Friends India

Asian Gays Meet in Bangkok
The Third International Asian Lesbian and Gay Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand from August 24-26, hosted by the Fraternity for AIDS Education and Treatment (FACT), an organization from the Philippines and the United States.

Better Gay Than Grumpy

WASHINGTON GAY, & BI
History Made By Asian Lesbians

One emotional issue which stirred passions at the conference was the question of whether non-Asian lesbians living in the West should be included in the New Americans movement. It was a conference where like-minded individuals gathered to discuss issues relevant to their identity and experiences.

BhEDbhAV VIRU
JNUSC Anti-Discrimination Act

NEW GROUP IN CHINA
A new group called the Sufi Liberation Group has formed in the People's Republic of China to promote gender liberation. Located in the Shaanxi province, south east China, the group members report progress in their advocacy efforts.
THE NEW AVATAR

Dear Reader,

Hi! Hopefully some of you remember the Pravartak of more than a year ago. Well, here begins its second tryst with you after "liberation".

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 hetero marriages, suicides, extortions by police in parties, sniggers 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 conflict — of a silliness amidst flow — lies the answer to "why Pravartak?" (or may be "why Pravartak again?")

Pravartak is past of the flow which wants to become powerful enough to dissolve the mountains of resistance to charge.

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 attitudes 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, politicians, 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 is on Pravartak's 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.

Next Month: AIDS — The True Story

We look forward to your views and criticisms— but don't forget the praise.

ED.
ACCEPTANCE OR TOLERANCE?

By R. Shankar

The basic answer lies in the fact that we gays must fight first to promote decency. To oppose persons who demonize us; to provoke and promote open national conversation an homosexuality. But we must avoid the demand for special programs. And we must come out.

Do we — must we gays have to travel the same route? A special status is certainly something we do not want.

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THEY WANT TO MAKE ME A 'MAN'

By Ritish

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 hardwired as it is irrefutable. Because of the legal implications of such a bizarre thought.

Dad says hormone therapy can cut one straight. The law says that forced administration of hormones is punishable. I say that it can drive me to suicide. So then what will father say, do?

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

And while my mother sat absent through the whole this, my father suddenly came up with a question. —

“King or queen?” he asked. I said that I used not understand such terminology.

Later, while driving home, dad said he admired my honesty. Then, unable to resist a joke, asked me if I had refused to speak to a ‘friend’ recently because he had been made in bed.

One thing led into another and the story continued to me stop meeting my gay friends. He suggested I just a gym so as to cut out on the path of becoming a ‘normal’ man.

And doctors consultations were divided to administer the hormone injections to speed up the process.

At the moment things are pretty hectic. The family is being away in London. I am scared of what I will do if push comes to shove, though, I have not completed studies, but the thought:

Though I still meet fellow gay, like to be honest.

PRAVARTAK/SEPTEMBER 1993
REACHOUT

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 (Greater Generosity will be more than welcome)

NETWORKING

- Please make sure to keep your listings up to date.
- If you have any changes, please let us know so we can update them accordingly.

CC OFFERS COUNSELLING

We have obtained several new counselors who have offered their services. You can contact them at the following addresses:

- Flat A, 1st Floor, 11, Ballygunge Place, Kolkata 700 016
- Flat B, 2nd Floor, 12, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata 700 016

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

IT'S BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY. WEAR CONDOMS

PUDDLES

By Gloria Anzaldua

The gay man always left a puddle on his chair, along with the tip on the table. It got so Prieta ceased being surprised. With her nose up and she'd wipe it up with a towel; the puddappet wasn't very big and with the other pocket the quarter the tip was always a quarter no matter whether it was coffee he'd ordered or a full meal. After half a dozen times of wanting to, Prieta finally dipped her finger in. The puddle. Prieta decided after sniffling it, was not piss. Nor was it water, though it looked clear. She put the wet finger in her mouth — it didn't taste like wine or coffee.

