

AIMS

- * 1). To provide all information related to homosexuality, from India and abroad. THE TERM HOMOSEXUALITY IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD TO IMPLY HOMOSEXUALITY IN ALL ITS VARIED HUES i.e. HOMOSEXUALITY AS ASSOCIATED WITH GAYS, WITH LESBIANS, AND WITH BISEXUALS.
- * 2). To put forth all issues related to homosexuality and thereby to provide a forum for debate on these issues.
- * 3). To provide homosexuals an opportunity to express their feelings and perceptions related to their own sexuality.
- * 4). To enable the homosexuals of Calcutta to participate in the worldwide effort to help homosexuality gain the attention and respect due to it.

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***** HELLO / While PRAVARTAK seeks to serve the homosexuals - gays, lesbians and bisexuals - it also aims to be read by those who are not homosexuals but are interested in or are affected by homosexuality in one way or the other.

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***** QUOTE: Prejudice is a despotic, ignorant, mental slaveholder. It pre-judges and pronounces sentences without evidence, judge or jury. We ought to run away from it, for it is a false witness, stupid, dishonest and short-sighted. It separates friends, impedes human progress, befriends bad institutions, obstructs good causes, perpetuates the enslavement of body and mind, and wars against the best interests of mankind.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY.

2.

LETTER FROM THE
EDITOR 

Dear Readers,

PRAVARTAK is yet another effort from Calcutta to help homosexuality gain the acceptance it deserves in everybody's mind, irrespective of his or her sexuality. Today, homosexuality is not just a name for a sexuality other than heterosexuality, often spoken about in hushed tones. It is also an issue - a matter of importance to be resolved - in a sense in which heterosexuality never was. It is an issue because of the wholly unjustified stigma attached to being a homosexual, causing a large section of humanity to live less than contented lives.

Today, one also witnesses a struggle to wipe off this stigma - a black mark - stamped on nature's own creations, out of prejudice and ignorance. PRAVARTAK (the word meaning " PROMOTER OF A CAUSE ") seeks to promote or catalyse this struggle.

THE MISSING ZEAL It remains to be seen whether PRAVARTAK will succeed in its mission or not. Its birth is in a way a protest against the Calcutta's homosexual community's apathy towards itself. Earlier attempts to start this periodical were not very serious. But the recent misfortunes faced by the Fun Club - one man's efforts to do something for the city's homosexuals - have compelled PRAVARTAK'S birth, even if somewhat sudden. While the rest of the country forges ahead on the issue of homosexuality, what are we, Calcutta's homosexuals doing about it ?

It is unfortunate that PRAVARTAK has begun on a stiff note vis a vis Calcutta's homosexual community. But PRAVARTAK proposes to be its friend and a very good one at that. For in the long run, each can be the source of strength for the other. So, is PRAVARTAK going to be yet another pipe-dream, or is the world going to say SALAM CALCUTTA one day ?

Yours hopefully,
Pawan Dhall
(PAWAN DHALL)

**** AIDS - WATCH :

AIDS ads

New York: Ads Against AIDS, the organisation conducting the advertising industry's first national educational campaign against that disease, last week presented 14 awards to anti-AIDS advertising. The winners—five television commercials, five print advertisements and four radio commercials—were selected from more than 1,000 advertisements in a contest sponsored by the organisation. The creators of the advertisements were honoured at the Marriott Marquis Hotel at Manhattan, attended by about 1,100 people. (New York Times)

Clipping from:
THE TELEGRAPH
16/11/91.

Monkey business

London (DPA): Experiments involving the injection of human beings with monkey and chimpanzee blood may have led to the first-ever outbreak of AIDS, a British scientist says. Thirty-four persons were injected with the blood of 17 chimpanzees as part of the search to find a vaccine against malaria. During the experiments from 1920 to 1960 another 33 patients were given the blood of people who had themselves received chimpanzee blood, the scientist said.

Clipping from:
THE TELEGRAPH 1/12/91

**** IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

PRAVARTAK looks forward to bringing forth to you a whole lot of exciting news and articles. Just wait for the ABVA story, a ticklish, pinkish puzzle and more news on the AIDS front.



