

## **New Spaces of Intimacies: Exploring the Changing Homosexual Spaces in Delhi, India.**

Kiran BHAIKANAVAR

Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,  
National University of Singapore

Homosexual men in India never had an organised space given the hetero-normative social setup and a law that criminalised same sex sexuality until recently. As such men produced a city of intimacies by using public spaces like parks, bus stops and shady corners of the city to express their sexuality strategising through time and space, building networks of their own very much invisible to the heterosexual eye. There were thriving places like cruising areas, secret gay parties, and public places like toilets, subways, railway platforms which were potent sites for chance encounters. The advent of Internet in late 1990s brought more people in contact with each other within the city and connected them to men and ideas of other cities in India and abroad. Newer technologies like the mobile telephones only made homosexual life more vibrant and safer. It also brought in activist voices to appropriate public space more openly and “uniting” the invisible community for political action. Delhi has had three Queer Pride Marches since 2008. Delhi High Court decriminalised consensual gay sex in 2009 and since then there have been opening of many gay venues like party scenes, saloons, gay friendly tours and publications. My paper documents the changes in these (homosexual) intimate public spheres in India in general and Delhi in particular after the advent of the internet in 1990s and the legalisation of consensual gay sex in 2009. I basically argue that the internet and the legalisation have brought a new found freedom in organising specific liberatory spaces in contrast to the erstwhile invisible homosexual spaces. Basing the study on data collected through ethnographic methods -observations, in-depth interviews; and secondary sources, I further argue that these new intimate spaces of the city are quiet in tension with various forces of individual’s rights, the family, the society and the liberalised economy, thus producing juxtaposed new geographies of intimacies in the city.