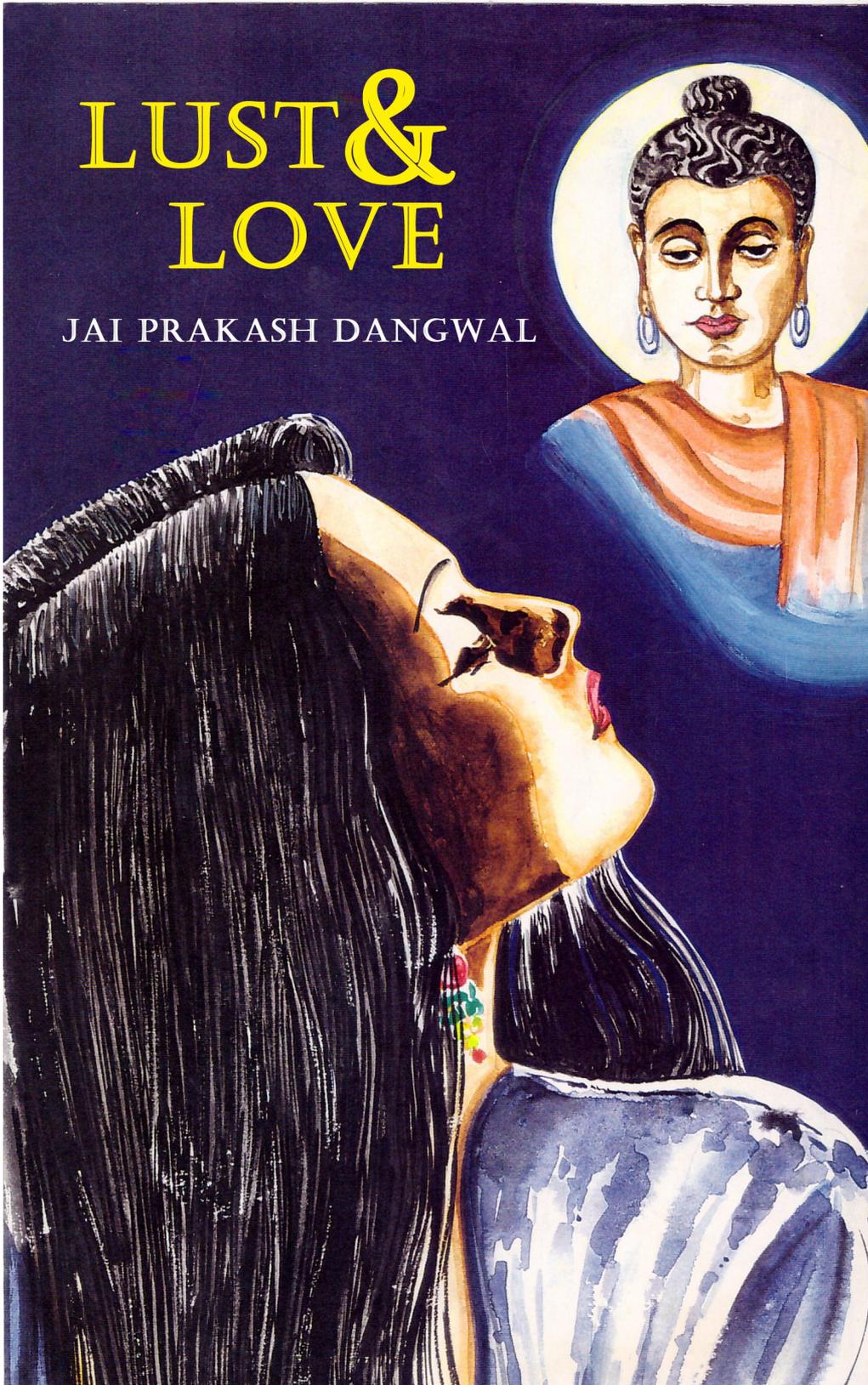


# LUST & LOVE

JAI PRAKASH DANGWAL







and Love

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*Dedicated to my Parents*

Late K.P. Dangwal  
Late Godambari Dangwal

With special thanks to my readers



## Introduction in Brief

Rising from the ground of reality, with the feathers of sentiments and faith after having a long flight in the world of fiction, the novel 'Vasav' is born.

The court dancer of the Buddhist monk was extremely beautiful, she was embodiment of beauty. She wanted to win the heart of the monk, charming him with her beauty. But the negative reaction of the monk hurt her ego so badly that it floored her and she passed her remaining life in restlessness. But in the end her attraction for the Buddhist monk and her damaged ego due to neglect on the part of the monk ended in eternal love.

The hero of this novel Abhay goes for the first time a brothel for enjoyment of sex but on coming in contact with Vasav the devil of lust disappears in him and his curiosity starts increasing looking for an ideal woman in her.

'Vasav' is the story of the agony of the daughter of a freedom fighter who was compelled to be a prostitute along with her mother by the corrupt leaders and cruel society. She is restless like the court dancer *Vasav* for deliverance from her sinful life and she is expecting the monk in Abhay for her salvation.

JAI PRAKASH DANGWAL



## Review

**A**fter a long time I received a splendid novel 'Lust And Love' for skimming. I read it from beginning to the end in one sitting. I felt very happy—blissful with the resounding of the eternal music of the theme. The balanced presentation of the three streams—ancient philosophy, Buddhist ideology and Gandhism—is excessively capable of nourishing the theme of the novel and sprinkling the saffron on the greenery of feelings and thoughts of human heart and mind.

The human values which have been formed in thousands of years are deteriorating fast. The depreciation in moral values, meandering in life and materialism are predominating all around us. Struggle and enmity are increasing because of decomposition in the standard of idealism. Under such circumstances the motive of current literature is to make human life meaningful. The main aim of J. P. Dangwal, author of the novel, is to condemn materialism and to inspire the readers towards spiritual development for augmentation of happiness for one and all.

The court dancer *Vasav* is the central character of the novel. She is accepted as the personification of beauty but indirectly this highlights the idea that only beauty is not all in all till it does not absorb the reality of life and a feeling of prosperity for all. For explaining this fact and to signify love and nonviolence in life the character of the Buddhist monk is very effectively delineated. It is not just a jumble of actors and incidents in the novel but the character of *Vasav*, the Buddhist monk, Abhay, Prabhakar Pandit, Ganga Ram, Stephenson, Sudarshna, Kalu and the little girl Muniya come alive with simple description and sensual perception giving voice to Buddhist idealism and Philosophy of Gandhi to reveal their treasures of knowledge to the readers.

