. The family doc being away in London. I am unsure of what I will do if push comes to crunch, though I have contemplated suicide. But I don't know.

Though I still meet fellow gays, life is in limbo.

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*Pravartak* 1 1993
ANNOUNCEMENTS

THANKS
- To all readers who contributed funds for the old Pravartak, what was left unspent has been used towards bringing out this issue.

SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION
- For Pravartak - to make it self-sustaining: Rs. 15 (Generous generosity will be more than welcome).

NETWORKING
- From the next issue, watch this page for personal listings.
- Send us your ad as you want it to appear in print. We may need to edit your listing. Please indicate how many times you wish your listing to appear.
- For prompt response use a personal mailing address. If not, get a P. Box Number at your local P.O.
- We can also forward mail. Letters to be forwarded should be sent to: PAWAN  P. Box 9687  Calcutta 700027.
- We take no responsibility for what happens as a result of meeting, corresponding through Pravartak. Please reply to any response as a gesture of courtesy.
- Listings, irrespective of length, will be provided at Rs. 10/-per. Please send MO/DD/Cash along with your Ad.

COUNSEL Club
- Counsell Club is an association of individuals with the primary aim of popularising health consciousness, bringing the gay issue onto a public platform and helping it gain acceptance in society at large. CC publishes Pravartak, its journal which aims to explore all issues relating to gays.
- Membership is open to all at an annual charge of Rs. 200/-.
- It entitles you to free issues of Pravartak, free contact listings and free counselling.
- For further info and a copy of the club constitution send Rs. 2 stamps to BAJ, P.O. Box 9687 Calcutta 700027.

CC OFFERS COUNSELLING
We have come across many who are often not comfortable with their identity, who are not sure of their peer orientation, or having once discovered their true orientation find themselves unwilling to accept it. It is for such of us that CC offers counselling services - and it does not matter that you may not reside in Calcutta. Whatever may be your problem, you can write in or phone in or meet us. And we will help you help yourself. However, counselling is not restricted to the above. Members are most welcome to seek counselling in other areas - profession, choice of a career, how to handle personal/family/health. We must help each other and CC aims to do just that. Write in to Counsellor C/O CC for details.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:
IT'S BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY * WEAR CONDOMS

* C/O PAWAN P. Bag No. 10237 CALCUTTA - 700019
Darrell Yates Rist’s Intimate Journey of Rediscovery

He began to understand his life as a man in a 10-year old living in Parito, Rist, a continues to the Appalachians Mountains who watched the last boys at his school and in the streets and believed that they, within their dark homosexuality, understood something about sexuality and sensuality that he did not.

But despite the yearnings, he married. In 39, he divorced from then on he was a gay activist.

At 47, Darrell Yates Rist (his name in his mother's has led) led several different lives, but none has more no-

His book he hopes will force what Dan Quayle might call the "white gay male elite" into the realization that the "gay community" has long excluded most gay men who live other men.

"This is how people live," says Darrell Yates Rist of the men he describes so intimately in "Heartlands.

"There aren't that many differences between gay and straight men. The differences we face are the same."

Yates Rist. "We are told to say, the New York or San Francisco community, that being gay is a birthright, that we are born that way, and that this birthright gives you a way of thinking of being of arranging your furniture that is gay. It's a very narrow way of thinking, a very narrow definition of gay community. That to maintain that you can't accept others who live the same sex, life and don't have that identity of that world view.

"The men spent researching the book through travel and interviews convinced Yates Rist that he too, had subscribed to the narrow view. He was "baffled" to see just how varied gay life in the U.S. was. "We don't think of the lives of gay men outside our community because the gay political community doesn't want to," he says. "Looking at the kind of men I present as gay men would require a radical reassessment of gay politics."

"I wanted to see that reassessment much in part for the men who met across America whom he came to love and in part because of his anger at the limitations and the narrowness of gay community."

"If there's what I loved about these people. he says. "They made me out of my complacency sitting on my gay activism in New York. It wasn't happening."

