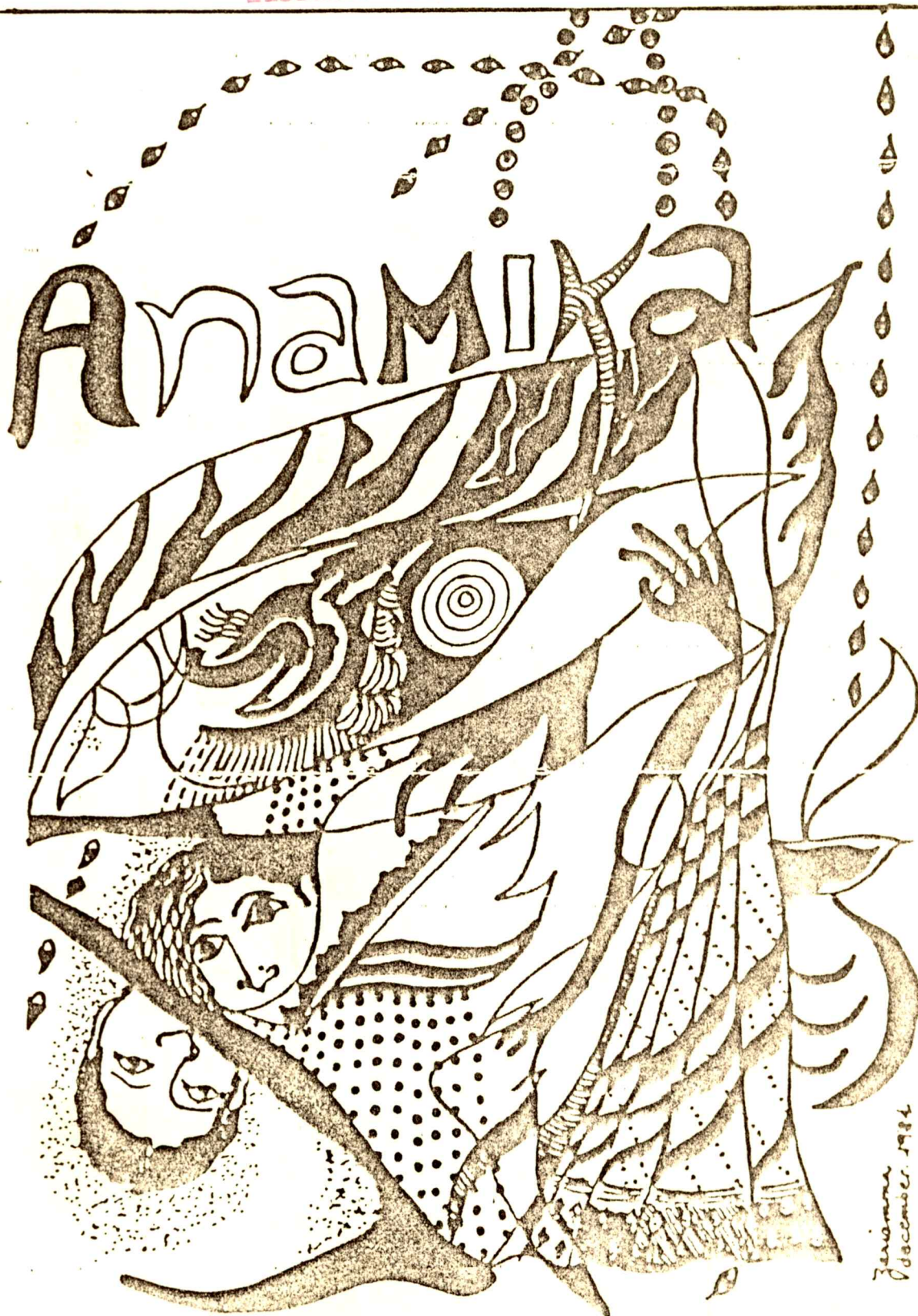


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Cover: Zariamma

Editors: Khayal and Utsa

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All correspondence should be addressed to:

Anamika
C/O ALOEC
P.O. Box 850
New York,
NY 10002, USA.

