PERISCOPE

Offering a choice

A choice. Reaction. An axiom in any sphere of human life. The limited gay action Counsel Club and PRAVARTAK have managed has also had its reactions. And more so, perhaps rightly so, amongst gays than non-gays.

Many have encouraged Counsel Club to go on with its work, and a heartfelt thanks to all of them. But thanks also to those who have voiced some pertinent questions. These deserve to be answered.

The questions raised are: Why the gay action? Why so much noise over a personal issue? What will it help achieve? Won't it backfire on gays? Doesn't the little bit of privacy they enjoy be snatched away too?

These fears are justified and Counsel Club respects the need for privacy for gays. But the purpose of gay action Counsel Club has undertaken is not to destroy that privacy; it is instead, to offer a choice by setting an example.

Counsel Club feels homosexuality is nothing to be ashamed of. Homosexuals are not 'sick' or criminals and do not deserve the prejudice they are often subjected to.

To those homosexuals who are not comfortable with their sexuality and feel guilty about it, Counsel Club would like to make them see that they have a choice. A choice to see themselves in a better light.

To those gays who are comfortable with their sexuality. Counsel Club again has a choice to offer. A choice to join a struggle for respect for their sexuality. An opportunity that could help them avoid seeing it a double life.

A choice to help them say: "So what if I'm gay?" A choice which will help them achieve greater control over their lives. A chance to know how to have sex without contracting or spreading any infection.

Of course, participation in gay action will call for some sacrifice, for taking some risks that may backfire and also for making some noise. Without some noise, polls on issues such as homosexuality, which has a social stigma attached, will never get heard.

By taking a lead, Counsel Club does not mean to organise 'gay activism'. It means making intelligent noises through the press, radio, TV, cinema, music, drama, literature, etc. through its own resources and other sources.

Gay action can yield some gains in the short term. A good example is an article published in 'Amila Bazer-Patika' in January 1994, based on interviews with Counsel Club members. Dive or take some errors, the article was refreshingly positive about gays, unlike most others in the past few years.

On the whole, however, gay action will call for a long-term struggle. There will be a price to pay. But then no action also has its price: a constant fear of being found out, punishment and ridicule, unhappy marriages, compensations which hurt badly and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection.

Counsel Club says to each of its members: 'We are all men of life. It does not wish to impose its ideals on anyone. To those who enjoy secrecy and prefer status quo, Counsel Club says: 'Best of luck.'

To those who want some change, Counsel Club says: 'Welcome!'. And this welcome is unconditional: it is not coming from a tolerating, But Counsel Club will be there with support if and when and whoever the individual decides to 'come out'.

It must also be mentioned that Counsel Club does not wish to discriminate between gays (and non-gays) on any basis, including income class. It is open to all individuals concerned with the gay issue: self-acceptance and acceptance in society at large. It wants all such individuals to share their experiences and help solve the problems common to all or specific to any group of people.

Counsel Club is not on a "mission to preach" to gays from any income class, brand or caste as one member stated. The last thing it wants to be accused of is "imperialism" of any sort, including cultural. Its mission is to participate in a learning process based on exchange of ideas and perceptions. It aims to create a forum for voices and issues often ignored by others.

In the end, there is a question for those who doubt the need for gay action. If in the days to come, gay action does result in greater acceptance of homosexuality and gay, even legalisation of same sex marriages, would they abstain from enjoying these gains? Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code is already being challenged in court in New Delhi (see report inside).

THE BOTTOM LINE: Resist prejudice: in you against others and in others against you.

PRAVARTAK APR-JUN '94
REPORT

Aniruddha Bhumi?

Ashwini on the December 1993 seminar on the 'history of alternate sexualities' in New Delhi

Scores of lies at home. Hunted travelling arrangements. Hours of research at the library. Completion of the paper.

Late arrival at the Old Delhi station. Bargaining for the autorickshaws. A hot bath at the guest house. Early morning breakfast. Arrival at the Indian Social Institute for the seminar.

Seven days of intense intellectual discourse and workshops. Evening chats with Giti, Shivi, Sushobodh, Manohar, Ashok and Krishna. Press sensationalism. India Today headline.