The next morning, as she washed her face she noticed that the tip of her tongue had turned green. She scrubbed it with her toothbrush. She, tried, with mouthwash. No change. She was running late for work. Never mind the green tongue. She planned to confront the man whose puddle had turned her tongue green. He was carrying some weird diseases? Could he think about it, he was a bit strange. Along with the pink triangle and carrying in his left hand, he always wore an olive green pacra that covered him to the knees. Though he never spoke to her, just looked at the menu when he ordered, nodded or shook his head when she came around with the coffee carafe, a look of recognition would pass between them. Did he have a reason for always picking one of her tables instead of one of his? Both were dykes, but Amy was the one who smiled and cracked jokes with the customers while Prieta complained about the twenty-five-watt — imagine, twenty-five — being fought on the planet. Now that she thought about it, he always sat at the same table, which was quite curious. How long had he been coming in? Two weeks?

What's wrong with your finger? asked her friend Amy, when she got to Los Amis. Why is it green?

"My finger? Ay ay! She said looking at her finger and giving a small yip. Could you believe I have a way with plants? Tu sebas, a green thumb?"

Any looked at her funny. "You're never showed you had a sense of humor, until now. You're face is all lit up. You wearing some kind of fluorescent make-up? The color's all wrong.

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A CONDOM IN YOUR POCKET IS A FRIEND FOR LIFE. ALWAYS CARRY IT.
OF HOMOPHOBIA AND KALA

By Parwalz

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

One fine day, this pretty lass who I thought was any school sweetheart comes up to me and tells me about this "rather interesting man" who lives in Greater Kaishal and is unting 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, quotas, period.

And when she went as far as to give me his address and telephone number. I was a quaking mass of jelly! Fear apart trust my ego to make her out to be a lezbi! So much for my rather limited and prejudiced viewpoint, coloured no doubt by my abject 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. Unfortunately, I read it. And shockingly enough, this perverted perspective goes on to become a bestseller!

If Kala’s definitions are right, then I am effeminate and walk like a woman - say a "queen" or a "pansy". I have lack "normal male aggression". I go through life having furtive sex in toilets and forever quivering, telling lies. And yes, oh yes - I have thin thighs!

Could anything be more preposterous? The Tink minority in addition to our sexual preferences have one other thing in common, a past of our anatomy the least verifiable (not to mention THEM). Whah!

I pity those poor victims with whom Kala had his intimate conversations as he set forth on his quest for uncovering our "murky world"! No doubt, he went armed with a measuring tape, just the thing to measure wrists 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 - about homophobias in our society.

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

Today when Gore Vidal's theory of the "Ying" - the dominent male, the bread winner and the "Yang" - 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 independant, earning persons - thus, more likely to be based on equality than a heterosexual 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 to. I am though with being in my stuffy closet, forced to bear the insulting definitions Kala wants to confine me into.

Should we have a procession against him? A conditioned response in protraitists and Marxist 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 our it to ourselves. No more Kala please. We don't want the light in the closet to be just a pipedream - a damned thought of (as Kala says) a wretched, perverted mind - one that could be yours, even mine.

(As of views expressed here are the author's personal thoughts)

PRAVARTAK/SEPTEMBER 1991

A GOOD HUMAN BEING

By Andrew Robinson

Khun Naihe walks double-time through Bangkok's ultra-modern airport. He has just returned from a conference on AIDS in Singapore. His shoulder-length, black, straight hair is done in the Western manner created by his forward-leaning demeanor which seems to accompany him wherever he goes.

Naihe rushes through customs and into the stifling humidity, and then into the more stifling hongkong traffic. A few hours later, after packing the members of his [classes] troupe into the back of a small pickup, Khun Naihe walks-run into a bar and stands working. Dancer, actor, teacher, gay activist and all-around groundbreaker, Khun Naihe has performed in hundreds of such bars - gay and straight, low class and high - during his original self-made career.

"The prostitute bar is my favourite place to perform," says Abul Salayeh, a Member of Naihe's troupe. "You feel like you're really teaching them something."