The British Collector Stephenson is a very strong and influential personality in the novel. In spite of being a British patriot his devotion to Gandhi and his nonviolence touches the heart.

Catching the weak nerve of the Indian society whatever he had spoken frankly to Prabhakar Pandit no doubt tastes very bitter but in reality it is proving true in the corrupt society of today.

His pride about the British character sparks while speaking to Prabhakar Pandit: 'A British does not work for his personal interests, he works in the interest of his country. That is why we are the ruler and you are slaves.' His love and faith for Gandhi reflects from his views expressed to Prabhakar Pandit: 'We both are Patriots. Whatever I am doing, I am doing for my nation and you for your nation. We both are soldiers fighting each other, but no violence. . . . You must know that I learned this lesson from your Gandhi. If I won't know Gandhi, either I would have shot you dead the very first day you met me or you would have killed me, but we can't do so. Do you know why? Because of Gandhi, he is standing in between us.'

A novel is not a formation of one cell like a story, it is a composition of an impression of different cells. Like a good novelist Mr. J. P. Dangwal has expressed ingenious experiences of life, different aspects of spiritualism and Buddhist philosophy in simple but glorious language.

'The contrivance to be free from sufferings is to detach yourself from deep attachment with the transient mortal world', 'ego leads to arrogance', 'love is benediction and brings good fortune for all', 'love is pious if it is free from lust and it means attachment towards that is eternal', 'following of nonviolence because of some fear is a sin', 'body is mortal and beauty is momentary' and many other such rays of knowledge glint the *classic theme* of the novel. The struggle between love and hatred, life and death, justice and injustice and restlessness in *Vasav* for deliverance from her sinful life going on in her mind is nicely presented by the novelist. His impressive power of expression has brought experience very close to the language. The prayer of the holy Ganga in the novel not only suits to the character but also describes the greatness of the holy river washing the sins of all with dispassionateness for the last thousands of years but still remaining holy.

The noted Hindi author Yashpal Jain rightly commented, 'Vasav' is really a unique composition. It is the story of a prostitute. The subject is very sensitive but the author presents it with great nobility. It is such an interesting novel that it nowhere dispirited me and I

finished it reading in one sitting. Small sentences, meaningful dialogues and the subject full of substance is the speciality of the novel. In the end the story of the Buddhist monk has made the theme more interesting. Heartily congratulations to the author.

At the time of releasing the Hindi version of this novel, Honorable Ex Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee not only admired the theme of the novel for enriching Indian Philosophy that Truth always triumphs but also praised the impressive heart touching dialogues and style of presentation of the characters. He said that this novel is not only for India, it is for the whole world.

Ex High Commissioner of India in London, Mr. L. M.. Singhvi expressed his opinion about the novel that Honorable Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee who is a highly reputed and a sensitive person, having a deep site into a subject has said all what could be said in praise of the novel.

*'Lust And Love'* inspires us towards self development and strengthening human relationships in the length and breadth of the globe.

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M.A. (HINDI), M.A. (ENGLISH), PH.D.  
(EX PRESIDENT, Delhi Literary Federation)

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# 1

**T**riveni is the pious confluence of the three holy rivers at Prayag and is considered one of the most sacred places of the Hindus. It is believed that Saraswati, wife of Lord Brahma, creator of the Universe, emerges in the form of a river from the bottom of the Universe to join at Triveni with her sister rivers Ganga and Yamuna both of which descend from the snow clad mountains of the Himalaya, travel long distances, pass through the hilly region frothing in anger striking the mighty rocks which obstruct their way.

‘By mere three dips, one is exonerated from all sins,’ is the faith of Hindu devotees who go there for a holy bath. But I had gone there not to wash off my sins or become sacrosanct. I had gone there to appear before the Services Selection Board to get Commission in the Indian Army.

After passing out from the college last year I joined service as a teacher in a Higher Secondary School at Dehradun. The destiny of a teacher was not sound from financial and social angles that time. Besides, Dehradun is known to have the charm of an army atmosphere because of the Indian Military Academy located there from where Gentleman Cadets pass out as officers of the Indian Army after completion of training. The military environment in the city might have motivated me to try to get Commission in the Army for an active life, service of the nation and social status.

I failed then to realize the significance and gravity of the teaching profession on the horizon of moral values and ethics. Today several of my students are in high position in the Indian Army and in other distinguished fields but I am still a teacher. I have no regrets for my failure in joining the army or in achieving a higher positioned job in the government or the private sector.

I won't hesitate to accept that a sensitive person like me was not fit for the army. I thought that whatever happens that is for good as per the wish of the Almighty.

'Truth and love win, malice and misdeeds are sin.' This spiritual thought which I had learned from my teacher, I delivered the same to my students. This is not an ethereal theory. It recaptures the powerful urge in a person to help him significantly to gain the spiritual strength prodigiously for increasing moral values and for internal purification.

There would have been no voids of joyful and bitter experiences in my life but at present nothing but Vasav has compelled me to open up the strings of my heart and mind to write about her.

I reported to the Services Selection Board and stayed on for four days for the different tests to qualify before the Board. The disciplined life of Army changed my life style from Civilian to Army for the period I stayed there.

We had to wake up early in the morning and had to report to Group Testing Officer punctually after dressing up to undergo various tests for physical fitness, intelligence, group discussion, group task and psychology. My chest number was 5 and my group mates used to call me lucky 5. Not only me but even they were hopeful about my selection as my performance in most of the activities was very good.

The company of the boys from different corners of India under one roof of the military barrack brought us very close to each other. Four-day old strangers became good friends now with a zeal to compete with each other to qualify before the Board. I was twenty three years old and it was my first chance to appear before the Services Selection Board. Whatever I had learned from books and whatever I had seen in life, that was the only experience behind me.

During the tittle-tattle at free time in the night, boys used to talk about their girlfriends and other romantic incidents. Some of them even used to narrate their sex tales in the Red Light area of the city.

There was clear official warning to all the candidates that if some one was caught by the police or military police wandering in the Red Light area, necessary disciplinary and legal action would be taken against him.