Aniruddha bhumi!!

The Naz Project, based in London, organised a seminar on gender constructions and history of alternate sexualities in South Asia in New Delhi (December 17 to 23, 1993). It was attended by the New Delhi-based Nazis group. A revival of alternate historical and mythological traditions and delving deep into diverse issues related to gay men, lesbian and bisexuals—was the aim of the seminar.

As many as 100 delegates from South Asia, the UK, USA and Germany attended the seminar.

Among the interesting presentations were Anjali Gopal's talk on 'sexophobia and homophobia in AIDS activism.'

Anjali's intense retrospection and sensitive narration triggered off discussions on various issues.

Radhika's presentation on 'varieties of sexual behaviour—the Spanish experience' reflected the general urban attitude towards sex.

Suhail Ahmed's talk on 'marriage for Indian homosexuals was inevitable' was charged with emotion and prompted others to share their experiences also.

Sultan Khan's paper on 'name calling' was hilarious. The quick summary of names used for homosexuals was worth listening. Sultan's paper initiated a discussion about the politics of language. Giti made a dig at the Western-dominated colonial language.

Apart from the presentations, research papers were presented. The paper ranged from mythology to cinema and the invisibility of alternate sexualities.

Mention must be made of the paper on 'decolonisation and third world lesbians' identified by Yasmin Tambiah of Sri Lanka. This paper was a testament to the denial of space for lesbians and gay men in the colonised developing countries.

Ramakrishna's paper titled 'female sexuality was a myth of the reconstruction of the femininity gender.' Using Buddhi Kokk and other analyses, Ramakrishna made a humorous representation of society's fear of femininity desires.

Ashok Roy Khur's paper on the obstacles in the development of a gay identity spoke about the concept of mardangi and analysed its role in perpetuating patriarchy.

Towards the end of every day a dance workshop was organised to develop the body language inherent in every human being. Literary works by gays figured on top of the final day's agenda. Mita's poetry 'Saans' as it was was remarkable, while 'Snake Woman' by Nalini from USA caught everyone's imagination and reminded one of the obstacles in everyday life.

The general mood of the conference was that of camaraderie. But ideological differences could not be avoided. The major issue of contention was the relationship between love and sex. Some considered the gay community's movement phallocentric while the lesbian movement was regarded as a reaction against the former. Both were discussed as separate issues with a common civil rights background. The seminar marked the beginning of a new era in gay activism in South Asia by concluding that it set up an institute for research on alternate sexualities. The seminar, to be set up in New Delhi, would serve as a resource and research co-ordination unit.

The seminar also acted as a catalyst for the setting up of a Naz Project unit in the capital.

An offshoot of the seminar was a national level meeting of gay groups, which enabled the sharing of experiences.

The seminar was a success, which every one looks at it. But it remains to be seen how long the world will be 'aniruddha' (lonely) for gays in South Asia.

Delving into tradition

The situation faced by gay men has a parallel in the Ganesha myth, say Rohit and Ashwini.

Athough the appearance of Ganesha in the Hindu Pantheon of Gods has been traced back to at least as late as the 5th century A.D., his popularity among all sections of Hindus is phenomenal. As a result of this rich and variegated body of mythology, both oral and written, Ganesha has grown up around the god.

His various philosophies, religions, and cults, which constitute the cultural strands of the cultural tapestry called Hinduism, draw upon a common religious thread. The Hindu religious stream, interpreting the myths in its own unique way, has given rise to a variety of modifications which help the myths conform to particular philosophical systems that these religions are allied to. One such myth of Ganesha has been interpreted as being the philosophical school of Sankaracharyam to explain the cosmological and religious ideas of.php.

This myth, however, is the most popular Ganesha myth in the land and narrates how Ganesha gets the elephant-headed boy.