One young prostitute, who has been working for nearly seven months at the Superbar, as barboy number 43 (the number dangles from his tank top), had just arrived from a village in north-west Thailand. Since then he has been working nightly in the hope of collecting enough money to return to the north-west and start his own, much more successful church.

Khun Naihe is a gay activist who speaks the AIDS message through dance performances in pickup bars.

PRAVARTAK/SEPTEMBER 1990

AIDS CAN BE AVOIDED - PLAY SAFE

Khan Naite was a gay activist who sparked the AIDS movement through dance performances in pickup bars.

Khun Naihe was a gay activist who sparked the AIDS movement through dance performances in pickup bars.
SHOULD YOU WEAR YOUR GAY IDENTITY ON YOUR SLEAVE?

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
By Reza Randers

Though the title of this essay may be a famous Dickens's novel — you are not going to read a critical evaluation of his literary talents: In fact, the reason behind this article is to help you critically evaluate yourself — and to come out feeling good! So, let's start at the beginning. You are gay (yes, it is not so difficult to admit it) and you think that you are correct in being so. However, prejudiced people being everywhere it takes a lot of guts to put your mind into correct perspective and be as honest as you want to be. This often makes you feel guilty, dishonest and leaves you generally depressed. So how does one go about admitting the fact of one's homosexuality openly and still feel on top of the world.

SELF DENIAL — It is not easy to live in a repressed and orthodox society, especially when one is gay! Religion lays a dominating role in any society and all religions forbid homosexuality. One of the common mis-compositions is to not admit to oneself that they are gay. This eventually leads to confusion regarding one's correct sexual identity — which is an extremely painful experience for those who are concerned.

RULE 1: Admit your homosexuality to yourself. In doing this you have taken the first step towards conquering the long fight ahead of you.

THINK POSITIVE — In a homophobic society, it can get extremely depressing to forever hear that homosexuality is the biggest sin of mankind. There are times when it serves that the odds are forever increasing against you.

Conformity, being part of the crowd, doing what others do, is fun. There is security in it and even happiness.

But trouble begins when you can no longer keep the feeling that you are different somehow, under wraps. Then you need assurance that this is to be different. This impel of the difference you have a place under the sun.

If you are different you must tell the world about it. Otherwise you will be taken for granted. How the world reacts to your self-assertion is secondary. Foremost is your announcing the fact that you do not want to lose your individuality and identity for that is losing your self respect.

If you are gay. You need to be open about it. Non-gays do not have to announce their sexuality because they don't feel they are being swamped. But you need to at least to your immediate circle, why should you spend your life with a woman in and outside bed when you want a man? And if it is so, why shouldn't others know? Why should they be allowed to assume how you would feel happy?

By all means coming out should be from a position of advantage — that is, you feel you can face the intolerance that may be directed against you. In a world replete with 'homophobia' strategy counts a lot in coming out. But the bottom line is coming out.

To whom you come out is your choice — family, friends or to the whole world. But it is best when you know it does not matter who comes to know.

RULE 2: Always think positive. Being optimistic always helps one feel better.

FEAR OF REJECTION — This seems to be one of the main reasons why a lot of gays are still 'in the closet'. Michael Jackson made millions from the song 'In the closet' but he had no fear of rejection from Naomi Campbell or the people who saw the clip. The biggest fear of rejection is from the people one loves most — parents, brothers, sisters, close friends and relatives. We normally do not want to open up and reveal our identity to the people we love most for the fear of losing them.

RULE 3: DO NOT REVEAL YOUR HOMOSEXUALITY SUDDENLY. This would only serve in increasing the gap. First feel how your loved ones feel about homosexuality. Talk to them and find their views. Remember, just as much as you want to be understood does not give you the right to spring your identity suddenly upon people, for they shall not be able to correctly comprehend the matter. This would worsen the situation. Go slow and judge when the time is right to reveal your homosexuality. If your loved one's people would not take too kindly to fact then it is better not to tell them and leave things as they are.