In spite of that they visited the area cautiously without falling in the trap of the police or military police. They used to describe their

sex game with the prostitutes giving every detail of their playing with the beautiful body of the woman and about how they responded them. Their stories made the atmosphere sexy. On such occasions I felt my blood boiling and my temples turned red with shame.

“Hey! Why are you turning red?” Someone commented.

“Don't disturb, he is a child. Okay friend! Continue,” other smiled and said. It made me feel more shy.

A Sikh boy Balbir Singh was the hero of our group. A handsome, stout young man, very talkative in Hindi but in English spoke very cautiously, only: Yes . . . No and thank you. His face looked very innocent and always smiling.

The first day he asked all of us to talk to him only in Hindi because his English was very poor. He used to tell nice jokes making others laugh rolling on their sides.

While other mates were speaking in fluent English to impress each other, he folded his hands and requested, “Brothers! I don't know English. I have not come here for selection. I am just sharing experience with you this time. Please talk to me in Hindi.”

After some time when we became informal to each other, he said: “I am a romantic person, I have surveyed most of the places in Chandigarh with my friends with a diary in hand.”

“Diary in hand? Why so?” I asked him.

“Have you ever been involved in love affair?”

“No,” I said.

“Then listen carefully, it may help you in future but don't repeat the mistake which I repeated. You know what happened with me?”

“What happened?” Some one asked with curiosity.

“The girl whom I teased the first time, her brother was in the police. He came to my house and thrashed me badly.”

“And the second girl?” I asked him.

“Her brother was a hooligan, he beat me black and blue in the middle of the road so mercilessly that I still tremble to remember the day,” he said.

“Then did you stop teasing girls?” Nirmal Singh asked him.

“Oh no, after all experience counts. We started teasing girls after making a survey.”

“What short of survey?” I asked him.

“We noted the names and addresses of the beautiful girls of the city in the diary and marked the names with the danger mark of skull and bone whose brothers were either in the police or were hooligans which meant . . . Danger. We never dared to look such girls even if they were very beautiful.”

He authenticated his poor knowledge of English telling us one incident which had happened with him. Making the atmosphere humorous, he laughed and spoke in Hindi, “Friends! Now I tell you about the incident which will prove how bad is my English. But first promise me that none of you will make fun of me later on.”

“Promise, no one will make your fun,” one of us assured him.

“It is all foolish . . .” He laughed and continued: “My friend Gurbinder met an accident and his left leg got fractured. My cousin Harmeet was studying in Delhi and had come to Chandigarh to spend his summer vacation with us. He was brilliant and fluent in English. I suggested him to go and see Gurbinder. He agreed and accompanied me. I introduced him to Gurbinder,” he paused, smiled and continued, “while returning, just to impress my cousin that I could also speak English, I made up my mind to talk to Gurbinder in English. I shook hands with him and said: ‘Let us go friend. I will come again to see you. Wish you happy returns of the day.’”

He laughed on his foolishness with us and said further, “Gurbinder knew that whenever I speak English I speak to pose and if he does not respond in English that would give poor impression in presence of my cousin. I knew what he was thinking and prayed to God not to let him show his wisdom.”

Jaswant asked him, “Why so?”

Balbir explained, “Because his English was worse than me, but he didn’t miss the chance. He shook hands with me warmly and said, “Thank you very much, I wish you the same.”

Balbir continued, “I thanked God that after all he had saved his as well as my honor. I turned to my cousin and looked upon his face to see whether he was impressed or not but he started laughing loudly.

He shook hands with Gurbinder and said, ‘Don't wish me so.’ Gurbinder thought he was applauding his wish and joined him in the laughter but I knew why Harmeet was laughing. Either one of us or both of us had spoken something very wrong,” he paused and

said, “on the way back home I asked Harmeet why he was laughing. He laughed again and told me the meaning of what we had spoken. I could not stop my laughter on our foolishness. I told him shamefully: ‘Don't mind, his English is not better than me.’”

‘No need to tell me, I know,’ Harmeet said to me.

We all laughed at Balbir's poor English knowledge but he was not like that as he had told about himself. He only fooled us. Next day the reality unfolded itself. On starting the group activities he took the lead speaking very fine English giving no chance to others to contradict his views. Everybody was surprised. Today's Balbir was different to yesterday's Balbir. He surprised the entire group.

No doubt, chest no 9 was leading.

But one of his quality he had described very truly, he was in the real sense a very romantic person.

The other Sikh youth in our group Nirmal Singh was a very simple and innocent person. He always maintained his bed very clean and did not allow anybody to sit on it. He was a God fearing and used to recite daily in the morning and before sleeping some lessons from the Guru Granth Saheb, the religious book of Sikh religion which is worshiped as the soul of their religion.

Even if by mistake some one sat on his bed, he would turn furious, “Bloody Hell, God knows which dirty places these people visit and then come back to spoil my bed. Vahe Guru! (Oh Lord!) Forgive me,’ and he used to recite again some lessons from the Guru Granth Saheb with the conviction that his prayer would clean all the filth or the sins spread on his bed by the dirty people. He had great faith in his religion.

That night while Balbir was telling his romantic tales Nirmal shouted at him: “Have some shame man! Stop it . . .”

“You fool! You don't know that those who feel shame their luck is smashed. Once you walk inside those streets, you will forget everything. Sex . . . Sex . . . Sex . . . Everywhere sex, beautiful women offering their all. Nirmal, you will feel that you are in heaven. As in the vegetable market you can select red tomatoes of your choice, you can choose a woman of your liking there. Women of thin waist, so thin that you can grip it inside your fist. You will pity on them

how so thin a waist could hold the weight of such big breasts, oh . . . I can't describe. Nirmal go there and enjoy life," Balbir replied laughing.

Nirmal stared him with burning eyes as if he was going to thrash him. He cursed him, "Shit, what nonsense you talk,"

Then he cooled down, raised his hand and prayed to God: "Vahe Guru (Oh Lord) forgive me, and save me from such company."

All except Nirmal Singh enjoyed the sex tales of Balbir Singh. Those who got a chance visited the streets and shared their experiences at the get-together at night.

A seed of lust started growing in my heart too.