The story begins with a lonely Parvati longing for a son. One day, when her husband Shiva's sexual demands on her become unbearable, she asks him to approach Parvati, a slave girl. While bathing one day, Parvati creates Ganesha out of the turmeric paste she has rubbed on to her body. Elements of a strong and mutual bond are suggested here, as Parvati sets up Ganesha to guard her bathing place from the sudden and unaccountable visits by Shiva. For Ganesha, he knows of no authority other than Parvati and no love other than that he feels for his mother and his mother feels for him. But soon enough, Shiva makes a typically noisy appearance on the scene along with his wild horses.

Ganesha, shyly refuses him entry into his mother's precincts (for which Shiva feels grossly insulted in the light that ensues. Shiva, furiously, beheads Ganesha.

Feeling guilty about his son's murder Parvati is angered. The mother of the universe assumes a terrifying form and threatens to destroy the whole of creation unless Ganesha is restored to life.

Shiva realises that the interloper he had just killed was also his son. By rebirth and ensuring the creation of any religious ceremony for it to be efficacious. Shiva, in addition, places his son at the head of his hordes, the 'Ganapatis.' Thus the boy becomes Ganesha, the Lord of the Ganas.

The Shaktas interpret this myth at many levels—social, phyical and material. The social interpretation of the myth makes Ganesha an 'ideal sex person,' who has understood the essence of both the 'masculine' and 'feminine.' The fundamental duality which makes up this universe.

In fact, our interest in Ganesha would require us to take a look at the relationship between Shiva and Parvati, the symbols of static masculinity and dynamic femininity.

The marital discord between Shiva and Parvati at the beginning of the story, the statement of the state of strife, that all individuals, including gods, find themselves. This disunity is a direct result of the disequilibrium resulting from the male aspect of ourselves, trying to dominate the female aspect.

The myth suggests, this is the unwelcome sexual demand of Shiva.

This disunity, prompts a response from the female side, where she immediately creates a male to complement her, but who is bastinadoed by a part of her own—her very own son: Ganesha. It is a reassertion of masculinity which comes to the defense of the female self with great gusto.

Inevitably, the opposing masculine elements come into conflict. Initially, the pro-harmony male element is dismembered and castrated (cutting off the head is a celebrated castrating symbol in Hindu myths and folklore). The father's child for obliterating the feminine access to his own, the latter's mother.

But the feminine power, which, according to the Shaktas, represents dynamic forces of creation, sustenance and destruction, constantly asserts itself. It threatens to obliterate the masculine element (Shiva; in turn).

Face to face with the reality of the situation, the masculine element realises that his own existence depends on a cooperative relationship with the feminine. That is, by integrating the pro-harmony male element with himself, Shiva reconstitutes himself to Ganesha, by reunifying...
ing his son and placing him at the head of his horses and uniting the four.

Ganesha accepts the father's right over him, but Shiva, the god of destruction, has other plans. Shiva then sends his agent, Parvati, to take Ganesha away and bring him to the palace. Parvati is a powerful goddess, and she is able to accomplish her mission. However, Ganesha has been drinking heavily, and he is not aware of Parvati's intentions. The goddess is able to trick Ganesha into getting into her chariot, and she takes him to the palace.

When Ganesha arrives at the palace, he is greeted by his mother, Ganga. Ganesha is surprised to see his mother, and he asks her why she has come to take him away. Ganga explains that the king of the gods wants to talk to him about his duties. Ganesha is hesitant to leave his father, but he is eventually convinced by his mother.

Ganesha then sets out on a journey with Parvati. They travel to the city of Varanasi, where Ganesha is able to see his father once again. Ganesha is happy to see his father, and he asks him for permission to serve in the army. Ganesha's father grants him permission, and Ganesha sets out on a journey to become a soldier.

As Ganesha travels through the city, he becomes involved in a series of adventures. He meets many different people, and he is able to help them in various ways. Ganesha is a hero to all who know him, and he is respected by everyone.

In the end, Ganesha is able to return to his father and mother, and he is able to continue his life as a soldier. Ganesha is a remarkable character, and he is able to overcome many obstacles in his journey. Ganesha's story is a testament to the power of love and devotion, and it is a story that will inspire all who read it.
**Challenges and strength**

By Parvez

How can the state decide who is to be bed whom? And how can the gender of one's

SUMMARY OF CIVIL WRIT PETITION 1999
determinant IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI

AIDS BHDHEVA VIRUDH VIMAL
(AIDS Anti-Discrimination Movement
Versus,

1. Union of India and others
2. Delhi Administration
3. The District & Session Judge, Tihar Jail
4. Inspector General of Prisons, Tihar Jail

SAFE CUSTODY?