How you can safeguard yourself against AIDS

People of all communities, age and sex can be affected by the AIDS virus (HIV). A person who is once infected, will remain infected for life.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by a virus called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). The virus attacks and destroys the cells of the body's immune system, and the body is unable to fight diseases, which ultimately leads to death. Until a drug or vaccine is found to fight the AIDS virus **prevention is the only cure.**

Symptoms

During the earlier stages of HIV infection, the symptoms are vague and often similar to those of common ailments. Some of the symptoms are: fever (more than 3 weeks duration), loss of weight (more than 10% of original weight), skin rash and diarrhoea (more than 3 weeks duration).

AIDS is the end-stage of the HIV infection. It can take many years to reach this stage. The infection at any stage can be passed on to others.

Prevention

The AIDS virus (HIV) can be spread in three ways.

1. **Sexual intercourse (homosexual or heterosexual)**
 - Avoid sexual intercourse with multiple partners, infected partners and prostitutes. The proper use of condoms is necessary.
2. **Blood or blood products**
 - Blood should be tested for HIV antibodies before being used for transfusions.
 - Needles and other skin-piercing instruments should be sterilised before use. It is best to insist on disposable needles and syringes.
 - An HIV carrier should not donate blood or share toothbrushes, razor blades and needles.
3. **From infected mother to baby**, either before, during or after birth.

The AIDS virus does NOT spread through casual contact like shaking hands, touching and hugging. Neither does it spread through food, water, sneezing, coughing, insects, toilets, swimming pools and sharing cups.

There is no need to fear and shun persons who are infected with the AIDS virus. They need a lot of Tender Loving Care (TLC) to help them live out their life with courage and dignity.

1st December is observed every year as World AIDS Day

You can avail of our A V productions (slide-tape and VHS formats) in English, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati to promote good health. For a free pamphlet "Your Guide to Good Health" write to the P.R. Department, Glaxo India Limited, Dr. A.B. Road, Worli, Bombay 400 025.
Glaxo — a concern for health

RADELUSTO/285/91

Clipping from: THE TELEGRAPH 1/12/91

**** Readers Write: Send in your suggestions, comments, articles, bouquets and brick-bats to : Pawan Dhall, 79/18 A, Palm Avenue, Calcutta - 700 019. Do write soon!

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*** READ ABOUT
MAGIC JOHNSON and
FREDDIE MERCURY in
future issues.

**** BOOKS WORTH A READ, AVAILABLE AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL LIBRARY.

- 1). In Search Of Love And Beauty - Ruth Praver Jhabvala.
- 2). My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign * (In play script form) - Hanif Kureishi.
- 3). The Corridor - Robin Maugham.
- 4). Coming To Terms - Robert Montagu.

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***** A LIST OF SOME GAY AND LESBIAN GROUPS.

I N D I A : -

- 1). Bombay Dost : 105 Veena Beena Shopping Centre, opp. Bandra Station, Bandra(West), Bombay - 400 050.
- 2). Sakhi : P.O. Box 7032, Srinivas Puri, New Delhi - 110 065.
- 3). Garden City Club : c/o S. Baranidharan, E59 Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore- 560 012.
- 4). Friends-India : c/o Shivendra, A-2 Indira Nagar, Lucknow - 226 016.

A B R O A D : -

- * 1). Trikone : P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, California 95151 U.S.A.
- 2). Shakti : 8M Box 3167, London WC1N 3XX, U.K.

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**** ANNOUNCING A "FOR AND AGAINST" DEBATE:
" LOVE BETWEEN TWO MEN CANNOT BE LIFE-LONG. "

- Is the above contention true ? Can two men never be successful in carrying out a relationship for as long as they live ? Or is the question irrelevant because 'love forever' between two humans, let alone two men, is a myth ?
- Readers are requested to send in their arguments ; clearly marked 'For' or 'Against' ; at the following address : Pawan Dhall, 79/18A, Palm Avenue, Calcutta -700 019.

***** WHAT PLAQUES THE FUN CLUB

When A. Kumar started Fun Club in December, 1990, he had high hopes of making it an institution of sorts, with which Calcutta's homosexuals would readily identify. For some time things were rosy. Having 75 members or so, even on the register, was no mean feat. A. Kumar not only spent lavishly to maintain the club, he took considerable risk in allowing the club premises to be used as an alternative to other riskier meeting spots, such as parks and public toilets.

