Pravartak

Issue # 2.

Dec.16-31, 1991.

Rs 4/-.

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 oppurtunity 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 which it deserves.

A CLARIFICATION:- PRAVARTAK has so far been less than particular about differentiating between the 'popular terminology' and the 'correct terminology' which maybe used when one is talking about homosexuals and homosexuality. See the LETTER FROM THE EDITOR, with regard to this matter.

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 : " To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a better place, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you lived : this is to have succeeded. " RALPH WALDO EMERSON .

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR :-

DEAR READERS,

PRAVARTAK is two issues old. It has been hectic putting these two issues together. But it has also been fun and the response to the periodical so far-however modest- has been positive. Some people read the first issue avidly, but never bought it. PRAVARTAK is glad that they atleast did the former, for that is what is of primary importance.

With regard to the 'clarification' mentioned on the first page, PRAVARTAK seeks to make some ammends, i.e. from the 3rd. issue onwards.

The word 'gays' in the list of 'AIMS' and 'HELLO !' (pg.1), implies 'male homosexuals'. This is 'popular terminology', as is referring to 'female homosexuals' as 'lesbians', but not 'gays'. However, going by the 'correct terminology', a GAY PERSON maybe a MAN or a WOMAN. In other words, a GAY PERSON maybe a MALE HOMOSEXUAL or a FEMALE HOMOSEXUAL. Moreover, he/she maybe EXCLUSIVELY HOMOSEXUAL or a BISEXUAL - again a HOMOSEXUAL but only PARTIALLY so.

Another misconception which this periodical seeks to avoid, is that 'being homosexual' and 'being gay' is one and the same thing. The truth is that while every gay is a homosexual, every homosexual may not be gay. At the same time, a homosexual who is not gay, cannot correctly be referred to as 'non-gay' either. This is because he/she is very likely to have ATLEAST the POTENTIAL to be gay. (While it is not possible to dwell on this aspect at greater length in this column, queries are welcome from readers with regard to it.).

It may perforce be added that this periodical is for all homosexuals. This is because PRAVARTAK feels one with all homosexuals, whether gay or not.

BEING ALERT ABOUT AIDS IS DOUBLY IMPORTANT FOR HOMOSEXUALS.

Why ? AIDS affects homosexuals like it affects other humans, but only a little more so. A homosexual with AIDS has to wage a battle on two fronts. Against the merciless virus which destroys his/her immunity and against the 'social virus' - PREJUDICE - which seeks to brand him/her as 'sick' (because of his/her sexuality) and singles out homosexuality as the cause of AIDS - erroneously of-course. With the battle against prejudice anything but easy, it would only be wise on the part of homosexuals to avoid the conflict against HIV at all costs. Hence the need for them to be extra vigilant against the devious virus. Hence also the AIDS-WATCH column in PRAVARTAK.

• Wishing all readers a MERRY CHRISTMAS — Pawan Dhall

READERS WRITE :

READERS : Do send in your suggestions, comments, articles, bouquets and brick-bats to :

Pawan Dhall, 79/1B A, Palm Avenue, Calcutta - 700 019.

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NEXT ISSUE

** The tragic death of Freddie Mercury.

** " I AM " : Announcing a new personal profile column. Anybody can advertise himself or herself.

AIDS - WATCH :

Women & AIDS

NEW HAVEN, (Connectiut), Nov 27 — Women face a greater risk than men for contracting AIDS and die sooner from the virus, U.S. university researchers reported on Tuesday, says Reuter.

Women are 12 times more likely than men to get AIDS and they die 20 per cent sooner than men, said psychologist Judith Rodin, in her article, Women and AIDS, to be published in the January issue of the journal Health Psychology.

Women are more prone to contracting AIDS "because the spread of the virus in the heterosexual population is more likely to occur from an infected male to a female. Therefore, heterosexual females are at a greater risk than heterosexual men", says Miss Rodin.

Women tend to die sooner from AIDS than men because of their lower socio-economic standards and because primary symptoms, such as vaginal infections, may be dismissed as something lesser, according to the study.

Fifty per cent of the women already diagnosed as having AIDS contracted it through using shared infected needles, while 33 per cent got the virus through heterosexual intercourse, the researchers said.

Clipping from:
The Statesman
(28|11|91)

World observes AIDS Day

Geneva, Dec. 2 (Reuter): The world marked its fourth annual AIDS day yesterday by trying to focus the minds of millions across the globe on threatened catastrophe from the killer disease.

People in more than 160 countries gave their support to the fight against AIDS in media interviews, silent processions, pop concerts and fund-raising soccer matches.

In New York, anti-AIDS campaigners held a dance marathon to raise at least $ 1 million to help fight the disease.