Tihar Jail bans condoms

WHERE does a condom belong?

The position of the court in this matter is
to hear the matter and to decide whether
the petition is maintainable or not.

The petitioners have not

constituted of Section 377 of the

Act. The petitioners have not

sought to annul the act itself.

ABDA, in its petition, argued that Section

377 be scrapped so that condoms could be

supplied to all inmates without segregation

for AIDS prevention. ABDA's petition was

referred to another matter by the court.

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SAFER SEX

Provided it is not forced, rushed or brought on with guilt and fear. Above all, care and concern for the other person (question?) makes it even more enjoyable.

Care and concern mean you don't want to hurt the other person. And, of course, you don't want to receive hurt either. Hey, I don't mean the hurt which sometimes accompanies pleasure during sex. I'm speaking about the hurt caused by all those viruses and germs going around these days. These microscopic creatures are clever things. They can cause a range of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, hepatitis, warts and other diseases in general areas. Ooh, baby, that's hurting. Then there is the high-powered viruses these human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Risky, isn't it, baby? Yes. But sex was never meant to be SAFE. What we do is to make it SAFER, to a great extent. Only then we evolve care and concern in sex. Which means we should have safer sex.

NOW don't say: I'm not saying NO SEX! I'm saying RESPONSIBLE SEX. And if you use your imagination, safer sex need not be boring or troublesome or embarrassing. So, WHAT IS SAFER SEX?

First, it involves keeping your body clean before and after sex and fit. It also means going for a good oral and root treatment. Drink moderately, if at all, don't smoke and avoid regular exercise.

Second, is to prevent the passage of semen, blood or vaginal fluid from one person to another with any of the viruses which cause STD and AIDS into the body of another person.

So, safer sex may involve wearing a condom - a different colour, print or flavour - each time, but if you are going to lack inhibition, body rubbing, massage, mutual masturbation and fingering (and their endless permutations), just mind the cuts and sores and infections so you might have across them with water-based lubricants.

SEX is wonderful

HELO, I'm Keshav from Calcutta, warm-hearted, understanding and against aggression in my early 30s, into business. I would like to correspond with persons of a similar age bracket, travel often to Bombay and New Delhi. [CODE NO. 35]

HELO, I'm Uday from Calcutta, middle-aged lawyer with a sickly sense of humor but alive to good humour. Very interested in reading and music. Age no bar for friendship. [CODE NO. 20]

HELO, 42-year-old, thin build, school graduate who likes to meet/correspond with like-minded people from all over. Interests include music, arts, crafts, travelling and music. Write to: AC, P.O. Box 18, Deligam, 73401, West Bengal.

21-year-old student from Calcutta.

We have come across many who are often not comfortable with their identity, who are not sure of their sexual orientation, or have only recently discovered that their sexual orientation is not what it once was. Here's how we will help you when you're here. First, we will help you identify your queerness in one of our forthcoming counselling sessions. We will help you identify your queerness in one of our forthcoming counselling sessions. We will help you identify your queerness in one of our forthcoming counselling sessions. You will be invited to our sessions with counselors. We will also help you identify your queerness in one of our forthcoming counselling sessions. We will help you identify your queerness in one of our forthcoming counselling sessions.

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MEDIA

Omitting acts of commission
By Debjyoti

At a time when human rights is figuring in cities, publications so regularly thought it opportune to throw light on an issue wildly kept from public knowledge.

"This has been done, quite possibly, as a matter of policy. It is, at this time, has found nothing. It has been in a manner destined to create a negative impact on the readers' minds.

It is heart-breaking to see newspapers devoting precious columns to stories of human rights violations in distant lands, but not writing a single line on the gross infringement of human rights by "law enforcers" in this metropolis.