Last day was the conference day. We all had to appear one by one before the members of the Board chaired by the President of the Board in the conference hall for the final assessment of our performance. Nirmal Singh was restless, he was reciting prayer continuously till he was called for the interview. He had great faith in the Lord and was seeking his blessings for selection.

After the three hours, interview of our batch was over, the President of the Board, addressed the batch before declaring the result, "Gentlemen! I thank you for showing your interest to join Indian Army. During your stay here you have tasted the military life. No doubt, your performance was good but the army has its own standards for selection," he paused. There was pin drop silence. He continued, "I am pleased to announce you that five candidates in your batch have qualified for commission. I congratulate them. But it does not mean that those who could not qualify are unsuccessful. There are many distinguished fields in government as well as in private sectors where many of you may succeed. Don't go disheartened to your homes. Try hard for the best in life. Wish you success. Thank you.'

And after this last address, he left the place.

The Junior Commissioned Officer declared the result, "Chest No. 1, 9, 15, 23 and 29 fall out. You have to stay here some more time for the medical test. Others may collect their railway warrants from the office. The Army truck will drop you at the railway station," he said.

Balbir was one of those selected while the failures included me and Nirmal with others. He could not take the result easily, his face turned pale, lips dried and he was staring the blue sky. Now he had forgotten

even his prayer. Some friend teased him: “Hey Nirmal! Where are you lost? Balbir wandered in the dirty streets, even then he qualified, but you? You kept on reciting prayers and even then failed . . .”

I thought Nirmal would get annoyed and curse him but he was cool and whispered to him, “Don't talk like this.”

We were going to the railway station in the army truck to return to our respective homes. I made up my mind to stay for some more days at Prayag and requested the driver to drop me near some hotel. God knows when I will get this opportunity again in my life to visit this place. I took leave from the boys near a hotel.

I thought that perhaps in the present life we wouldn't meet again. With the sweet memories of their company, I reached a hotel and booked a single room for myself. After bath I was feeling fresh but I had no peace of mind. The thorn of failure which was pinching me, I had pulled out and thrown. I already had a job of teacher in hand and there was not much to bother. I thought I will have a holy bath in Triveni. Perhaps that would bring peace to me. But the thought vanished the very next moment.

The stories of sex which I had heard from Balbir and some other boys were reeling in my mind. A beast in me was gradually growing stronger and his hunger for lust was trying to drive me to the streets where he could find a woman to fulfil his libido. I was in a dilemma whether I should follow the beast who was wandering in my mind and bringing all of my efforts to control him to a void. My mind was feeling comfortable towards him. I was free . . . Nobody knows me here . . . I was very free from the reach of the strict discipline of my father and the vigilance of my mother. Nobody knew me here to pass comments on my conduct. Still I was feeling uneasy because of the holy religious thread ‘Janeu’ hanging down from my shoulder. It was giving me the sensation of a snake hanging on my shoulder. My father who was my religious teacher told me after whispering the hymns in my ear at the time of my ornamentation ceremony of ‘Janeu’: “Abhaya, my son! This ‘Janeu’ you are holding on your body is not merely a religious thread to honor. In your life now onwards it is a check on you. Whenever your mind will go in the wrong direction, it will stop you from doing that. It is your duty now to keep it holy with your good deeds. It is sacred, never malign it. . . .”

But the wild beast born in my thoughts was not ready to get chained with my 'Janeu' and was pushing me to the street of the Red Light.

Perhaps such opportunity I may not get again. So I dressed up and walked out of the hotel.

I called a three-wheeler and asked him to drive to the particular place. His mischievous smile irritated me but I did not react as he was a stranger and I had no danger from him. He was nobody to me.

After half an hour I was standing at the corner of the street about I had heard a lot and the attraction of which had brought me there. People were coming and going. There was no shame in their eyes and nobody was stealing eyes from each other.

Rather they were walking in the streets impudently passing vulgar comments on the prostitutes standing by their doors or peeping out from the balcony with a professional smile to attract and welcome their customers.

Suddenly someone touched my shoulder which shook my body and soul. I looked back and heaved a sigh of relief, he was Vimal a group-mate of Services Selection Board.

"What is the matter?" He asked me smiling.

I dug my eyes to earth and replied, ashamed: "I have not come here with some bad intention."

"Wow, then with what good intention you have come here?" He asked me and laughed. I joined him laughing on his comment and felt relaxed.

"When are you going back home . . .?" I asked him.

"Tomorrow, today I want to enjoy life to forget the shock of my failure. And you?"

"After two days, I want to see this city . . ."

"What a nice start it is from here to see the city," he quipped. I laughed on his comments.

"What are you doing standing at the corner of the street. Let us go inside," he said.

Vimal's company encouraged me and we entered in the street.

On both sides of the streets professional women were standing at the door of their houses in cheap makeup attracting their customers with gestures. Some were peeping from their balconies shaking hand to attract men. Their faces were shining, lipstick coated lips were

throwing flying kisses and eyes were restless in search of their clients. Their breasts were exposing in the short and deep neck tops. Some of them were fixing a deal in symbolic language and some were openly inviting the customers. After the first round my hesitation shed off. I looked to my left, right, up and down evaluating the beauty. Many passed signals to me, winking and smiling, inviting to join them.

“Hey handsome! Come on, pay whatever your like. Come on darling.” A middle-aged woman called me laughing, But I did not stop. Still I could not dare to cross any door to join any one of them.

I was startled to see there Nirmal Singh coming from the opposite direction with four other batch mates. We greeted and laughed to see each other at the wrong place.

“Nirmal! You too here?” I asked him with a little surprise.

“When you can come here, why can't I?” He quipped.

“But you always cursed the people who come here and what about the preaching of the holy book?” I asked him touching his weak nerve. I realized my mistake that at this place at least I should not have told him all this. I thought he would get irritated. All other friends started laughing. I saw an impression of guilt on his face.

“Don't discuss here Guru Granth Saheb,” he whispered.

“I am sorry friend, please don't mistake me, I am really very sorry. I did not mean even the least to hurt your feelings,” I told him holding his hand.

“Forget it, I may also have weaknesses. After all I am also a human being,” he said laughing.

“You have come here several times. You know this place well. You have told us about your adventures at this place. Please show us some beautiful girl,” Vimal told Jaswant.

Jaswant laughed, put his hand on Nirmal's shoulder and told him: “Now Nirmal is more experienced, he is a big player of the game. Nirmal! Tell him . . .”

