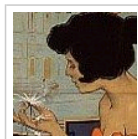


# PRESIDENT BLINK-BLINK

SALT AND PAPER

## ABOUT ME



### ROSWITHA

Here, I write about books and some other stuff I come across in my work as a journalist.

I write about footie and occasionally other sports on Treasons, Stratagems & Spoils. Most opinions expressed here are my real ones.

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MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2009

## smutty savitri

A version of this piece appeared in the December 2008 issue of [Verve Magazine](#). I'd also like to draw your attention to the current issue, the January issue, which is produced in response to the terror attacks and is counted by several other than myself as a production of some quality [I will say only that it was a labour of love and deserves to be consumed as such. The Internet layouts miss a lot of the flavour of the thing, so do grab a copy if you can]. I have a feature on Internet journalism/blogging during the attacks in the issue, which I will blog at a point in the future when I am not quite as plagued by the ordinary business of living as I am now. *Anar caluva tielyanna*, as the Eldar of First Age Beleriand would say. I hope you're all doing marvellously.

### Bhabhi Girl

Pornography does not, as a rule, appear in my email inbox. What broke through my and everyone else's spam filters earlier this year, however, was unique even for that jaded genre of entertainment. It was a series of comic book images, produced in clean lines and solid colour in the style of that staple of Indian childhood, *Amar Chitra Katha*, and it told a story almost as old as the ACK folk tales: that of the lonely housewife entertaining her male houseguests.

The housewife is Savita Bhabhi, the fictional protagonist at the centre of a storm of public attention this year. Newspapers in the UK and the United States have picked up on her immense popularity, wondering if it heralds a dawning sense of sexual candour in Indian society; men's magazines are less than discreetly jubilant about the advent of a bold new heroine; the first rumbles of government alarm are sounding in the occasional press report; on the Internet, and bloggers and writers no longer need to provide explanations to their audiences about who they are referring to when they talk of "the hot bhabhi."

So here is an interesting crossover production: this character shorthand, this quick and easy signposting of a stereotype, has somehow entered the mainstream, and is going where little porn has gone before. The popularity of the comic strips is not in itself surprising. What goes unseen in popular culture, distributed through pavement booksellers, late-night cable and illegal downloads in cybercafés, has always formed the unseen base of the iceberg. But something makes Savita Bhabhi far more visible, and far more talked about out in the open, than other works of its ilk.

One reason is mundane but vitally important: it's just much simpler to access. To know if a commodity in demand online, you only have to ask yourself if someone in India will use their creaky wireline connection and poor hardware to download it. In the X-rated business, to this day, when more and more people in other countries are dropping out of the porn consumption cycle and spending their time on Facebook, the answer is a resounding yes. Downloading a comic burns up about an order of magnitude less bandwidth than a movie clip, and what could never be forwarded in email or nestled on a pen drive can now be passed around with the insouciant ease of chapattis before a mutiny.

Another factor is the uniqueness of the medium. The advent of cinema rendered the raunchy woodcuts of Victoriana extinct; there is a great deal of time and effort expended on drawing dirty books that produces much lower returns than an investment in a shuttered room with a camera, an appropriate mise-en-scène and an hour. Comic-book pornography is nothing new in countries with different approaches to sexuality and obscenity law (and, I dare say, to comics), but isn't a part of the porn mainstream in India.

Then also, to consider a Savita Bhabhi comic, as a woman, is to bridge the divide between pictures and the written word that academics have long talked of as a gender issue: that women respond rather less to visual stimuli and rather more to textual ones – like the souped-up 'mature' Mills & Boon novels – than men. It also eliminates one very serious feminist concern about the means of production: questions of consent and compensation aren't relevant to a cartoon.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about these comics is their language. Rooted in the conventions of very Indian iconography and genre codes, the characters speak in English. It is a garbled, misspelt English, reliant on Hindi translations and phonetics, full of the flavour of the third or fourth language of the small-town, high-school educated Indian, the kind of men and women who are increasingly finding voices and recognisable

faces in our advertisements and television programming. The gaucherie of Savita Bhabhi's speech bubbles has kept certain kinds of readers entertained on more than one level, and are so over the top – an especially memorable panel involves characters chanting the word "fak" in the throes of pleasure – that the premise of the comics sometimes tips over into a surreal irony, seeming like the work of a talented and very classist humourist.

Savita Bhabhi does not spring from the nether parts of the Internet fully formed. The comics are produced in serial format – another hark back to the nineteenth century – by a dedicated team of designers and writers who work at putting out one page a day of a thirty-page 'episode' in the sultry afternoons of their protagonist, leaving the most explicit art to appear towards the end of the month on their simple but sophisticated website. There is a quasi-journalistic zeal to their method. On their website, the team, known only by their Internet nicknames, declare deadpan that their "positions" on the Savita Bhabhi team are all "honorary and voluntary," and story announcements are interspersed with earnest calls for scriptwriters, designers and web programmers.

