PERISCOPE

Collective catharsis

When happens when a lover and/or partner to find their sexual identity, a common trigger is the introduction of new experiences and relationships. In the context of the current discussion, how do individuals grapple with the challenges of sexual identity and how can they navigate the emotional landscape of sexual orientation?

The issue of "gender identity" by nature is complex and can be difficult to define. The expression of one's gender identity can be influenced by various factors, such as societal norms, cultural background, and personal experiences. Understanding and embracing one's gender identity is crucial for self-acceptance and well-being.

There are several resources available to individuals struggling with gender identity issues. These include support groups, counseling services, and online communities. It is important for individuals to seek out resources that resonate with their needs and to feel comfortable in their own skin.

Credit: Given the sensitive nature of the topic, it is crucial to handle such discussions with care and respect. By fostering open and understanding conversations, we can help create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.
LETTERS

No preaching

CONGRATULATIONS, in spite of being a "parasite", you have decided not to join the "Parat thek" and "Bumblingo" were great, but the Cover Feature always tries too hard to influence people towards its point of view. Try to put the message across more neatly: go slowly, slyly, so people won't wake you up.

Safar Sex" and "Reachout" are very important pages. Debroy's "Media" was well researched and well-written.

I found happiness in "Cityscapes" Please include stories and see if it could get articles on cinema are comprehensible to us all.

Try to review more books; also try to include ads on contraceptives, address of blood banks, AIDS hotlines about blood testing. Some on-the-spot reporting on the situation in villages would be appreciated.

I pray for a long and prosperous life for Pravartak.

A friend, Calcutta.

Editor: Dear friend, thank you for all your suggestions. We have made a note of them and will try to incorporate them in future issues. Your letter was in Bengali, but for maintaining a uniformity on this page, we have translated it into English. From the next issue we will try publishing letters in their original language. As regards publishing stories, why don't you make a start by sending in a contribution? Perhaps you could help the "Storyline" contest announced in the last issue take off.

Kudos

The book section, CCP party-circuit news column, the "Safar Sex" column and the editorial ("Cityscapes") in the second issue were particularly good.

but I appreciate your including women's voices.

The report on "The Streets of Philadelphia" was most interesting. "M桔ihed" three lines from the end should be "humiliated".

-Lekhini, Madras.

Editor: Yes indeed, a separate "Storyline" for men and women would be in order. So why don't you get it going? We're looking for someone - man or woman - to give the column a start.

including the extract was one way of showing solidarity with women's issues. There is a common bond between all those who are disoriented against, however subtly it may be. In fact, gay issues and women's issues, if studied closely, reveal a strong connection.

A reader asks me what is humanized and Pravartak are in need of:

Some brickbats

In an otherwise wonderful issue, I found two flaws. The Cover Feature was very confusing, while the "Safar Sex" page was too blatant. Please consider everyone's sensitivity in such matters.

-Sanjoya, Calcutta.

Editor: Sorry about the confusing "Cover Feature"; perhaps we should have simplified it further. But we do feel that "Safar Sex" needs some plain speaking. It's too sensitive an issue to be dealt with in hushed tones. However, I'll be sure to play it safe from here on.

We welcome queries and information on safer sex for women, lesbians and bisexual women in particular. Women readers, please write in without hemlines.

PRAVARTAK, JULY-DEC '94

LEAD FEATURE

Prejudice mightier than the pen

Partha takes a look at the treatment of male homosexuality in popular Bengali literature

Do you know that homosexuality is a moral issue? That's what it seems.

"People are no longer a test case for this. They are seeking acceptance from the society, putting together, forming organizations, taking on mainstream, opposing separate Olympics so it's perfectly natural.

This is a 1993 problem, not a 1994 one. Homosexuality, as far as we know, has no connection with either parent or child. But sexual orientation is a natural phenomenon, and every normal person has a sexual orientation. In fact, that orientation comes not after but, per se, and is not altered primarily through one's understanding or sympathy, but advice meaning at fulfilling the heterosexual norm.

Interestingly, this was published in "Purna" an anti-establishment Bengali literary magazine, known for its radical and revolutionary views.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. At least one group of young writers had come close enough contact with the legendary gay American poet Allen Ginsberg whom we visited Calcutta in 1982. To his horror, the Russian poet Vsevolod Chvostov (whom Allen would refer to as "a great Russian". Ginsberg's movement had infused the "Hungry" movement in Bengali literature.

It's recorded reliably in an interview that, though he was in India for a year and half, he was never had a close unlike with an Indian. The reason for which may be this was the same atmosphere in which he was able to write in a place that he lost touch of, but culturally traditional, but not particularly Indian: However, he did remember that having lost contact, Ginsberg's move to New York city, he moved to a gentle heart of a "Sexual Homewaters.".