Yes, I'm speaking about gays being harassed by the police in public parks.

"The Telegraph" prides itself on news relating to gay affairs in "Fine Print", a column reserved for incidents bizarre, absurd and comic.

"The women's magazine "Sananda", in its weekly column, does not hesitate in urging a mother perturbed by her son's "unnatural" behavior to "consult a psychiatrist immediately. In the same breath it informed homosexuality to be potentially diagnostic of AIDS.

Another mass circulated Bengali daily "Bhutanman" recently carried an article on homosexuality praising.

The story narrated the case of a young woman married to a gay man. The man had been loved into the marriage by his mother who thought it would "cure" him of his disease.

A tragic situation, no doubt, for all concerned. Certainly, of course, for the sub-editor who gave the headline: "A new threat facing Indian homosexuals - homophobia mothers!

The police threaten to arrest him under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code if he did not pay up. All my friend was doing was chatting with an acquaintance, sitting on a bench - two feet apart! - in Park Circus Maidan. Since when did conversing become "criminal act"? Isn't Section 377 being used as a means to extort money from hapless people?

Sex in a public place is obscene and punishable with fine, but my rights definitely allow me to converse with a friend in a park - whatever be the topic of conversation at the time of the day (unless a police has been notified).

On the issue of police harassment of gays in the city, I can relate from personal experience how plain clothed police officers in Park Circus police station regularly harass gay men in the Esplanade area and in Park Circus Maidan.

Often a couple of lewd notes suffice. Otherwise, one is sure to land up at the police station and have their look-up list midnight. Then release follows on a bond order of Rs. 60. If the bail is not paid, the next morning is sure to see one being produced before a magistrate. 

(By the way, one's family, friends and the entire neighborhood would be within earshot of each other. "We never knew he was this bad").

What enraged me most was a recent incident when a friend was involved in such an incident. The police threatened to arrest him under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code if he did not pay up. All my friend was doing was chatting with an acquaintance, sitting on a bench - two feet apart! - in Park Circus Maidan. Since when did conversing become "criminal act"? Isn't Section 377 being used as a means to extort money from hapless people?

A police is obscene and punishable with fine, but my rights definitely allow me to converse with a friend in a park - whatever be the topic of conversation at the time of the day (unless a police has been notified).

For the press, of course, such cases of human rights violations, even on a large scale, do not merit attention. Where is the story, in them, where is the media, the politics? Or perhaps the police deserve brakes only when trespassers are beaten up?

It is high time the press media started sensitising the government and building public opinion on the gay issue. Enough of bungles comments on homosexuality as an aberration enough of linking homosexuality with HIV infection and AIDS; please let us have the last of snippets under gender-bender columns.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Storyline

Put on your thinking caps, dear readers. The feathers you enjoy will be all yours and definitely a colourful lot.

PRAVARTAK announces an amazing contest - STORYLINE. Your brief is simple. Write us the beginning of a story in not more than 500 words;

You can write about anything you wish - sex, AIDS or homophobic even chocolates and moods. But remember to leave a bit of room for endings.

The best story will be selected as the beginning of a continuing "serialised" novel, printed in the next issue of PRAVARTAK. Readers will be invited to submit subsequent issues to provide continuations and finally a finale. Who knows, we could even publish the "novel" and win a Pulitzer for originality!

So get down to it, for not even the light bulb has such a great idea come up!

You stand to win exciting colour t-shirts and PRAVARTAK prizes. You are sure to have fun writing! So start thinking and while you are at it, don't forget to submit entries.

A) Your entry should be typed or handwritten in double space and labeled "STORYLINE ENTRY".

B) An entry should be accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped envelope to facilitate return of entries found unsuitable.

C) You should mention your name and address with all details for publication.

Play it out

One friend Moushak from Banglore suggests that gays must play their role in the mainstream. He has sent us information about awards for contemporary plays in English announced by the Hindi.

TWO awards Rs. 20,000 each in the open category and three special awards will be made for "merit" plays written in English on themes set in an Indian context. Full-length plays not published or produced previously may be submitted.