Nirmal winked, indicated to a girl and said: “She is wonderful.”

Before we could approach her to settle the deal, two persons joined her. She knew our intention, stepped forward and said very softly. “It will take some time, please wait . . .”

Nirmal told her pointing us, “entertain my friends too nicely.”

She passed on a sweet smile and went with her customers. We also hugged friends and departed from them.

“How long will you keep on walking, will you stop somewhere?” Vimal asked me.

Just then, I noticed her. Black thick hair in two long braids resting separately on her breasts. Her cheeks were pink with the tint of rose and puffed powder was shining on the face.

She was wearing a short red blouse of very thin cloth under which her breasts were bulging out in the white transparent bra. Her belly was naked and many eyes were fixed on her round naval. Her lips coated with lipstick were appearing like red rose petals. Her face was innocent but her body was very sexy.

She was a cocktail of innocence with sex. I saw many people being interested in her but she was not responding to them except passing a sweet smile. Someone tried to allure her with money but she turned her face indifferently. One man cursed her: “Bitch! What for you are standing here, just to burn hearts?” But she was not annoyed with his comments.

She just laughed and turned her face. The glimpse of her teeth shining like jewels made me impatient. Vimal knew my choice.

“Go to her and try your luck,” he said to me.

“I can’t . . .” I said hesitating.

“Your name is Abhaya, which means a fearless man, but you are a coward. If you can’t speak to her then what can I do?”

“Vimal! Please, you talk to her for me . . .” I said.

“Okay; you will remember me whole life what a friend you had,” he said and proceeded to her. He spoke to her but she did not agree, just nodded her head. It looked she was standing there just to expose her beauty and she had no concern with the sex business. Vimal was trying to persuade her and I was disturbed with the thought that in case he is also interested in her he would prefer to settle her first for himself. Vimal diverted her attention towards me. She stared me for sometime and laughed. Vimal came back to me.

“With difficulty she has agreed. Go my friend before someone else fixes her. Pay her Rs. Ten and enjoy. I too try someone for me, okay bye ,” he said and left me alone there.

I slowly approached her with my quick heart beatings. Another prostitute standing by her side said smiling: "Vasav! You have been refusing everybody, why did you settle for him? Because he is handsome and looks innocent?"

"Get aside," she told her rudely, held my hand and led me into her house. I knew her name was Vasav.

I was shocked to see the inside scene. I wished to pull away my hand from her and run away from there. Everything there was different from what I had expected. I had imagined a separate room where no one else would be there. A jute curtain was hanging in the middle of the room dividing it into two parts. There were three other persons in the room, one old man with a dirty turban was smoking 'hukka' with a long pipe making a rumbling sound. His face was full of wrinkles with twisted moustaches.

He threw a casual look towards me while Vasav was taking me behind the curtain. My whole body shivered with his looks. An old woman sitting by his side was winnowing rice. One pot of food was on the oven and it was boiling. She was busy in her work and did not bother even to give a look at me. She had no concern with who was coming there and who was going from there because it had become a routine of her life. A seven or eight years old girl was sitting there and she was drawing zigzag lines on the floor with a piece of charcoal. I was shocked to see this. Vasav pulled me behind the curtain. There was a cot without any bed, a big earthen pot filled with water and covered with a wooden lid was put in a corner and a steel mug with a long handle to take out water from the pitcher was placed on the lid. I could see the hazy images of the old man, the old woman and the little girl on the other side of the translucent curtain.

She sat thumping on the cot and asked me to sit with her. Unwillingly I sat by her side. A naughty smile played on her face to see me puzzled and

"What will you do now that you have come here?" she asked me.

"All that, others come to do here," I told her firmly. I did not wish to know her that I was a novice. Before she could ask any other question I gripped her in my arms tightly. She was startled with my such behavior.

"You look quite a novice," she said.

For some time she flounced in my arms but soon loosened her body. I was just going to kiss her cheeks, when someone removed the curtain and entered there. I saw the same girl who was hardly seven or eight years old standing before me. I felt someone had blackened my face. I was shocked and separated myself from her. She also did not like of the child intruding at the wrong time.

“What is wrong Muniya? Why have you come here?” She asked her with annoyance.

“There is no salt. Take money from him and give me to buy salt,” she said innocently.

“Give her money.” Vasav said to me. I gave her a currency note of Rs. Twenty

“Don't you have change?” She asked me.

“Keep it.” I said wiping sweat from my forehead.

After all there is a limit of falling low but I had crossed that. My soul started cursing me. I stood up to leave the place. She held my hand and asked me innocently, “Won't you stay any more?”

“No, not at all.” I said firmly.

“Why?”

“I never knew that here, in one room all this happens. After all there is even a limit of shamelessness.”

“Yes, here everything happens in one room. All shameless people come here, gentleman like you don't come,” she said in sharp voice.

I was about to move, when I heard stampede in the street. She read the question in my eyes. “There is a police raid. Don't move from here otherwise you will be in trouble.” She said and moved to the other side of the curtain. I was frightened. In this unknown city there was nobody to bail me out. I trembled to remember the story of Jaswant which he had told me during our stay in the S.S.B.

Once he was trapped in Agra in the same situation and to save him from the police he had to hang on to the balcony. In the market a huge procession of Dussehra festival was passing through the market. There was no space left in the market and he was hanging in a very critical condition. He could neither jump down nor climb up. Jaswant used to say laughing that he felt as if his blood was freezing.

One policeman noticed him. He first laughed, then abused him and after that pulled him up. After his requesting the policemen several

times they freed him but before that they emptied his pockets and hit his back twice with the baton. This can happen with me also. The thought made me nervous. I had never imagined that my one mistake could prove so bitter to me. I was helpless without any solution.

After half an hour the storm had passed away and peace returned. In the meantime she returned. I stood up to run away but she signalled me to keep sitting and said, "still the danger is there."

I sat down on the cot with the fear of being caught by the police. Some more time passed in silence.

She broke the silence, "Pay some more and stay here whole night."

"I can't stay here even for a moment. Let me go," I told her.

"Go, but the police is on round in the street," she said.

"How long will the police stay on round?"

"Perhaps for a little more time," she said and sat close to me.