"I don't even recall re-Established. May be I don't understand it. I have had issues, to said."...
Towards reality
A report by the Pravartak representative to the West Bengal Sexual Health Project.

Living in a third world society entails dealing with issues pertaining to functional development. Health forms a large area of concern for government, non-government organizations. Ever since the advent of HIV & AIDS, initiatives and a lot of debate has emerged in an attempt to provide services in the area of sexual health.

Sex being a sensitive issue calls for skilled intervention. However, given the "too-much-to-talk-about" attitude and several beliefs and fraudulent suppositions which guide the Indian psyche, sexual behavior and sexuality become difficult to deal with.

The West Bengal Sexual Health Project (WBSPHP) sponsored by the Government Development Agency (GDA) seeks to provide training, counselling and a platform for organisations working in this area.

Veena Laxmimini (project officer, British Council Division) director of the project says the project is to enable the government to help develop material, counselors, helpers and field workers in order to cater to the sexual health needs in West Bengal. Ever since the WBSPHP has been organizing a series of workshops and training meets. Resource persons include specialists from the UK, training workers with a lot of experience in the North-East and western doctors.

Participants in the project represent various NGOs and governmental programmes. They include Child Life Needs Institute (CNI), CII Addis, Pratiktor Seva Sanstha, Calcutta School of Social Work, Public Health and Social Care Education, East Central Training Institute, and Institute of Social and Health Policy.

The project has been most effective according to Dr. Rupsa Sutar of Pratiktor Seva Sanstha, in providing the area with a network of volunteers. For the most part the volunteers work in the areas of the slums or in the back streets to reach out to the people who need help. The majority of people who attend these workshops are those who are not able to afford medical help.

The project has been running for two years. It is expected that the volunteers will be able to reach most of the people in the slums and areas where they live. This has been a great success and the volunteers are expected to continue their work.

Participants are encouraged to bring their friends and families to these workshops and training sessions. This has been a great success and the volunteers are expected to continue their work.
men platform for all workers of sexual health. She says: "It is a journey from the world of facts and figures to a world of experience and behaviour. Homosexuality is an area Kieran was unprincipled about: "Having to discuss about it broke a lot of my inhibitions. The WHISH is the first place I spoke on the issue. I feel everyone has the right to express their own preferences. Society should be more sensitive about this issue. We should delve more into issues of sexuality. On the basis of my feedback, Sheraka has plans to conduct surveys on homoerotic behaviour amongst truck drivers and kothus.

Apart from homosexuality, language is an area often discussed about. The various NGOs have attempted to develop vernacular terms for use in their field in the training workshops. However, says Sherena Bhatia, "We are not in the terms which are work-specific." In this workshop, the participants were asked to use the terms which are work-specific. Mr. Bhushan Banerjee, a resource person, says, "One has to use slang words to make them real and the normal word in the field.

The workshops in themselves are a project on each member gets to network with other NGOs. Poor employers from among the sex-workers of the Sonagachi Intervention Programme remind us that to be a sexual health specialist, one need not come from a "peculiar" background.

Dr. Sujit Ghosh, one of the resource persons, opines: "The project members share a lot of responsibility, it is their efforts which will bear fruits in West Bengal."

The project which has united organisations and activists has been conceptual in creating a sense of belonging to all the participants. What remains to be seen is the effectiveness of the project and the resistance of its members in social tensions and political conditions which lose large over the issue of sexual health.

NOT SO FUNNY

The Truth about Truth

Is philosophy merely delusive? What seems rubbish to you may be true for me. Which leaves everything, inconclusive.

Some Lives are So Odd

Well worth of biography. The letterer makes an attempt to tell the story in a way that is engaging and interesting.

Said Mrs. Farlow, in one of her letters: "It is more fun in bed than in parks. You feel safer inside. Your questions aren't free.

And passers-by don't make remarks.

SOME LIVES ARE SO ODD - you agree?

A remarkable race are the Persians. They are good at their craft. They have such peculiar diverters.

They make love all the day.

In the usual way, and save all the night for perseverants.

In school we taught about science and needlework. At home we learn hygiene cooking, cleaning the house and removing stains from clothes. When we realize our dressing up has only one purpose: to make us attractive to the male gaze.

The day comes when mother comes running and announces gleefully that a suitable boy has been found. Someone unrelated by blood, family background, wealth and education.

And life is not grabbed immediately. We find ourselves getting ready for marriage, never mind whether we want to or not.

Right from our childhood, we know we will get married one day. We have seen our parents investing money in government approved units for their daughters marriage and their son's higher education.

The thought of the marriage brings a sense of separation. We cross our mind. With anticipation we look forward to the first night with our husbands. But on the first night itself, we realize something is wrong somewhere. The first physical contact turns out to be quite unforgettable in a negative way. Some of our husbands find our reaction an affront to their manhood. So they try to improve their point with force. Marriage becomes a nightmare. But who cares for us anyway?