THE Macaw Players will stage a selection of the award winning plays during the Theatre festival to be held in Madras In March 1995. The award winning plays may then be published in The Hindi.

FOR more details and the registration forms please write to: Playwrights Award. The Hindi, Rashmi Managar, Anjum Sahil, Most at the branches of The Hindi at Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Madras.

Destination Bombay

The results last came in Bombay. We were looking forward to hosting the 6th South Asia Hindi Conference in the second week of December, 1994. The conference will be held at The Hotel Gateway (a), Yash Importers, Convention and support services. The World Health Organization will be sponsoring the conference. It will be arranged with the help of Dainik Hindustan, Union and members of the community.

PARTICIPATION will be restricted to gay men involved in community issues. Members of pooling groups, researchers, individual activists, researchers, writers and artists will be welcome to participate.

SINCE future action plans will be decided at the conference, a personal commitment on the part of delegates to participate in the same is essential.

THE conference will be a closed one; there will be no observers.

The conference hopes to cover a wide range of subjects in the form of workshops. Some topics include the role of the unwed gay man in the South Asian community, Section 377 of the IPC within the gay community, problems of married gay men, problems of HIV- positive gays, etc.

THE duration of the conference will be three days. Housing and lodging will be provided. Second class train fare will be offered in certain cases. If you wish to attend, write to the HX project, c/o Shrimandi Khan or Bombay delegates.
EXTRACT

Invisible violence....

"....... is not alien to gais in India. Neither is it to the housewife in an urban joint family, says Kusma Gupta.

"When my iron was a ground, I would listen to his passion and speechiness on the oppression of women with a head full of (laugh), but with a mind half in the kitchen. How he has gone and how his concerns have become my daily concerns. I wish I had listened to him more. Now I have to think on my own, from scratch.

The story of violence is one of power, of how to acquire it and to retain it. A person acquires power by asserting his strength, force, authority or over a person whom he considers subordinate. When he feels that power is slipping out of his hands, he becomes enraged. Violence is an intense, harrowing reality that the society in which we live, the relation between men and women that makes this form of relation rare and ruled. Is there something similar in women that makes them unequal and, therefore likely to be oppressed? Women bear children, men do not. Childbearing and child raising give a woman a feminine character and alienate her from the male-dominated world.

What is it like to be a woman, living day to day, in love and married? To understand all these social processes, we have to move through the voice to the least visible layers of society. Drawing from my observations in this paper, I will focus on the lives of one specific group of women who are not much talked about even in feminist studies. They have no economic problems, are not underprivileged as such, do not suffer domestic violence. Yet, their lives are dominated and violence shapes their lives."

"The situation of the housewife in the well-off joint family is not so much of a calamity, but rather the illusion of a problem. The illusion may come from the existence of a housewife in the mind of the husband, who has not been exposed to anything like this. Violence that the wife of her mother-in-law perceives as being done to her, is one of the most devastating forms of violence. Violence that makes her feel that her husband is the father of her children. Violence that makes her feel that her husband is not a man of her own, but rather a man of her family. Violence that makes her feel that her husband is not a man of his own, but rather a man of her family. Violence that makes her feel that her husband is not a man of his own, but rather a man of his family. Violence that makes her feel that her husband is not a man of his own, but rather a man of his family. Violence that makes her feel that her husband is not a man of his own, but rather a man of his family. 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**HAPPENINGS**

Meet to mark Stonewall nots

Gays march for equal rights in New York rally

From John J. Goldman and Helaine Celen

New York, June 27: Thousands of gay rights supporters marched through the streets of New York yesterday in a huge rally to support Stonewall, the historic event that marked the beginning of the gay rights movement.

Activists consider the incident to be the origin of the modern gay rights movement.

But there were no incidents at the anniversary march. The New York City Police were on hand to ensure a peaceful event.

**CITYSCOPE**

CC party circuit

That everyone ended up having Thomas U. Kent and busker is another story.

THREE. PM saw eight girls painted in orange, silver, red and black (also pink, green and purple) return home to assemble their tales.

**CC T-shirts**

WHO says CG projects are just a lot of hype?