A sweet fragrance of powder and some scent entered my nose. She approached closer to me and rested her chin on my shoulder. Her lips were touching my cheek and I was feeling a sensation in my body. Just before me was hanging the curtain. Behind the curtain there was silence. Perhaps the old woman had put down the pot from the oven. But I was afraid with the thought that the old man, the woman, the little girl or a police constable may pull the curtain aside any time and appear before me to frighten me. How disgraceful it would be when people would know that the son of the Pandit was arrested in a brothel. What is she going to loose? Perhaps nothing. She is a characterless professional woman. She has neither shame nor any fear of slander in the society. I wished to separate her from me but I could not. She had gripped me in her arms.

Her long braided hair were swinging around me like serpents to make me delirious with their bite and poison of lust. Her painted eyelids, half opened lips like rose petals and the expression on her face were an open invitation to absorb her in me . . . I dare not neglect her. I bowed a little and kissed her. She half opened her eyes. I saw a question there: What do you want after all?

I kissed her again and asked her, "will you stay with me in a hotel for two days? There won't be anybody else except you and me."

Her eyes brightened, face glowed for a moment but soon that brightness and glow disappeared and she became sad.

“Can’t you?” I asked her.

“When?” She asked.

“Just now . . .”

“It would cost much,” she said.

“How much . . .?”

“Two hundred rupees.”

She thought that I would withdraw my proposal but I took out my purse from the pocket and gave her two currency notes each of Rs 100. The old man had heard what we were talking. He coughed to indicate his presence and giving us some time to be in our normal position, he removed the curtain and appeared before us.

“He is asking to stay with him in a hotel for two days, he is paying Rs 200 for that,” she told the old man.

“I have heard that all but,” he said.

“But what?” I asked him.

“Time is bad,” he said.

“I don’t understand, what do you mean?”

“Better you don’t understand,” he said and laughed furiously.

“What have you to say? Yes or no . . .” I asked him boldly.

He made up his mind and said: “Give your hotel address. She will reach there tomorrow morning.”

“Not tomorrow morning. I will take her just now,” I told him.

“But I don’t have my man free to drop her to your hotel,” he said.

“Do you not trust me?” She asked looking straight in the eyes of the old man. He was in a dilemma for some time but soon he decided and said to him, “You can take her but the third day she should come back otherwise . . .”

He did not complete the sentence but I smelled a threat in his voice. I asked him, “Otherwise what?”

“It wouldn’t be good for you.” He smiled mischievously and while saying so the wrinkles on his face deepened further.

“All right, on the third day she will be back,” I said.

The old man stared at me in a typical style. Fixing his little eyes on my face he was trying to read my mind. After sometime he took the money from Vasav and said to me: “All right, you can take her with you, but first give me the address of your hotel.”

I noted down my hotel's address on a piece of paper, handed it over to him and the old man moved to the other side of the curtain.

"I just come," she said leaving me alone there.

For the first time I heard the voice of the old lady. She was telling her: "Vasav first have your meal . . ."

"I don't need it," she said and returned to me hanging a bag with her belongings on her shoulder. She was ready to accompany.

I expressed my doubt about the police patrolling in the street.

"There is no danger now, it is quite normal. Let us go," she said.

I felt relaxed after coming out of that house where life was rotting and I was suffocating.

## 2

I had no peace even after coming out of that house. As the night was darkening the commotion in the street was increasing. All around I was looking at devils' faces and one of them was mine too. Nobody had any shame there. They were passing filthy comments and making vulgar gestures to the prostitutes who were responding with a broad smile, filthy language and sexual gestures to attract their suitors. Some men were exposing their virility in such a shameful manner that I was ashamed to be there but to my surprise some of the prostitutes were challenging them in return in the same manner and were inviting them openly to decide the winner in the sex game. At least I never expected it from a woman.

Those who had no money to pay were standing there just to go on staring at the beautiful women since they need not pay for that. Their eyes were running on every part of the body of the prostitutes and they were getting extreme satisfaction in doing that. They were so much 'busy' in this act that for a moment it seemed that they had attained the stage of a saint lost in meditation.

The people who had mixed up in that environment can only live there. For a moment a philosopher was born in me who was studying the philosophy of that kind of life which was unknown to him so far. But the life of the philosopher was momentary as he had died just after his birth and the lust for sex had also finished without quenching its thirst. The uncontrollable beast born with sexual desire in me who pushed me to this place crushing my character was also sitting feeble hidden in some corner of my heart and was not daring to meet his eyes with mine. I wanted to walk fast and get away from that place but my weak feet were turning heavy to move while my mind was restless and wanted to be free from that atmosphere and not to stay there even for a moment. But for Vasav that all was normal. Having gone ahead she was waiting for me, looking back at me.

My heart and body were burning on hearing the filthy remarks the passersby were passing at her. She has no objection and was just smiling. Men and only men in that street were splitting vulgarity crossing all the limits of shame.

On meeting familiar faces she used to raise her hand to wish them and in return they passed vulgar gestures.

I was walking with fixed eyes to the ground and my 'guide' was walking with a smile.

From one balcony somebody called her: "Vasav! With whom you are going?"

She pointed her finger towards me. I looked at the caller, she was a middle aged woman peeping out from her balcony. Her golden ornaments were glittering.

"Handsome boy, is he your lover?" She asked.

"No," she laughed and replied.

"Run away with him, don't come back here," she said.

"Where can I go after running away from here? It is not so easy, you know that, otherwise you would have also runaway with someone," she told her.

Vasav stopped to wait for me, she held my hand and said to me: "Come on, where are you lost?"

I could not tolerate this, I pulled away my hand with a jerk and stepped back.

The woman in the balcony laughed and told her: "Don't worry Vasav! Handle him carefully. One can enjoy best on riding a wild horse after taming the animal and a woman can enjoy life best in handling a rough man . . ."

I was feeling embarrassed there. I don't know because of which sins, in a bad moment I planned to come here. Nobody so far could ever point his finger to my character but today people were laughing at me. I was hating myself. But this was not sufficient. Something worst had to happen.

A drunkard was coming from the opposite side. His eyes were red, hair and beard were scattered. He was not in his senses. He spread his arms and gripped Vasav's waist.

She became furious like a lioness but he continued squeezing her in his arms and I was looking at all this helplessly.