Some of us may be less unfortunate in that we have husbands who are considerate and understand that we have a problem. We are taken to psychiatrists who are either ill-informed or prejudiced against homosexuality. They can't help us and it's back to square one. We convince ourselves one more time will make things alright. One more time and then yet another.

We never get a chance to discover an essential part of our identity. Frustrated and lonely, I started to realize that the presence of a woman lover would have made our existence so much more meaningful. The worst sufferers amongst us are those who realize they desire a lesbian identity after getting married. That, in fact, is the story of my life.

I got married without being aware that I could be attracted to women and would want a woman companion some day. I could not decide what the reasons for my lack of interest in "heterosexual activities", until it was too late. Following my doctor's advice I continued trying, and six months later realized two things. One: that sex life was not for me and second that I had conceived.

The sheer drudgery of living through this marriage would have driven me mad but for my daughter's presence in my life. She made me forget my sorrows.

Seven years have dragged by. I am convinced that if I will never feel complete till I make a woman love. She would be the one who would help me feel free and happy with myself. I would walk hand in hand with her and feel the joy of all feelings of guilt. I wouldn't have married if I'd known real desires.

What does the future hold for me and all those women in my position? We can walk out of our marriages and start living with our lovers. But would society accept such a move? Most of us are financially independent. Even for those of us who are, would we be able to retain our jobs? We declare that we are lesbians; that we have divorced and left our families to live with another woman? Won't our children be rebuffed and taught as being "that's not a man's way of marrying with another woman?"

Thus, we Indian married lesbians continue with our marriages. We need the centre of a triangle formed by the society, our children and husbands and our loves at the three vertices. We have to find a double life and we are very often termed hypocrites by some. But do we really have a choice?
Condoms, not culture

I was not sure where to place this piece since it is about safer sex, and not culture. However, I found it to be an interesting perspective on the topic.

Condoms are not a solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS. They are just one of the many tools available to prevent the spread of this deadly disease. The use of condoms can significantly reduce the risk of transmission of HIV, but it is not a substitute for education and awareness.

Culture cannot be exported, and it is not possible to simply impose one culture on another. It is important to respect the cultures of different people and to work towards a more inclusive and tolerant society.

Networking

Networking is crucial in the world of business and social events. It is essential to know the right people and to have a good network to succeed.

Counselling help

Counselling help is available to everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation. It is important to seek help when needed, and to ensure that everyone has access to it.

INDIA


To the Unnamed XCVII

When they ask you who I am
of yours,
Shed not your hatred
Through furtive glances,
On me -
But say,
I am that alien flower
That fell into your lake
And bloomed.
I am that disowned drop of dew
That landed on the leaf of your heart.
And failed to dry.
I am dream
That lingered in your eyes
Even after the night passed on.
When the frustration of being victims
Makes us blame each other,
And burn;
And they warn
That dead cells decompose and
must be got rid of,
Not in passive agreement
But say -
I am that distant ray of hope
Which lives:
Both,
In sun and shadows,
Even
After life's gone.

SANJAY

The other shore

She puts her arm around me
Blows away my tear.
Can we make it
My eyes ask
Her smile says
We will make it
To the other shore.
Is it worth the bad
With the good?
There is no other way.

LAKSHMI

PRAYARTAK JUL-DEC '94

PRAYARTAK JUL-DEC '94
চুনি শতক : বনফুল-পরিমল গোধূলি পতাকালী

বিলেট দোঁক

এমন ভালবাসা কি আর হয়?
বক্ষ সাহিত্য সমালোচনা সম্পর্কে লিখেছেন সুনীয়া।

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সাহিত্য সমালোচক সাহিত্য
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প্রবর্তক জুল-দিস হার

প্রবর্তক জুল-দিস হার

—গার্ভ
AIDS experts watch as patient lies dying

As you are reading this, a 25-year-old man is dying of AIDS at the Calcutta Medical College and Hospital. There is no cure for AIDS yet and many 25-year-olds may have died of AIDS. But it is nothing about AIDS or its science.

It is about how ignorant top Government doctors, whose job it is to control AIDS, can seem. It is about how they mislead and then explain.

The 25-year-old resident of north Calcutta who says he worked in a garment store in Bombay, fell ill and returned to his home in the city in June to seek treatment. On the staff doctor, Mr. Das, administrated a patient on July 10, 1994.

He complained of diarrhoea and was admitted to the Nishtar Medical Hospital on July 11, 1994.

PRAYATK JUI-DEC '94

Joining hands

While there's a lot of despair in this city, something is happening to keep it forward. History of sorts was created, when the Women's Studies Research Centre, Calcutta University, organized a panel discussion on undergraduate college students on September 14. This was the first time that students of different levels got to have a concerted debate on women's issues.