Agreed, there's a safer sex pamphlet still popping up. The two groups interlace without either one taking the lead, as stated before.

FEBRUARY 23 and March 5 saw the circuit come alive. Finally, the last show for both parties was a success. A girl who attended both parties was interviewed.

Jokes, leg pulling (not literal), poems of passion, yummy food and drinks and amusing touches marked the first party. The highlight was a raffle at the end. Some got fortunes of hunka, others candies and yet other ones only paper. The unofficial winner was a guy who got two orders inside a card: Wonder what he did with them.

TWO. The second party was more of a party with a more serious tone. Suits, C's (or not?) and dancing. What followed was a hilarious game of passing the ball. It ended abruptly when a guy was seen dancing with a paper bag in his hand. Everybody was hungry by now. For the delicious tiramisu, that is.

As somebody remarked, both parties ended around the same time. They will be held in New Delhi and Mumbai on 30th before.

RIGHT. Now, the circuit was short-circuited with emotions, happiness, holidays trip, interview, and maybe some good fun.

HOLI ka maza.

In spirit of some hill hoppers, those who did not partake for the festival of colours had a gain as well. After the event, everyone had a great time. All were so happy for the reason. All were so excited for the reason. A good time was had by all.

**RATIFIED**

That the middle-aged wife looked very happy at her husband/husband deep behind the TV screen. She was shown the photo of her daughter who called her to say hello.

**Delhi Sizzles!**

RAPIST who was away in Delhi for much of the month was here on Saturday. He was seen wearing a black coat and a white shirt. He was seen riding a bicycle and carrying a bag.

DELHI: April 16

PAUL, who was away in Delhi for much of the month, was seen riding a bicycle and carrying a bag.

**MOVING EYE**

READ about a sexual health workshop organised by the British Council at Delhi last week. The workshop was attended by health workers, educators and community leaders.

A SALLY, a social worker from the workshop, said, "We need to educate people about their rights and responsibilities." She added, "It's essential to have a balanced approach to sexuality education."
On the streets of Philadelphia
By Parvez

The last time two men mucked each other in Hollywood was back in 1980 in the art film `Kiss of the Spiderwoman' and William Hurt's `deviation' was, well... accepted.

But when straight heartthrob and symbol of 'mainstream Americana' Tom Hanks does it, the star-struck American public goes into shock!

An Oscar on his mantlepiece and they call him the Neil Armstrong of cinematic exploration, a path-breaker and a great actor. So much so for double standards.

Hanks plays a gay lawyer who is lied when his employers find out he is HIV-positive. And heterosexual lawyer Danal Wright has a lot of personal prejudice to contend with, when he takes up the case. No we won't tell you what happens, but the court room scenes are something else!

Hanks has starred in his such as "A League of Their Own" and "Sleepless in Seattle." In doing `Philadelphia,' he has in one swift move, overturned all the stereotypes he propagated earlier.

And it was not easy. He had to shed 30 pounds and get his hair thinned to achieve the look. Method acting is all very well, but Streep should vouch for that. But Hanks took to the role like a fish to water.

He read up a lot of gay literature. The hardest part was seeing real people about living with AIDS. His greatest flight, admits Hanks, was against homophobia - his own. The man, who used to get repulsed when his crotch was fondled in New York subways, had to actually stroke screen-lover Antonio Banderas's thighs. Six takes and consolation from Banderas later, he could do it convincingly.

Kudos for Jonathan Demme of `Scent of the laminate' fame to speak up about something so close to our hearts.

And where Demme goes, can Oscars be far behind? Yup, the movie has bagged two, not the least deserved of which was for the best actor.

The music by Bruce Springsteen adds just the right touch of pathos. When will the movie be shown in India? And no need please. You should see it with your mother.

Hanks in his last great Oscar acceptance speech said, `The streets of heaven are crowded with angels.' We agree with you Tom and there might be no space left very soon. Thanks Hanks for kicking mankind right where it hurts. Who is it he said: `A kick in time saves more than a life!'