A LETTER FROM US

Dear Sisters,

We are proud to announce the birth of Anamika, a newsletter which aims to provide information by and about Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Afghani, Sri Lankan, Bhutanese, Nepalese, and Burmese lesbians. We are both Indian lesbians currently living in New York. Khayal has been in the U.S. for four years and Utsa has been here for one. We are students and were lesbians before we came here. We knew a handful of Indian lesbians when we met each other in early 1984, some of whom are in India, England and the U.S. We have since been conducting a "search" for more South Asian lesbians and are extremely excited that we have either met or heard about fifty to sixty more of us all over the world.

Which brings us to the whole point of this newsletter. We feel that we have now reached a point when we can and need to begin to communicate with each other. We have all been struggling individually and our isolation has led to more casualties than survivors. We feel an urgent need to put a stop to that. Hence, this newsletter.

While we were discovering more Indian lesbians, we found that the term 'Indian' was broader than what we had grown up identifying with. There are Indian lesbians who are first generation U.S./British/Guyanese/West Indian etc. In addition, we recognize that lesbians from other South Asian countries confront similar issues and we want to ensure that Anamika provides all of us with a forum. We ourselves know little about the situation in each country, and we hope that all of us together

are able to fill in the gaps.

There are other limitations to Anamika. It is being brought out in the U.S. and could serve to reinforce the assertion that we are a Western phenomenon that is alien to our cultures. Unfortunately, neither of us is in a position to work on this issue within our own country at this time and we cannot afford to wait for that time to come. In fact, we hope that Anamika will serve to break the silence and change this situation. Also, the bibliography shows that lesbianism has been a part of our histories for thousands of years. We refuse to continue to be invalidated as a "Western" phenomenon. Another factor that prevents Anamika from being based in our own countries at this time are the legal problems. We hope to provide women with a safe place to send their thoughts, feelings, ideas, reports, pictures etc. We want very much to not have to be in this situation and are committed to working with lesbians in any South Asian country to begin organizing there in any way we can.

As this newsletter is in English, it excludes significant numbers of women in our countries. We do not have the resources to translate this into our many languages and would appreciate translations that you might be able to do. However, do send us untranslated materials if that is the only way information can reach us.

So much for the problems with Anamika. Why did we choose the name 'Anamika'? Anamika has many connotations. It represents the unnamed, the unnameable or that which is yet to be named - which in many ways reflects our situation as lesbians.

contd.



However, we are open to suggestions for other names. To the extent that we have named ourselves, we use the word "khush", which in Hindi-Urdu means happy or gay. Let us know if you know the word for lesbian in our different languages.

Anamika will be focussing specifically on the lives of South Asian lesbians. This includes our experiences when we were growing up, our first relationships, our "success" and "failure" stories, our options and anything else we want to share with one another. We do hope to keep the newsletter targeted on a specific theme in each issue. Some of these could be;

- a. Our specific stories
- b. Sexuality in the South Asian context.
- c. Feminism/Women's movements in our countries and its attitudes towards lesbianism.

We hope that you will send us your suggestions.

Anamika is only a very small beginning to future organizing amongst ourselves. We want Anamika to primarily be a tool through which lesbians can communicate. But we also want it to provide the stimulus for greater dialogue within our countries so that lesbians and our concerns will be given the attention and respect that we deserve.

Looking forward to hearing
from you,
Love,

Khayal and Utsa.



MONEY

The first issue of Anamika has been made possible by a grant of \$50.00 from the Asian Lesbians of the East Coast. However, we would like Anamika to eventually become self-sufficient. As we have a commitment to sending Anamika to women and groups in South Asia free of cost, we would appreciate financial help from those of you who can afford it. Checks for \$5.00 or more should be made out to ALOEC, P.O. Box 850, New York, NY 10002, USA. Please indicate that the check is for Anamika. We plan on bringing out Anamika as often as is possible but we will try to have a minimum of 3 issues every year.



LETTERS

We would like to assure everybody that all letters, names and addresses will be kept confidential unless you tell us otherwise. We would greatly appreciate it if you can indicate whether or not we can reprint parts of your letters using your name or a pseudonym. Let us know how you feel about sharing your name with other lesbians for the purposes of sharing information, meeting one another, and general sisterhood.

