

# LATERALVIEW

BY PALASH KRISHNA MEHROTRA

## Of Sperm, Savita Bhabhi and Rock e' Roll



**I**T'S TRICKLE BUT A STEADY ONE. WHAT STARTED with Bodhi Tree continues – a very young tradition of writing songs in the local idiom about everyday realities. The latest in this line is Shor Bazaar, a funky Mumbai six-piece. Their single 'Savita Bhabhi,' a sharp-witted, fluently bilingual take on

Indian men and online porn, has been doing the rounds of the internet for about six months now.

Shor Bazaar's been around since 2007. Their story is the story of many indie bands, of attempting to walk the tightrope between musical and lyrical honesty, and the need to put food on the table every month in market conditions which remain incredibly hostile to new original music. SB made music fulltime through 2008 until their collective savings ran out and the members were forced to return to their day jobs in advertising and IT.

The band's name is the outcome of an opinionated discussion the band members had in a shady Chinese joint in 2007. "Back then," says Joy (guitars), "a lot of Bollywood tunes were rip-offs, so we started calling Bollywood Chor Bazaar. From that came Shor Bazaar: it really captured our sound – we use a lot of fuzz and distortion and can be very loud at times – and what we stood for."

'Savita Bhabhi,' recorded at Mumbai's Empire Studios, is their first release. From Hyderabad to Srinagar, it's become their most-requested song during gigs. And surprisingly, for a song about men's sexual frustration, it's the band's women fans that scream for it most.

The lyrics speak of a young man who wants to get laid but can't because in the new India money talks and he doesn't have any, "Straight forward si baat/Jab bhi laundon ki jamaat/Sharam aur sperm ki baatein/Saari saari raat/Ladka ek dum ordinary/Simply looking for a naari/Ke ye koshish bekaar!/Bekaar bina car!/Hai jo car and money/They help get honey beta/Dhan-dhan Gopal/Nahin galni teri daal/Yahan ka tu native – society conservative!" Left with no option he goes online and bumps into Savita Bhabhi: "Aise in halaat mein/Majboori ke saath mein/Best to go online/Leke apne haath mein."

Says Joy, "The Savita Bhabhi site got banned around the time we finished recording the song. It was meant as social comment initially but after they killed the site it ended up becoming a tribute."

The band says they are just having a laugh at Indian society but dark humour underlies their playful banter, often turning their songs into uncompromising social commentary. 'School', for example, is not just about schoolyard bullies but also about corrupt Indian politicians.

Singing in Hindi was a conscious decision. JD, the band's songwriter, is most comfortable writing in Hindi and grew up listening to film songs of the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies. It also enables the band to get their music across to a wider audience.

Still, the mainstream is not interested because, as Joy puts it, "They simply don't get it." While agreeing that there are more and more songs like 'Savita Bhabhi,' 'Kaatil Sardar' and 'GMD' around, Joy feels they will remain under the radar, at least for some time to come, "If we cut an album, the record company will probably ask us

to drop Savita Bhabni. There are too many issues.

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*The writer is the author of *Eunuch Park* and the editor of *Recess: The Penguin Book of Schooldays**