Yates Rist is a hard-core New York who his father (15 years), his pet dog, and his red-headed politics. He has a renewed hope, in spite of having AIDS. "I would give anything not to have AIDS," he says, but would not exchange my life for anyone else's. I'm much happier now. That was the all all these years across America gave me."

—Victoria A Brownsworth

HEARTLANDS
A Gay Man's Odyssey Across America
by Darrell Yates Rist
E.P. Dutton
ISBN 0689909002
paperback $22.00, 384 pp.

OF HOMOPHOBIA AND KALA

By Parveen

I first came to know about Arvind Kala in a rather strange way. This was in 1991 and I was in Delhi.

One fine day, this pretty lass who thought was my school sweetheart comes up to me and tells me about this “rather interesting man” who lives in Greater Kailash and is writing a book about gays in India.

Imagine my plight. Here I was, all of 18, confused and trying to put up a front of being “straight” - and here is my girl friend talking to me about gays, in quotes, period.

And when she went as far as to give me the phone number of a spa, that was it all.

Fear apart, my ego to keep her out to be a lesbian! Much for her rather limited and prejudiced viewpoint, coloured no doubt by my object terror at being forced out of my closet in this strange way.

Like many of you, I was desperate for anything that could enable me to see myself in a kinder perspective. Not that I hated myself, it was just that I was not like THEM a terminology often used by that most fascinating homosexual genius, Christopher Isherwood.

I waited for the book. Unfortunatley, I read it. And shockingly enough, this perverted perspective goes on to become a bestseller!

"If one’s definition is right, then I am a woman and walk like a woman - say a "queer" or a "pansy"? I also lack normal male aggression", I go through life having furtive sex in toilets and forever quivering, telling lies. And, yes, oh yes - I have this twist!"

Could anything be more preposterous? We, the "pink" minority in addition to our sexual preferences have one other thing in common, a part of our anatomy, the most versatile (not to mention THEY) twist!

I pity those poor victims with whom Kala had his intimate conversations as he sat forth on his quest for uncovering our "murky world"! No doubt, he went armed with a measuring tape, just the thing to measure "twists" with!

I talk of Kala and wonder if he deserves my notice. I would love to ignore the man but can’t. Because do you realise how much he has added to those derogatory, those suffocating cliches?

Would I go up in the esteem of my gay-bashing relatives and acquaintances if I read Kala’s book? It would only strengthen the homophobia in their minds.

Today when the theory of the "gay" - the dominant male, the bread winner and the "fem" - the inferior female, the housewife is fast becoming obsolete, Kala fails to see the modernity of a gay or lesbian relationship. One which is more likely to be between two independent, earning persons - thus, more likely to be based on equality than a heterosocial relationship. That is, as far as the economics of running a household goes.

Thanks to intellectuals like Kala, homophobia refuses to go away. But it has lost the trick with the jaffa coat, forged to the insulting definitions Kala wants to confine me into.

Should we have a procession against him? A conditioned response in the Philippines and Menial Bengali - also largely ineffective, let me assure you. I would much rather consign him to the dustbin of history.

But we must all speak out - we owe it to ourselves. No more Kalas please! We don’t want the light in the closet to be just a lid:stream - a derided thought of (as Kala says) a wretched, perverted mind - one that could be yours, even mine.
CONCERT FOR A CAUSE

By Parvez

This is one album that forces you to sit back and absorb the music, which is world class by any standards. No listening to this between appointments or telephone calls. It is notable too, for its worthy cause, one which is dear to Prawartak's heart - that of contributing to AIDS charities. We have five seminal covers that pay tribute to Queen frontman, Freddie Mercury. Add to this George Michael and Queen with Lisa Stansfield live at Wembley, and you have absolute, unadulterated ecstasy.

'Papa was a Rolling Stone' (familiar to MTV addicts) the video is somethings else) doesn't fail to surprise, with its well orchestrated rhythm and George Michael's brilliant rendition. 'Calling you' is haunting and forces one to reach out for the rewind button. Freddie's magical voice pulls your heartstrings in the short but remarkably engrossing 'Dear Friends'.

