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Savita Bhabhi is dead. Long live Indian hypocrisy

Divya A, TNN 19 July 2009, 05:18am IST

In her brief life and sudden death, Savita Bhabhi did much to reveal the nature of India's troubled relationship with sex. The sultry Indian housewife was an unlikely star. She came to public attention through her role in a pornographic comic strip on the Internet. She died at the hands of a Union government directive to shut off all access to the website. Savita Bhabhi, born just a year ago, was said to have created her own version of cyber sutra in the land of the Kama Sutra.

But there was much more. She was urban, good-looking, married and well-heeled. She took the lead in fulfilling her sexual fantasies, initiating all her sexcapades, be they with a salesman or the teenaged neighbour.

Within months, Savita Bhabhi's fan club had grown to phenomenal levels. She became such a phenomenon that the number of hits on her website were eagerly tracked by sections of the foreign press.

Closer home, many watched Savita Bhabhi with fascination. Patricia Oberoi, a Delhi-based sociologist, says: "To me, Savita Bhabhi was as if India, in spite of its coyness, had come of age" a woman initiates all the action here, the porn is not crude but on the verge of sophistication. India got its desi Debonnaire in Savita.

Many others felt that Savita Bhabhi was a symbol of freedom, of empowerment, of the sexuality an Indian woman can wield if allowed to escape the sham world that Indian men trap them in. Adman and TV commentator Suhel Seth says that in her birth and in her death, Savita revealed a lot about the Indian society.

"The fact that she was called 'Bhabhi' indicates a perverseness that always existed but we were in denial about. The average Indian thinks of sex more than any other species but because it has limited social sanction, it is both hidden and even more vulgar," he says.

The last days of Savita Bhabhi's controversial life were extraordinary. She appeared to be in the prime of health and popularity when the I&B ministry decided to censor the website. Savita Bhabhi's creator, Puneet Agarwal, came out in the open and started a campaign to save his baby. Till then, he had remained incognito, using the pseudonym 'Deshmukh'.

But time ran out for Savita Bhabhi. Just days ago, Agarwal declared: "Dear Savita Bhabhi supporters. It is with a heavy heart that I have to announce that I will be shutting down the Save Savita campaign and everything associated with it."

But the frisky Indian housewife had made her point. "It shows that we are a sexually repressed hypocritical society even though we have stone carvings such as Khajuraho to prove the contrary," says Seth.

Advertising executive Prahlad Kakkar says she established the gross hypocrisy of male sexuality. "The guys who killed her are the same who have stalled the women's reservation Bill in Parliament," he says.

But as with other much-loved public figures, Savita Bhabhi's virtual avatar is "officially dead" even as some people claim sightings on proxy servers.

Kakkar says she may be reborn on CDs and DVDs or as the heroine of videogames. She will be every man's fantasy. She will become a cult thing.

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