Clipping from:
The Telegraph
(3|12|91)

FOURTH ANNUAL AIDS DAY MARKED ON 1st of Dec.'91.

Striking out AIDS with hugs, kisses

Wellington, Nov. 29 (AFP): Eve van Grafhorst, a nine-year-old girl stricken with AIDS, will sell hugs from today to raise money for AIDS research.

Her mother Gloria Taylor said the idea of selling hugs, was Eve's. And how much for a hug? "Fifty cents, and a dollar for a kiss," Taylor said. "We're hoping she'll be all hugged out by the end of the day."

On World AIDS Day, which officialy falls this Sunday, Eve and her mother will be in a mall in the provincial city of Napier ready for hugs and kisses.

Eve was infected with with HIV through a blood transfusion after she was born prematurely. At age three, she moved to New Zealand with her family when she was ostracized in the Australian community where she lived.

Clipping from:
The Telegraph
(30|11|91)

TO BE MAGIC JOHNSON IS TO BE COURAGEOUS :

(Excerpts from the article "Magic strikes terror in American hearts" by "Michael Specter"; published in "New York Times" and reprinted in "The Telegraph" (24/11/91)).

(*Magic Johnson is a famous American basketball player, who recently publicly admitted to being infected by the AIDS virus*)

"Childhood ended for Jamal Davis on Thursday. It stopped abruptly for Mack George and Sharaz Hayes too. Tony Frazier rushed to the bathroom to hide his tears.

Teenage life will go on for each of them, and for tens of thousands of the youngsters-black, white and Hispanic - in schoolyards and class-rooms across the country. But...with a difference because Magic has the 'virus'."

"Although he has not directly addressed how he became infected, Johnson has implied that it was through heterosexual intercourse. His frank admission of his illness and his willingness to talk about it, have plainly delighted educators and health planners."

"There is nothing as effective as a famous face to prompt awareness of an illness and its treatment. And never before has someone as popular and winning as Johnson publicly admitted to an illness so deeply identified with two of the nation's most forbidden taboos: intravenous drug use and homosexuality."

"He can be gay or straight, black or white," said Tony Frazier, a 17 year old school-goer. "I don't care what he is. He's magic, and if he's sick, I want him to get better."

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

(The books have atleast a significant content of homosexuality, even if homosexuality may not be the central theme of the story).

1). The Death of Men - Allan Massie.

2). How Far Can You Go ? - David Lodge.

3). In Search of Love and Beauty - Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.

4). The Corridor - Robin Maugham.

5). Coming to Terms - Robert Montagu.

6). My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign (In play script form). - Hanif Kureishi.

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SOME MORE GAY AND LESBIAN GROUPS / NEWSLETTERS

1). Paz Y Liberacion.
(Peace and Liberation)
Editor : John Hubert.
P.O. Box 66450.
Houston, Texas 77266.
U.S.A.

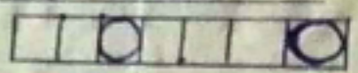
2). The Barangay News.
(A newsletter from the first Filipino group in U.S.A.)
P.O.BOX 691985
West Hollywood,
CA 96069
U.S.A.

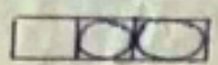
3). Shamakami.
P.O. BOX 643.
Cambridge
MA 02238.
U.S.A.

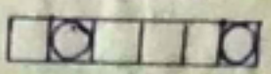
4). Khush.
P.O. BOX 6172.
Station 'A',
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P6,
Canada.

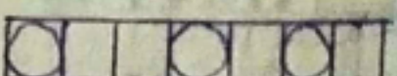
IT MAKES SENSE!

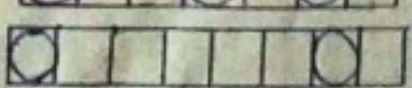
- UNSCRAMBLE THESE 5 JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM 5 ORDINARY WORDS.

1) DOFREME  .

2) YAG 

3) MODCON  .

4) BESANIL 

5) BIXULASE 

- NOW ARRANGE THE CIRCLED LETTERS TO FORM THE SURPRISE ANSWER, AS SUGGESTED BY THE CLUE GIVEN BELOW :

- CLUE : A PERSON (OR A TRAIN) FROM A HEP INDIAN CITY.

ANSWER:

. [SOLUTION IN THE NEXT ISSUE.]

PD

THE ABVA REPORT

Once in a while, things happen which make mundane lives suddenly momentous. For homosexuals in India, leading an existence with a perpetual fear of being 'found out', the ABVA report is something momentous and much more. Titled 'Less than Gay', it deals comprehensively with the issue of homosexuality, as it is in India.