Five live

The high point is undoubtedly Lisa Stansfield's inspired and stellar performance on 'These are the days of our lives', a number that will haunt you for years to come. It is unsurpassable in its poetry and sheer melodic quality. Lisa's set to go places, as the numbers on the forthcoming 'Indecent Proposal' track prove beyond doubt, the icing on this delicate confection is vintage Mercury as 'Somebody to love' - a number that has been lying around for too long, with 'Nancy from New York', is a classic heartbreak number.

The cassette is a must buy for 'Prawartak' readers. Say Michael (as quoted on the cassette jacket) - I think a lot of people, not necessarily people who have anything against gay people, are probably taken comfort in the fact that although Freddie died of AIDS, he was publicly bisexual - for the year 2000 ... 40 million people on this planet will be infected by HIV, and if you think that those are all going to be gay people or drug addicts, then you are pretty well living up to be one of those numbers'.

Buy this. It's only for our millions of drying brothers and sisters - and believe me, you won't regret it. You'll probably end up rediscovering music and not the M TV way.

Avoid AIDS, Practice Safe Sex

PRAWARTAK © 1993
সেই সময়েও?

সূত্র.

নইল কৃষ্ণ ত্রিলীলার সহায়তা নিয়ে একটি বিষয়ের উপস্থাপন। এটি হলো সূত্রের জীবনী।

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আমাদের সবাই!

প্রাকৃতি সবাই...

PRAVARTAKO 1993.
NIPPLES!

* Believe you me, I used to lose my car keys all the time... *

THE POLITICS OF RIGHT OR LEFT

... just when I checked my wardrobe with every imaginable shade of pink, comes along news that our colour is now PURPLE! Believe me it is not merry being gay, especially when it boils down to making such HARD choices! Yes I talk of ear-rings, the not-so-long-ago-so-reliable way of recognising my brothers (sisters actually!). Ashok Row Kavi has assured me it doesn’t matter, but if it has to be, then why not left. Remember, we are not on the right side of the law? Another friend, a self-proclaimed bisexual (not another one!) insists it is right to be right. For him, of course, since he has the best of both worlds and is sooo politically correct. I dither and quiver, the burning question not yet resolved. If it were a question of simple symmetry I would not hesitate to wear two to give the mirror a more balanced picture every morning! But, Alas! as I struggle to solve the the hottest controversy since PINK VS. PURPLE, both my ears itch for an identity. Could Rahul Roy or George Michael help?

-Parvez

BODY PIERCING - AN AVANT GARDE STATEMENT

When the teen pin-up Howard Donald from the band 'Take That' appears in such prepubescent magazines as Fast Forward, with a couple of inches of steel through his left nipple, you know that body piercing has become about as riskfree as growing your hair or having a tattoo on your arm.

Earlier naughty boys put gold studs in their ears, but when George Michael wore large hoops through both holes during concerts, the idea somehow lost its appeal.

Next came every supermodel's favourite fashion accessory-tatoo. A butterfly on the hip or a chain of roses around the wrist. But now these have also lost their love as a rebellious fashion statement.

Body piercing, originally associated with the Gay Movement, has hit the "mainstream" today. Even featuring in Madonna's book Sex.

Clothier Mark Garba, 28, has had both his nipples and navel pierced. And along with one, called an amputarga, runs through the end of his penis.

"That wasn't too bad", Mark told The Independent. He said the technique originated in China, a nation with a large gay population.

Body piercing has been associated with tribalism in Indonesia; in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu body piercing is a tradition for religious reasons. Young Tamil boys pierce both their nipples and other parts of their anatomy with short spears. Then they solicit alms.

If also became part of theSSM scene in the West. Because pin and pleasure are closely linked. Now it is an avantgarde fashion statement.

The advantages of body piercing, which costs up to 50 pounds in London, is that you can wear your rings to office under your clothes. Besides it requires a turn on your lover.

Finally the good news. A well known plastic surgeon says body piercing is not dangerous as long as clean needles are used, and the pierced area is kept clean.

- R. Shankar

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