The drunkard pointed at me and he said, "He pulls his hand and even then you stick to him. But in my arms you are flouncing as if you are in the arms of a man for the first time in life."

A crowd gathered around us. People were laughing. Someone shouted from the crowd: "Rub her, just here on the road . . ."

"I will do that," the drunkard shouted.

I was badly frightened and was looking for an opportunity to run away from there. Just then a tall and stout young man came there. He had a blackish complexion and his face was covered with a thick shining black beard. His eyes were burning and he had wrapped one fold of muffler around his neck. He was running his hand on his beard. Perhaps the crowd knew him, people started to scatter in different directions.

"Bastard!" He narrowed his eyebrows and gave a strong blow on the neck of the drunkard who gave out a shrill sound and rolled down on one side separating from Vasav. He looked around stealing his eyes from the attacker. That man gave him hard kicks and the drunkard returned to the real world. He pushed some people and runaway from there. The young man did not speak to Vasav but something transpired between their eyes.

He turned to me. I saw hatred in his eyes for me. He muttered: "Coward!" And moved away from there.

Vasav heaved a long sigh and told me: "Let us go . . ."

I followed her silently.

"Who was that black boy," I asked her hesitant.

"Kalu," she said.

That dirty street was left behind. I was a little relaxed. Now there was common life around us and for the first time I saw her with a relaxed mind.

She was now looking common, the professional touch of a prostitute did not reflect from her personality. Perhaps she had left the prostitute residing in her far behind in the sex market. Nobody could doubt her of being a cheap woman.

"What are you looking at me?" She asked smiling.

"Looking your face . . ."

"Had you not seen me before?"

"Now you are looking different," I told her.

“But I am the same Vasav . . .”

“You are not the same, perhaps this atmosphere has changed you.”

She was following me quietly. A feeling of self condemnation and hatred had affected me and I was trying to get rid of her. The loss of Rs. 200, I wouldn't mind. I was bothered only to save my prestige and life from the blot of filth.

“How long we will continue walking?” She asked me. Her question jolted me. Will it not be proper to get free from her just this moment. At least it will save my soul from the sinful company of a prostitute. After taking birth in a high cast family of a Hindu Brahmin, such a down fall? Shit . . .

In the dual of virtues and evil ideas, the sleeping virtues in me had now awakened and were fighting strongly with the evil who was now loosing the battle.

“You did not reply, how long we will walk like this?” She asked again. I stopped, I had decided, so told her firmly: “You go back Vasav, I don't need you.” She was surprised with my changed behavior. Her face turned pale. She looked at me lost for sometime, then asked me in a low voice.

“Any mistake on my part?”

“No, not you but I did commit a mistake, the company of a pros will neither be accepted by my body nor by my soul.”

“Pros . . .” She muttered first then shouted at me: “Why did you come to my door? I had not called you.”

“I have admitted, that was my mistake . . .”

In excitement her face turned red, her lips dried, her body was trembling with anger and eyes were burning with insult.

“All right, leave me at my house,” she said.

“No . . .” I said.

She shouted, “why not?”

“I can't go to that hell again . . .”

“You can't accompany me even a few steps in that hell but I have to live my whole life there. Coward man! You can see a pros in a woman but you can't see a woman in a pros.”

Her hurt voice pained me too. Her eyes were moist, after some time she became normal and said to me: “I can't return your money, I don't have that in my possession otherwise I would have returned.”

“I don't need money, you can go,” I said.

“Can you accept my one request?” She said to me.

“Yes,” I said.

“You please let me live with you for two days. We won't have sex, we won't commit any sin. You even don't touch me.”

“Why?”

“I will get rid of that hell to live two days a free life with you.”

“Ricksha!” I called a ricksha-puller and occupying the seat told him the address of my hotel to drop me there.

Vasav was looking at me with painful eyes. I could not neglect her and stretched my hand to help her to sit on the ricksha.

She could not believe it. She wanted to speak but she could not, her throat was choked, she was staring me without shutting her eyelids. She stepped forward, held my outstretched hand and sat by my side on the ricksha. She was cautious not to touch any part of my body. I caught her hand, she raised her eyes, looked at me and bowed her head. Two drops of hot tears dropped from her eyes on my hand.

We reached the hotel. I told her to wait outside and went straight to the reception and told the receptionist to keep ready my bill as I wanted to check out. He asked me, “You booked hotel for two days and you are leaving today?”

“I am in a hurry, I have to leave today itself,” I told him.

By the time he prepared the bill I packed up my luggage and after making payment left the hotel. I asked the ricksha-puller to drop us to some other good hotel. The ricksha-puller was astonished and started staring at me. Vasav was also curious to know the reason for changing the hotel. I asked him, “what happened? Don't you know any other good hotel in the city?”

“I know,” he said in a taunting tone.

“Why don't you move then?”

When I reached the new hotel it was 9 P.M.. The receptionist welcomed us with a smile but his eyes were fixed on Vasav.

“Please book a double bed room . . .” I told him.

“Please note down your name and address Sir!” He said opening his booking register.

“Mr. and Mrs. Abhaya Sharma,” just to save me from any doubt I posed Vasav as my wife before him.

I don't know what was the reaction on Vasav because she was standing behind me.

He allotted us Room No. 204. The attendant picked up my luggage and said: "Please come Sir, I will show you your room . . ."

For a moment I felt the dual between good and bad person in me was mitigated but in my heart and mind Vasav was shadowing. Before anybody could doubt my integrity, I had found a solution of that. I had changed that harlot into Mrs. Abhaya Sharma for the time she stays with me in the hotel. I was smiling on my cleverness.

After a bath I pulled a chair close to her and sat by her side. She asked me, "Do you drink?"

"Casually, Do you?"

"It depends on the customer," she said.

"Do you like?"

"No it tastes bitter but I like its intoxication, for a moment one forgets all miseries . . ."

"If you want to drink I can manage . . ."

"Will you accompany me?" She asked.

"Yes, to give you company I will."

"Do you like women drinking liquor?"

"No . . ."

"Why?"

"In our culture drinking and smoking by women is not liked."

"But in foreign women drink and smoke and this does not affect their respect in society."

"It may be because of the geographical changes or because of their own culture."

"Even in India some rich and modern Indian women drink and still enjoy high respect. What you say about that?" She quipped.

"Yes, there are double standards in the society for poor and riches."