Anguish

Literary writing in Indian languages has largely ignored sexual minorities, especially the socially marginalised communities like eunuchs or hijras. In Bengali, Rabindranath Tagore's novel `Paurash' had positively depicted a hijra as one of its main characters. But there was a woeful lack of creative writing incidenting solely on the hijra community. Manav Chakraborty's `Sanpatt' (Anguish) has boldly endeavoured to fill this void.

The deeply sensitive portrayal of a community of hijras, living in a basti on the Western Bengal border, is particularly moving. The interaction of the hijras with the surrounding basti dwellers, their pain and anger, longings and fears, desires and hopes, the glimmer and anguish of daily living in this milieu, all have been forcefully conveyed in narrating this sombre psychic topography of the eunuchs. Mukherjee has used maternal symbols like the shedding of tears as a vehicle to devastating effect.

For gay activists in particular, the character of Murali, the hijra sinter, embodies a powerful albeit conservative political statement. Murali saves the daughter of a rich man from a snake at great risk to his own life.

This selfless act wins for the aging hijra and his group an acceptance hitherto unimaginable. The whole cast joins in a search for Chhush, a disabled boy loved to beg, whom Murali had adopted as his son. This relationship has previously been the object of much derisive laughter.

Unlike Dominique Lapierre's `City of Joy,' there are no gory descriptions of the operation centers, since the characters are congenial hijras (neophrophiles).

However, there is an inexorable absence of `ULB Rambo,' the peculiar image of the hijras of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, certain words of which have found their way into the ghazals of Calcutta and surrounding areas. Mukherjee seems to have carefully avoided an important sub-

His lotus and ours

A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience
Edited by Reaven Rathi.
Al-yan Publications, USA.
$ 8.95

Rakesh Rathi sets about unveiling the South Asian gay and lesbian experience in 300 important pages and America's and its own evolving stereotype of hijras catches up more often than once.

The loss is the reader's, especially the homonormative Indian type, who marathis at Kim's assertion (p. 83) that in India `we manage to live a life of untroubled joy and virtual bliss.'

Excuse me Mr. Kim, but the India of our diaspora is markedly different from that of your dreams. But Rathi's book is a singular achievement and it goes to the editor's credit he is able to combine an incredibly insightful and well-written pieces with dollops of trash, with the latter kept in abundance most of the time.

The poetry does jar at times for a very obvious lack of poetic content. But Sudhir Pant's `The Lion Skin,' Ian Rashfi's `Another Country' and Rathi's `Beta' are beautiful compositions and touch many chords.

The lesbian voices heard in the book do bring home the fact that lesbians in the West have a stronger political identity than men, which in an Indian context is an ironic reversal of a prevalent situation.

Rathi raises a provocative question in `Feminism and Men' and Kamini Choudhary's `Thoughts on Dragons' are helpful in bringing down the mental barriers most homosexuals erect towards this very real issue.

Mummy's `Darling' is not a real experience in real terms and it is honest though prosaic. Ashok Jha's `Outside Her Experience' and Kartikay's `What Doesn't Happen Nowadays' combine wit, humour and subversion in a wholesome whole and are thus able to talk of India, as we know it.

While Lakshim and Arika's `Extended Family' does meaner on to a very extended bend, the interview with Urvashi Vaid is relevant and precise. Smith's `Chalwali' does broaden the perspective, though one wonders where Tagore could have described Prasad's first orgasm in more poetic terms!

In `Improbable Pair,' Kishan gets dangerously close to making you cry and this piece stands out for honesty and clout of thought.

Rathi's final reflection in `Visiting from an Old Heavens' is touching and the technique impressive. We indeed have to let our lives into the wind and shout our rage. But the wind would have to be very much a polluted Indian type and the outrage often different from our kindled splits in Clinton's America.

The book, however, remains a very relevant political, social and cultural statement, and its voices need to be heard. Next time round, however, Mr. Rathi or whoever else chooses to speak up would do better to jump a few false steps and write with the mix of a subcontinent and Section 377, oppressions and religious chauvinism are still everyday realities.

By Parvez

EAST OR WEST - SAFER SEX IS BEST

PRAVARTAK APR-JUN '94

PRAVARTAK APR-JUN '94
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