ABVA - Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan - is a group involved with AIDS activism. The team includes professionals from various fields - medicine, social work and law.

From AIDS activism to homosexuality : what made ABVA take this step? The first page of the report makes the reason very clear." The emergence of AIDS as a major public health crisis has had a devastating effect on gay people in most parts of the world. Gay people have been blamed for the spread of the disease,..., and denied safer sex information vital to their survival. Like women in prostitution, professional blood donors, and intravenous drug users, gay men and lesbians stand already marginalised in relation to the law, the medical establishment and the police. As a result they are easily scapegoated and blamed for the advent and spread of AIDS. THOUGH THERE IS NO INHERENT LINK BETWEEN AIDS AND HOMOSEXUALITY, IT HAS BECOME MORE NECESSARY THAN EVER BEFORE TO UNDERSTAND THE STATUS OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN OUR SOCIETY."

ABVA describes this report as 'an attempt to define an agenda for a public debate around homosexuality in India'. To quote again: "If this report can expose the silly lie that homosexuality does not exist in India, or that gay people are a species from a different planet, we will feel our efforts rewarded." Another way to reward the ABVA team's efforts : 'beg, borrow or steal', and better still, 'buy' this report. PD

• FOR A COPY OF THE REPORT : CONTACT - SIDDHARTHA GAUTAM, C-564, DEFENCE COLONY, NEW DELHI - 110 024. •

• DON'T FORGET TO READ THE "CHARTER OF DEMANDS" (CHP. 10 OF THE REPORT) •

PINKY - PONKY !

* PINKY : " PONKY darling, do you love me very deeply ? "
* PONKY : " Yes PINKY, sweetheart. What do I do to prove it ? "
* PINKY : " Sing me a song, honey. "
* PONKY : " A song ? Well, ahem.....I'll sing: 'Gay you, gay me ..... ' ".

PD

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• DEAR READERS, As this issue of PRAVARTAK gets printed, speculation about Fun Club's continuance is on the rise. On 15/12/91, Fun Club will turn ONE YEAR OLD. But its '1st. birthday' could very well be the day of its demise too. (This is news as of 10/12/91).

ALL FALSE ? ALL RIGHT !

(SOURCE : Modified from a clipping from an American publication, sent by Don P. Baker, Japan.)

- DEAR READER, DO YOU KNOW ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY ? WHY NOT TEST YOURSELF ? JUST MARK THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS 'TRUE' OR 'FALSE', AND THEN CHECK YOUR SCORE.

1). Homosexuals commit more crimes than straight people.
2). Everyone is born straight, but some become gay because they have been seduced by a gay person early in life.
3). You can always tell homosexuals and lesbians by the way they act, dress and talk.
4). With the proper therapy and motivation, a gay person can become straight.
5). Boys raised by domineering mothers and weak(or absent) fathers usually turn into homosexuals.
6). Gay people can never become mothers or fathers.

HOW DID YOU SCORE? IF YOU MARKED :- • All 6 statements 'false', you are very well-informed.

• 4 statements 'false', you are fairly well-informed.

• 3 or more statements 'true', you have a lot of learning to do / BECAUSE all 6 statements are FALSE / Look for another set of 6 statements in the next issue.

GAY KAHANI : "TEARS OF JOY"

CONTD. FROM ISSUE # 1.

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

"Romesh, it's time we met. I have to make am — ends."

"Are you sure, you want to do this ?"

"Why, yes. My feelings for you haven't changed."

"Really ?"

"Honest. Look, it was all a mistake. Very imm- ature on my part.How do I explain ? It's all so awk- ward."

"After all these days, you come up with this.But it's not really necessary. Things can go on as befo- re."

"But it is. I must get this load off my chest. I value our relationship very much. And.... "

"I know that Varun. I can understand how you you must feel. So why don't we spend some time together tomorrow?"

"Yes let's do that. Really,Romesh, you're great."

"That'll do old boy.Sleep tight."

Walking down the avenue, Varun wondered how his coversation with Romesh would be today.

'We have individual virtues but general vices.No one is good all through, in all relations,for all purposes.As virtuous agents we sp- ecialise, we have to because vice is natural and virtue is not.'Varun recalled these words from a book he had read recently - Iris Murdoch's 'Nuns and Soldiers'.Would Romesh understand? Surely, he would. Wouldn't their closeness for two years count for even this much?

How cold Romesh had been with him when they had last met.That Sumeet had been such a wretch.He had gone ahead and told Romesh everything about their despicable fling.

Yes, he had broken the trust Romesh had placed in him, and which in fact he had earned.-PD

[TO BE CONTD.]