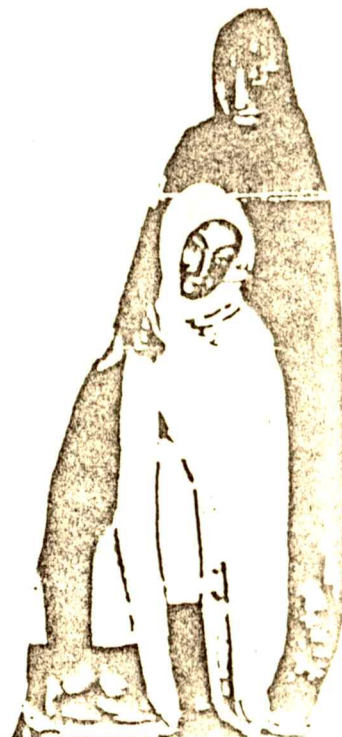
POETRY

first generation

The following poem was sent to us by Debi Ray-Chaudhuri, whose parents migrated to the U.S. from India in the 1950s. She was born and raised in the States.

Mother
 Stop your cleaning
 for awhile
 Your constant sweeping
 and sweeping
 wiping and wiping
 Picking things up
 And putting them down
 somewhere else
 Your baby is sleeping
 And it is afternoon
 Sit with me
 for awhile
 And tell me
 what you dreamed you could be
 when you were eighteen
 And nobody's wife
 nobody's mother
 nobody's little girl
 I saw your photograph
 You were sitting on a stone
 Your sari falling loosely
 over your light brown
 limbs your head
 resting lightly
 on your wrist above
 your knees
 Poised and watchful
 There was a fire in your eyes!
And you knew it
 Tell me what you dreamed
 Before you were swept up
 And put down somewhere else
 How did you warm yourself
 with that fire
 when outside there is snow
 that stares asking when are you
 going back to wherever you came from?
 A story you tell:
 (interpreted through me)
 So you weighed 90 pounds
 with a baby who would not suck
 the milk spoiling in your breasts
 And the doctor, the cool confident
 American who has the know-how
 but no breasts for babies
 says: "You worry too much."
 when she will not eat
 and the rotten smell of
 blood and snot comes out
 of the face you are learning
 to love

Is that right?
 Tell me how you stoked
 your dreams
 Without burning yourself up
 Like oil left on the stove
 too long absorbing heat
 silently shifting
 shifting
 sending up a wisp of smoke
 before bursting
 boiling blistering
 into a flame that can
 not be put out with water
 Spattering fury and
 consuming itself
 and anything close enough
 to feel the heat
 Tell me mother
 how you stoked your dreams
 without burning yourself up
 Or putting your soul out
 I need to know you see
 Because
 I have this fire...



CoSAW

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Fiction:

"Awakening" by Mumtaz Shirin in Nasir Ahmed Forooki, ed. and tr. A Selection of Pakistani Short Stories, Lahore: Feroze Sons, 1955, pp. 167-187. (Also translated by author from Urdu in Pakistan Quarterly, 1.5 (1951?) pp. 29-31). Short story: A woman's "crush" on her teacher which she "gets over" by the end of the story.

"Lihaf" by Ismat Chughtai. Written 1941. Translated from Urdu by Surjit Singh Dula and Carlo Collola. In Mahfil 8, 213 (1972) pp. 195-202. Short story: Depicts lesbian relationships in the segregated women's quarters of a well-to-do Muslim household.

"Apna Khun" No reference available. Story. Husband and wife fall in love with the same girl. Wife kills girl rather than let husband sexually use her. In Urdu. (If anyone finds references for this, please let us know.)

Poetry:

Poems by Indian Women ed. by Margaret Macnicol, Associated Press, 1925. Has poems by Indian women dating from 1000 B.C. - early 1900s. Some of these are explicitly lesbian.

"Woman to Woman", Manushi, July-August, 1979.

"Two Women", Manushi, May-June, 1980.

Non-fiction:

The World of Homosexuals, by Shakuntala Devi. Bell Books, Vikas Publishing House, 5 Anson Road, N. Delhi 110002

Kamasutra by Vatsyayna. Chapter on homosexuality.

Mahabharata. References to all female realms.

Another Mother Tongue by Judy Grahn. Beacon Press, Boston, 1984. Reference to lesbianism in South India.