"Yes, every culture has double standards, one for the rich people of society and one for poor the oppressed classes of the society."

"Do you smoke?" I asked her.

"I do everything to please my customer," she said bitterly. The bell of the intercom started ringing. I picked up receiver and said. "Hello."

"Good evening sir, This is room service, dinner is ready. If it is convenient should we serve?"

I covered the mouthpiece with my hand and asked Vasav. "Have you placed the order?" She nodded.

"I want drink first, can you send a bottle of Black Night whisky?"

"I just send." He said.

Vasav looked at me with surprise.

After five minutes the room attendant returned with a bottle of whisky of 'Black Night' brand. He kept it in the refrigerator.

"Send meal after forty minutes." I told the boy.

He nodded and left the room. I closed the door and switched off the light. The moon light was spread in the room through the window. I stood by the side of Vasav who was looking out from the window. Most of the shops were closed and a few people were walking on the road. A shopkeeper of a sweet shop was pulling down the shutter.

"Come on, have a drink," I told Vasav.

"I don't drink alone," she said.

"Okay, I will accompany you but won't have more than one peg."

"Will you have sex with me after the drink?"

I did not reply.

"Do you know wine is a catalyst which accelerates sexual feelings and gives more and more enjoyment while having sex?"

"I would like to experience that with you." I said hesitant.

"All right," she said and opened the refrigerator, took out the bottles and ice from there, broke the seal and prepared two pegs.

I had a packet of salted cashew nuts. I put them in a dish. She offered me the peg and we cheered and sipped the whisky.

For me it was bitter and it caught my throat, I did not even like its smell but just to accompany her I sipped it.

She finished the peg in two gulps and was waiting for me to finish.

I could hardly finish that peg. She prepared two more.

"I can't take more . . ." I told her.

"Try," she said.

After three pegs she stopped. I switched on the light. Her eyes were becoming pinkish and drowsy because of intoxication, her hair were flying and sometime covering her face, she was looking very pretty. She braided her hair in a tuft. At the given time the room attendant served dinner. "Let us have our meal." I said to her.

We finished meal enjoying intoxication of the whisky. Her beautiful intoxicated eyes fascinated me. I approached her, rubbed her cheeks, touched her shoulder and said. "Talk to me."

"What?" She asked in a dull voice fixing her intoxicated eyes at me.

It looked as if she was lost in her past and trying to turn over the pages of her life. God knows behind the jute curtain with how many persons she had sex but there she was looking happy, then why was she looking dull and lost here.

I played with the tuft of her hair and let them scatter on her shoulders. She was frightened. It appeared that for the first time in her life she was coming in contact with a man.

In the mean time the room attendant knocked the door and asked. "If you have finished, may I collect the dishes?"

"Okay, come in."

The room attendant entered the room and collecting the dishes asked.

"Any thing else sir?"

Before I could reply she told him, "No, nothing. Serve bed-tea at seven in the morning."

"Okay Madam," he said and returned.

I pulled her closed, kissed her cheeks, touched her lips and silky hair. Her body was quivering.

"How are you feeling here?" I whispered in her ear.

"Fine." She said uneasily.

"You lie, you are uncomfortable, you were looking more happy in the brothel. Perhaps whores don't like homely atmosphere." I don't know why without any intention in intoxication I told her all this.

"Whore? Who is whore?" She questioned turning her head.

Before I could reply, her neck straightened, a smile was there on her lips. The pride reflecting in her eyes exploded in her words as an answer to her question.

"How dare you call me a whore? I am Mrs. Abhaya Sharma, only Mrs. she broke the silence. Sharma."

She caught my shoulders and jerked me and said with pain. "Just some time before you told that receptionist, have you forgotten?"

"You are mistaken . . . I did not mean that . . ." I told pushing her away from me.

“Don’t worry, I know that just to save yourself from the doubts of people and to save your prestige, you called me Mrs. Abhaya Sharma. You lied but I liked that,” she said and laughed.

“Yes that is right . . .” I told her rudely.

She was lost in some other world.

“It is too late. Come on, let us go to bed . . .” I told her.

“Well, will we sleep together?” She asked with a naughty smile.

“Yes, together . . .”

“Will it not spoil your character?” She taunted.

For a moment I was irritated.

“Are you annoyed?”

“No,” I said in an easy tone.

She stood before the mirror. She combed her hair and made a loose knot. She put off her sari and wore her transparent nightgown which was exposing her figure. She joined me on the bed.

I pulled her closer to and whispered in her ear: “You are looking very beautiful, untie knot of your hair and let hair spread around me.”

“You do it yourself,” she said.

My fingers played with her hair and untied the knot, her thick black hair spread out. I dug my face into her hair. The sweet pleasing fragrance was instigating my sexual feelings and my hands started playing with her body.

“Listen!” She said seriously. My hands stopped on hearing her.

She asked me, “are all the males alike?”

“I don’t understand, what do you mean?”

“All hungry for sex, all impatient for playing with the body of a woman?” She asked bitterly.

Before I could answer she questioned, “are you also like them?”

“No, not at all,” I said.

“You are not like them?” she asked and cried embracing me.

I tried to pacify her moving my fingers in her hair, wiping her tears but she did not stop and after some time resting her head on my arm slept, and I could not dare to disturb her.

I could not understand for what I brought her here. I know It was lust which compelled me to forget my character and reputation of my family. She was not my beloved. She was only a sex girl selling her body to satisfy the libido of her male. Her presence in my life and my

in her life is momentary. I must not spare her and must realize my payment enjoying her body. But she is behaving strangely. Instead of burning my fire of lust she is cooling down me.

What is she considering me? A fool or what? I am also like other males, hungry for sex. But Why I lied to her?

No, I didn't lie. What do I mean by this? Do I want to put myself in different category of males who are above sex and this materialistic world. No, not at all. It means I am just pretending to leave my impression on her of the kind of person actually I am not.

I rarely drink. She said it works as a catalyst in accelerating the sexual feelings. I was feeling that and the feeling turned in to action. I pulled her hair, kissed her lips and bit her cheeks.

She was astonished with my such behavior, gave me a pathetic look and said hurt. "I misunderstood. You are also like others."

She again cooled down me. I felt as if I was going to rape her. I was ashamed, a good man in me cursed me for my bewilderment.