Their protagonist is a figure in the mould of the "aunty" of a certain sort of fantasy, much-married, dark-haired and ample of breast. In a convenient compromise, she is also young and lissome, with a belly as flat as a superheroine's. The episodes rarely veer off the beaten path of the genre's narrative: an assortment of men in nominally submissive roles (adolescent cricketers who have broken a window, travelling salesmen) ring Savita Bhabhi's doorbell and end up being treated real friendly-like by the courteous and amiable matron with a penchant for leaving the bathroom door unlocked as she changes clothes.

The act of consuming these narratives is a thrill on several levels. There is the forbidden act of adultery embedded in the larger context of getting a forbidden kick out of a forbidden product. All of these combine to make the Savita Bhabhi stories an accomplishment in their genre. Not for me, though. I am more impressed by the dissemination of the Savita Bhabhi stories, and their normalisation in parts of the media, than I am by the comics themselves. There is something almost touching about the painstaking detail that goes into drawing and producing these works. But there is nothing bold or beautiful or, once you scratch the surface, any more appealing to an audience looking for something other than titillation. The comics advance no particular notions of sexual liberation or female freedom. And like most porn produced by men for men, they're not much use to girls. Bring her to life, and Savita Bhabhi would be an unremarked series of clips knocking about in the underbelly of the Internet's P2P programs and virus-ridden web pages. It's in her two-dimensionality that she she manages truly to escape censure, and become part of the popular.

POSTED BY ROSWITHA AT 5:21:00 PM

LABELS: [FAKE JOURNALIST](#), [VERVE](#)

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## 7 COMMENTS:



**sudo.inttelecual** Jan 29, 2009 05:18 PM

good

wl mus read sv

[Reply](#)



**Scherezade** Apr 13, 2009 12:58 AM

There is something very unsettling about her sindoor and mangalsutra when she is stark naked splayed out.  
Ouch!

[Reply](#)



**AMIT** Apr 18, 2009 07:06 AM

Pornography has rise very much this days.

[Boise real estate](#)

[Reply](#)



**Toothlesswink** May 16, 2009 11:45 PM

Awesome write!

[Reply](#)



**funbolly&amp;hollywood4u** Jun 20, 2009 07:45 AM

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Per-Click Program - Get paid for each click:

Pay per click program is the simplest way to start earning. We track who you refer and give you up to \$1.00 per each unique visitor per day (counted by unique IP address).

To promote use of this programme, simply use this url:  
<http://adultfriendfinder.com/go/g1029931-brk>

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**Bijoy** Sep 22, 2009 12:56 AM

Dear roswitha

Happy onam to you. we are a group of students from cochin who are currently building a web portal on kerala. in which we wish to include a kerala blog roll with links to blogs maintained by malayali's or blogs on kerala.

you could find our site here: <http://enchantedkerala.org>

the site is currently being constructed and will be finished by 1st of Oct 2009.

we wish to include your blog located here

<http://roswitha.blogspot.com/>

we'll also have a feed fetcher which updates the recently updated blogs from among the listed blogs thus generating traffic to your recently posted entries.

If you are interested in listing your site in our blog roll; kindly include a link to our site in your blog in the prescribed format and send us a reply to [enchantedkerala.org@gmail.com](mailto:enchantedkerala.org@gmail.com) and we'll add your blog immediatly.

pls use the following format to link to us

**Kerala**

Write Back To me Over here [bijoy20313@gmail.com](mailto:bijoy20313@gmail.com)

hoping to hear from you soon.

warm regards

Biby Cletus

[Reply](#)



**Bijoy** Oct 26, 2009 10:21 AM

Dear Sir/Madam

We are a group of youngsters from cochin who are currently doing a website on kerala. which we plan to make the most informative resource available. our website is <http://enchantedkerala.org>.

you could find more about us and our project here: <http://enchantedkerala.org/about-us.php>

we came across your website:<http://roswitha.blogspot.com/>

We found your website interesting and noted that the content in your webpage and ours could complement each other. So we kindly request you to have a look at our website and provide a link to it if you think its worth linking to. Ofcourse we'll reciprocate by adding a link to your webpage from ours.

as you can see ours is a collaborative venture wherein many people from different walks of life participate. we also welcome you to be a part of our site, you could help the project by writing articles, providing photos and videos, subscribing to our content and also by recommending it to your friends and relatives.

pls free to contact me for any further clarification needed or even if its just to say hi.

warm regards

For Enchanting Kerala

Bibbi Cletus

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