STUDENTS from most of the Calcutta colleges were there. The welcome address was given by Calcutta University Pro-Vice Chancellor Bhimnath Roy.

INTERESTINGLY, the issue of homosexuality was also raised. Questions were asked and discussed. The meeting made additional efforts. A discussion took place on the need to define beyond traditional boundaries. Anand Kumar, a member of the Centre, was the one who spoke about homosexuality and other social issues. He fielded questions from the audience.

CLEARLY, sexuality is something students do not want to discuss in their classes. They do not want to take the initiative to talk about AIDS and its cause. But they do not want to sit back and watch.

PRAYATK JUI-DEC '94
A TIME TO HEAL

With tears in her eyes, Martina says goodbye

FROM JULIE CART

New York, Nov. 16: The spotlight is turned off, but the light doesn't die. That's the way some champions leave. There are others, though. Some, like me, are led away in handcuffs. We are taken away on gar- vers. And leave their careers in an operating room. A few, very few, because some of their colleagues leave them on the tools.

A few, very few, because some of their colleagues leave them on the tools. Some are taken away on gar- vers. And leave their careers in an operating room. A few, very few, because some of their colleagues leave them on the tools.

Martina Navratilova left tennis last night in the same way that she left tennis five years ago: with a feeling of despair, a feeling of hope for a better future. She announced her retirement from tennis, effective immediately, at a press conference in New York. The press conference was broadcast live on national television, and Navratilova spoke in a voice that was calm, steady, and resolute.

"I have come to the decision that my career is over," she said. "I have been playing tennis for 26 years, and I have been very happy with my career. But I have come to the point where I no longer enjoy the sport. I have not enjoyed the sport in a long time, and I believe that it is time for me to retire." 

Navratilova's decision was met with mixed reactions. Some of her fellow players, such as Serena Williams and Venus Williams, expressed support for her decision. Others, such as Maria Sharapova and Roger Federer, were more critical.

"Martina Navratilova is a legend," Williams said. "She has contributed so much to the sport of tennis, and she will be missed. I wish her the best in her future endeavors." 

"I agree with Martina," Federer said. "She has had a great career, and I respect her decision to retire. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors." 

Navratilova's retirement is the latest in a series of high-profile retirements in tennis in recent years. Other players who have announced their retirements in recent years include Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic, and Serena Williams.

The announcement of Navratilova's retirement was met with sadness by many of her fans. "Martina Navratilova is one of the greatest players of all time," said one fan on Twitter. "I will miss watching her play. She will be missed by all of us." 

Navratilova's career was marked by her grace, her beauty, and her intelligence. She was known for her powerful forehand and her volleying ability. She was also known for her outspokenness and her political activism. She was a vocal advocate for gay rights and was a strong supporter of the LGBTQ community.

"I have always been proud of who I am," Navratilova said. "I have never been afraid to speak my mind. I have been lucky enough to be able to do that, and I will continue to do so in the future." 

Navratilova's retirement is a loss for tennis. But her legacy will live on. She will be remembered as one of the greatest players of all time, and as a trailblazer for gay rights.

End of the line for tennis legend Navratilova

The end of the line for tennis legend Navratilova

Navratilova, a three-time Grand Slam singles champion, announced her retirement from the sport on Friday, saying she was no longer enjoying the game.

"I have come to the decision that my career is over," Navratilova said in a statement. "I have been playing tennis for 26 years, and I have been very happy with my career. But I have come to the point where I no longer enjoy the sport. I have not enjoyed the sport in a long time, and I believe that it is time for me to retire." 

Navratilova, 57, was a dominant figure in women's tennis in the 1980s and 1990s, winning 18 Grand Slam singles championships and 16 major doubles titles. She is one of only three players to win all four Grand Slam singles titles in a single season, joining Martina Hingis and Chris Evert.

"I have been very fortunate to have had a career like this," Navratilova said. "But at some point, you have to know when it's time to move on. I have been playing tennis for so long, and I have had so much fun. But I have come to the point where I am no longer enjoying the game. I have been trying to enjoy it, but I am just not able to do it anymore."

Navratilova's retirement comes after a series of injuries and surgeries in recent years. She had a bone spur removed from her elbow in 2010, and underwent a knee procedure in 2011. She also had a neck operation in 2012.

"I have been dealing with injuries for a long time," she said. "I have been trying to play through them, but I just can't do it anymore. It's time to move on."

Navratilova said she would continue to play exhibition matches and would remain involved in the sport through her coaching and television work. She is currently a commentator for ESPN.

"I will always be a part of the sport," she said. "I love tennis. I have loved playing it. I have loved being involved in it. But it's time for me to move on."

Navratilova's decision was met with mixed reactions. Some of her fellow players, such as Serena Williams and Venus Williams, expressed support for her decision. Others, such as Maria Sharapova and Roger Federer, were more critical.

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