

RX FOR ETHNIC SEX

A Vancouver therapist specializes in 'sexual culture clashes'

BY MICHELLE TARNOPOLSKY • Kurt Preinsperg and his partner, Julie Wang, first met sex therapist Faizal Sahukhan three years ago when they attended his workshop on multicultural sex at a Vancouver sexuality centre. Two years later, the Austro-Canadian philosophy instructor and his Chinese-born partner were having serious relationship issues. "We were on the verge of breaking up when we sought out Faizal in his private practice," says the 54-year-old Preinsperg.

Sahukhan, an Indo-Canadian raised in Vancouver by traditional Muslim parents, has practiced clinical sexology and counselling therapy since 1997. "My mother is still wondering how I got into it," he laughs. Sahukhan says he noticed a need for sex therapists in B.C.: "There were only a handful and none was ethnic."

During his career, which has included teaching at Vancouver's Langara College and writing an advice column for *The Canadian Immigrant Magazine*, the 40-year-old has seen more and more clients suffering from "sexual culture clash," in which Western individualistic and Eastern collectivistic romantic values collide. "He's very passionate," says Preinsperg, "about helping couples from different cultures understand each other."

Preinsperg, for example, was jealous of all the time Wang spent with her family, and she resented the fact that he refused to marry her. After dating and splitting up with a dozen Asian women over the years, he was tired of the pattern. With the help of Sahukhan, Wang has learned to accept that Preinsperg "just isn't the marrying kind," and it's clear to him that her child (from a previous relationship) and her mother are more important than he is. "Family is her purpose in life, and I'm sort of the cherry on the cake."

Sahukhan's clients tend to be in relationships already, so it's not as if he's offering advice on how, say, a guy can bed a cute Muslim girl. Anyway, unless you plan to marry her, he says, "forget about it." Even just dating an ethnic—South Asian, Asian, Middle Eastern—woman "is going to be a tough road." "If she has grown up here, your chances are better," he says. "But ethnic children are raised to think that premarital sex is taboo.

So even if the Muslim girl decides to sleep with her boyfriend, she won't enjoy herself because of this unconscious resistance."

Many young ethnic clients share their fears about an arranged marriage with the sex counsellor. "Dear Faizal," writes an Indian woman, born and raised in Vancouver, to his advice column. "I agree with you about the difficulties a girl has in trying to cover up her lost virginity to her future husband and his family. Like the example you gave, I also feel like smearing fake blood on the sheets on my wedding night to 'prove' that I am still a vir-

SAHUKHAN is 'passionate,' says a client, about helping couples understand each other



MANY ETHNIC MEN ABHOR THE CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF 'SERVICING' A WOMAN

gin." Sahukhan tells his clients that true intimacy is impossible without honesty, and points out that these poor girls are so busy worrying about bursting a fake blood capsule that "they are not even enjoying this first sexually intimate moment with their husbands!"

The benefit of the therapist's insights came late for 26-year-old construction worker Amanda Marigliano and her 39-year-old Pakistani boyfriend Hameed Laskani (not their

real names). Marigliano sought Sahukhan's advice regarding what she saw as Laskani's controlling behaviour and his refusal to introduce her to his mother, even though they had talked of marriage and kids. But Laskani spurned the counselling and Marigliano gave up on the relationship a few months ago. "I hear from many women in this position," says Sahukhan, who is completing a self-help book entitled *Dating the Ethnic Man: Strategies for Survival*. Marigliano had previously been to see the therapist about an Indian man she was dating who refused to reciprocate oral sex. "Not only have many ethnic men been raised to fear the vagina," explains Sahukhan, but they also abhor the cultural implications of "servicing" a woman. With couples like these, the therapist "helps the

man disassociate his cultural take on oral sex and separate it from the equality that needs to be present if you're going to have a relationship with a Westerner."

As homework, Sahukhan suggests a sexual position in which "she's not looking down on him. It's side by side! This works very well."

Laskani has since moved out of his mother's house and begun meeting with the counsellor. "We'll see what the future holds," says Marigliano. "If there is enough compromise to have a relationship work in a romantic sense, then that might be something to explore." M



JAPAN: AN EXPLOSIVE NEED TO SAVE MONEY

This week the "Savings Bomb," a toy that delivers a coercive inducement for people to save money, goes on sale. If owners of the black ball-shaped bank don't put coins into it regularly, the toy bank suddenly lights up, rattles, shakes and then "explodes," firing coins all over the room. Says the toy's manufacturer, Tomy Co., "Users must pick up and collect the scattered coins and reflect on their laziness."