WHY BE RADICAL? — I, personally, have a number of gay friends who are extremely and radical! A lot of gay people who are radical scream discrimination at the drop of a hat. While it may be worth while to organise gay rallies and marches for equal rights, these measures work best only in a society where the 'community' feeling exists.

In India however, it shall take a long time for a gay community to evolve in the true sense. So remember that you are alone and act accordingly. In the same way as a heterosexual person does not go about screaming that he is straight, there is no reason for you to wear the fact that you are gay on your sleeve all the time.

RULE 4: Being radical in most cases, calls for undue attention and worsens the situation. Remember that you are fighting a tough battle and if you want to win, it is not against any social system or the elements. It is your battle against your own inner being. Just as you may not like certain characteristics in people, there are many who do not like homosexuality. One must respect their views too and not force one's opinion down another's throat. The main law of a civilized society is to tolerate and respect each other's beliefs, customs and practices. Running the gauntlet unnecessarily shall only harm you.

BE DIGNIFIED — In order to gain respect one must give respect. Being gay does mean that you are doing something wrong. It is a fact of life and is being proven by science even today that homosexuality depends on chromosomal structure.

RULE 5: DO NOT BE WRACKED BY SELF PITY OR DISGUST. Be proud of who you are and keep your dignity. Do not let people use you as a doormat if they know you're gay. Be firm and confident.

DISCUSS — The most important rule is to make friends not sex, but for meaningful relationships. Most people frequently and discuss real problems that you face.

In conclusion, I can only add that some of the most talented people in the world were gay and when I think of that, I give myself all the boost I want. We still have a gay way to go and the world is our oyster. So keep your chin up, you guys and hang on. (The author is bisexual)
WHO'S THAT GUY?

By Pawan

What's common to Raja, Deepak Sehgal, Kishore and Sanjoo? They're all young Calcuttans just past 20, claim to have a macho persona and possess a buyout "oh I am just 20 but you're 60" voice.

What else do they share? The same body - To give him the benefit of doubt, they may indeed be four different guys — or two: Raja alias Deepak and Kishore alias Sanjoo. But intelligent guesses and sharing of notes amongst members of a particular gay circle in the city lead to a different conclusion — that the four names belong to the same guy.

And why the guesses? Because no one in the circle has met him so far (that is, till the time of writing). All encounters with him have been over the phone.

According to some accounts, he's a great conversationalist. One guy said he talked to "Raja" for nearly an hour. Apparently, the conversation was hot and this fellow wasn't quite sure what Raja was up to on the other end. And curiously, Raja wasn't keen for an encounter.

This writer's experience was different. He received a call from "Kishore" at his office who turned into "Sanjoo", a month later (the voice was the giveaway). The second time the caller said he'd borrowed this writer's number from a friend's diary without telling him. He answered questions with questions and probably had a big mental block. He refused to give his address or telephone number or to fix a rendezvous with a stock comment: "I don't know you, so how can I be sure I should tell you..." He had nothing to tell about himself and yet wanted to be friends.

Similarly, three others have had "teleounters" with this phantom, none followed by a personal encounter.

Incidentally, it was one of these three who first received a call from "Deepak Sehgal". Towards the end of May this year. Since then the mysterious caller has reached out to practically all the circle accessible by phone. How he got hold of all the phone numbers is a big question too, although it's possible that some one in the circle might have inadvertently given him a few numbers.

Besides, the caller has never given any personal contact number or address.

So who's this guy? What's his problem? Has he got a split personality? Has he got a problem of self-acceptance or insecurity? It so he needs help — good counselling and good friends.

But if he's just a prankster — WHO MAY NOT EVEN BE GAY and whose idea of fun is to talk shit over the phone, there's only one treatment he deserves. HE SHOULD BE EXPOSED.

CONCERT FOR A CAUSE

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 PRAVARTAK'S heart — that of contributing to AIDs charities. We have five semi-rare 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 something else!) doesn't fail to surprise, with its well orchestrated rhythm and George Michaels brilliant rendition. 'Calling you' is haunting and forces one to each out for the reward button. Fredries magical voice pulls your heartstrings in the short but remarkably engrossing 'Dear Friends'.