Sisterhood is Global ed. by Robin Morgan. Doubleday, New York, 1984. Has sections on homosexuality in 68 countries.

Articles:

"The Hijras of India" by Serena Nanda. Medicine and Law, 1984, 3, 59-75.

"Becoming Visible", Black Lesbian Discussions with some South Asian women. Feminist Review, No. 17, July 1984.

Radio:

"Women in the World in the 1980s", An interview with two Indian lesbians, Khavai and Utsa - by Susan Heske. Aired on WBAI New York, April 29, 1984. Transcript available on request from Anamika.

contd.



LAWS

Miscellaneous:

"Bury Us Together", Connexions, Winter 1982. References to lesbianism in India.

"Uma", Connexions, Fall 1983, No. 10. Interview with Indian lesbian settled in Australia.

"Gay Times", by Coomi Kapoor in India Today, January 31, 1984. Deals only with gay men.

"They Dare to love each other", Manushi, July-August 1980.

"Gay Life in Bombay", letter to Gay Community News, August 4, 1984.

Gay Scene, an Indian newsletter on gay communication. Ed. by Dhruva Roy-Chowdhury, 2N Roy Road, Calcutta 700008, India. Not sure if this is still in existence.

Film: Umbartha (marathi)
 Subah (hindi)
Touches issue of lesbianism.

Play: "Meeta ki Kahani" by Vijay Tandulkar. Stereotypical representation of lesbianism - the "tomboy" who ultimately commits suicide.

"Naya Gharvas" by Vijay Dan Detha. English translation of a Rajasthani folk tale about two girls who get married and live together. Manushi, August-September 1983. Also published as "Dohri Zindagi" in Hindi in Duvidha by Vijay Dan Detha, Raj Kamal publications. Was also made into a play.

Compilation of laws regarding homosexuality in various South Asian countries. Data obtained from Sisterhood is Global ed. by Robin Morgan.

AFGHANISTAN:

Policy: illegal; punishable by imprisonment. No further data obtainable.

Practice: No data obtainable.

INDIA:

Policy: The Unnatural Offences Law prohibits "carnal intercourse against the order of nature"; punishable by 10 years to life imprisonment. The law specifies male homosexuality and anal rape (a Hindu woman can seek divorce from a husband "guilty of sodomy"). No data obtainable on laws concerning lesbianism.

NEPAL:

Policy: No data obtainable.

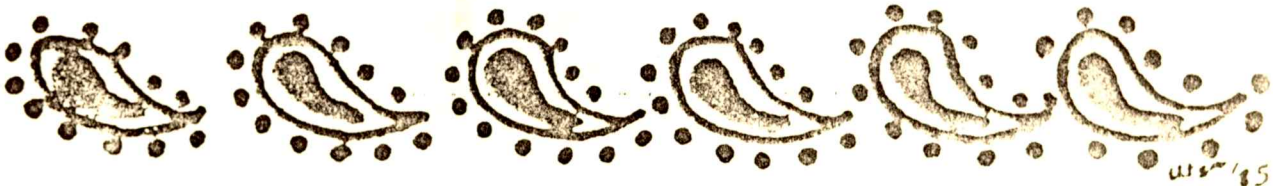
PAKISTAN:

Policy: The Penal Code (Sec. 377) defines "unnatural offenses" as sodomy, buggery, and bestiality; relations between men are punishable by up to 10 years in prison. No specific wording on lesbianism.

SRI LANKA:

Policy: No specific laws pertaining to homosexual behaviour, although homosexual acts can be punishable as "unnatural offenses" (10 years maximum imprisonment) or specifically as "gross indecency between males" (2 years maximum imprisonment and / or fine and or whipping- 1966 Penal Code). Women are exempt from whipping as a legal punishment in Sri Lanka.

No information on Bhutan or Burma in this book.



Please send us the following:

- Short stories
- Articles
- Photographs
- References
- Thoughts
- Ideas
- Letters
- Reports
- Anything else you want to

We will not return materials unless specifically requested to do so.



--Hina Faisal Inam

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Anamika will focus on "OUR LIVES". Please send us anything that you feel is an important part of your life as a South Asian lesbian. We would like you to go into as much detail as you want, however, the final copy may have to be edited by us.

Please send in all materials by August 15, 1985.