There were, however serious flaws in the whole venture. A. Kumar was too lenient in collecting subscriptions from the members. He relied too much on credit, even while organising 'pink evenings'. All in good faith, but it was basically ~~was~~ a case of poor economics. And to rub it in, some members who regularly used the place, were calling it 'filthy' and a 'whorehouse', behind A. Kumar's back /

Not surprisingly, A. Kumar is quite disillusioned today. All that is needed, is a change in attitude. The day Fun Club becomes 'everybody's club' from 'A. Kumar's club', things should be better. Are Calcutta's homosexuals listening ?

&?&?&?&?&

-PD

***** PINKY - PONKY /

- * PINKY : PONKY dear, must all gay couples adopt children ?
- * PONKY : No PINKY darling. Not if they are a THANKS couple; i.e. a "TWO HUSBANDS AND NO KIDS" pair!

-PD

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• But this isn't the last page !!!

Plea to legalise 'gay' marriages

From Our Correspondent

New Delhi, 22: The Delhi-based AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan today launched its campaign for improving the status of homosexuals in India by submitting a charter of 16 demands to the petitions committee of Parliament.

The group, which has been working on AIDS-related issues for the past three years in Delhi's red-light area, wants immediate decriminalisation of sodomy by repealing Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, legalisation of same sex marriages, setting up a commission for documenting human rights violations around homosexuality and reformation of the police policy for ending institutionalised harassment of gay people.

The demands are based upon conclusions drawn by a group of seven voluntary workers who

have documented real-life experience of homosexual men and women belonging to different strata and regions of the country in a report entitled, "Less than Gay."

The citizens group has stated that one of their primary motives in publishing the report was to expose the lie that homosexuality does not exist in India. Not only do homosexuals exist, their situation is quite unhappy because the society did not permit them to reveal their sexual preference.

The report says some of them end up in heterosexual marriages against their own desires for fear of exposing themselves to their families and society. Others who muster up courage to come out in the open and declare themselves as married couples are ostracised.

As an example, the report cites the well-known story of two poli-

cewomen, Lila and Urmila, from Bhopal, who were discharged from service without a show-cause notice. They were forced to sign statements which they had not read, kept in temporary isolation and then transported to a railway station late at night with instructions not to return to the barracks ever.

However, some homosexuals are lucky to have parents who accept their sexual preference. In the report, a South Delhi resident recounted that her initial reaction when told about her son's homosexuality was "what will happen to my gold bangles." But, gradually she began to accept the fact and even told her relatives that her son was gay.

While her son is now worried about finding a partner to settle down with, she keeps telling him that "pair bonding is not necessary...there is greater potential for

a person if he or she remains single," the report says.

The report points out that same-sex eroticism was accorded high status by traditional Indian cultures and the original Kamasutra contained a separate chapter on it. But the British found this to be repugnant and declared it a crime in the Indian Penal Code, which was enacted in 1861. Since then, the police use the law to harass homosexuals and a "homosexual criminal" has been invented in society, the report says.

Making a strong plea for recognising gay marriages, the report says, Whatever happens between men and men, and Women and women is common knowledge. Why then should gay marriages not be recognised as legally and socially valid? Marriage offers social prestige and substantial legal benefits to citizens allowed access to it."

In the next issue : Details of the ABVA report .

***** GAY KAHANI: "TEARS OF JOY"

Atlast, a break in the cloudy sky. Grey skies in November seem out of place. Is Calcutta's climate changing ? Within a few days, some meteorologist would pen a column in a daily, explaining this absurdity of the heavens.

Varun smiled at the direction of his thoughts. The break in the sky symbolised a break for him too. One, which he had waited for eagerly. For the past week. A gloomy 7 days. Today was the day to smile once

again. Boy, would he smile ! He grinned at himself in the mirror. He broke into laughter. Inevitable, he thought. He felt much too happy to stop at a smile. In two years of friendship with Romesh, there never had been a gap of 7 days of not seeing each other.

How would he start it with Romesh ? It had been easy on the phone last night. -PD

SO WHAT HAPPENS

NEXT ? Will Varun smile ? Read the next issue without fail to find

Out!

ATTENTION Readers !

Let your creative juices flow (no pun intended /), and give PRAVARTAK the privilege to print your articles.

• GOODBYE READERS ! "DON'T WORRY BE GAY!"