FIVE LIVE

GEORGE MICHAEL

WHEN LONDON CALLS

The remix of the 'Rolling Stone' number is as good as the original. One is almost a part of the entwined audience as they, at frequent intervals, break into frenzied scenarios, victims of the Music Mania! What is hard to understand is the large amount of music space wasted — almost more than ten minutes in both sides. One is immediately transported to the heady days when Queen with numbers like 'Radio GaGa' and 'I want to break free' held an entire generation in thrall.

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 multi-instrumentality. Lisa is set to go places, as the Numbers on the forthcoming 'Silver' track prove beyond doubt. The icing on this delectable confection is Mercury as 'Somebody to love', a number that shines with nostalgia evokes sadness for a genius, snuffed so early.

The cassette is a must buy for 'Praavartakt' readers. Says Michael (reproduced as jacket from the performance) — "I think a lot of people, not necessarily people who have anything against gay people, are probably taking 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, if only for our millions of dying brothers and sisters and believe me, you won't regret it. You'll probably end up rediscovering Music and not the M TV way.

Five Live Remixes Review by Pawan

MAKE SEX SAFE USE CONDOMS

PRAYARTAK SEPTEMBER 1993

PRAYARTAK SEPTEMBER 1992
সেই সময়েও?

নীলিমা দেবেশ্বরের জীবন “সেই সময়” একটি নিষ্পাদন। এই জাতীয়দের জীবনীকৃত অ্যাব্রাহাইম ১৯৩০-র তারিখে সমাপ্ত হয়েছে। এর সম্প্রসারণ এবং প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। এটি কালীমাত্র ঢাকের পাবলিক মেমোরিয়াল স্মৃতিসভায় প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

এক উনিশ প্রায় সালের প্রথম খেলায় তারা আরম্ভ করেছিল। একটি বেলায় তিনি অন্যদের মধ্যে একজন ছিলেন। এর প্রথম চরম পর্যন্ত তিনি জীবনীকৃত সৃষ্টিকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করেছিলেন।

চারদিকে আলোর ডিউ গুনের সহজে আসে।

নীলিমা দেবেশ্বরের জীবন “সেই সময়”

কেন করেছিলেন?

—আমার কী জনপ্রিয় ছিলো?
—আমি কী ছিলো?

THE POLITICS OF RIGHT OR LEFT

Just when I closed
my wardrobe with every imagin
able shade of pink, comes along
news that our colour is now
PURPLE! Believe me it is not
merely being gay, especially when
it boils down to making such
HARD choices! Yes I talk of
ear-rings, the not-so-long-age-sc
reliable way of recognizing my
brothers (fisters actually!).

Row Kavi has assured me that
it's a matter of choice, but if it has
to be, then why not? Remember,
we are not on the right side
of the law! Another friend,
who is not quite in the know,
(though another one) insists it is right
to be gay. For him, otherwise,
since he has the best of both
worlds and is sooo politically
correct, I either and I quiver

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
come to, as it were, make your
mark on the body. It is on its
way to becoming as normal as
growing your hair or having a tattoo
on your skin.

Early naughty boys put gold
studs in their ears, but when
George Michael wore huge hoops
through both lobe during co
recortes, the idea somehow lost
its appeal.

Next came every supermodel's
favourite fashion accessory —
tattoos. 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 asso
icated with the Gay Movement,
hits the Mainstream today.
Even featuring in Madonna's
book Sex.

Clothing Mark Garte, 28, has
got both his nipples and nose
pierced. And a long bolt, called
an amputating, 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 associ
ated 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 the $M
scene in the West. Because pin
and pleasure are closely linked.
Now it is an avant garde Fashion
Statement.

The advantages of body pier
cing, which costs up to 50 pounds
in London, is that you can wear
your rings to office, under your
clothes. Besides it reputed to
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.
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Send in unpublished and original works C/o. PRAVARTAK.