

Click here...

here...



NEWS | OPINION | ENVIRONMENT | SPORT | LIFE & STYLE | ARTS & ENTS | TRAVEL | MONEY | INDYBEST | BLOGS | STUDENT

UK | World | Business | People | Science | Media | Education | Obituaries | Diary | Corrections



Hot Topics | Welfare | Barclays | Syria | Euro | NHS

News > World > Asia

Cyber Sutra: India's online eroticism

Now known for strict conservatism, India was the birthplace of erotica, famed for its sensual literature and carvings. Andrew Buncombe looks at a modern expression of an ancient urge.

THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2008

Tweet PRINT | EMAIL | A A A

- Latest in Asia**
- How bright lights of Pattaya seduced Iran's bungling Bangkok bombers
- Tycoon's illegal 'underground palace' buries his hopes of ruling Hong Kong
- New Maldives leader agrees to poll
- Iranians were 'plotting to attack' Israeli diplomats in Bangkok
- Maldives: Leader gives coalition ultimatum
- New North Korean leader following in his father's goose steps
- China likely to overtake India as biggest market
- British police assist Thai murder inquiry
- Maldives leader agrees to early election
- 15 killed in China mine accident



VIEW GALLERY

India's cultural gifts to the world include the Kama Sutra and the sexually charged carvings that lure and intrigue tourists at Khajuraho. But the country's reputation today is as a much more conservative, buttoned-up society where couples risk opprobrium even for something as chaste as daring to hold hands in public.

Suggested Topics

- Indian Languages
- Hinduism
- Bollywood
- Publishing

Little surprise then, perhaps, at the roaring success of 21st century India's most recent contribution to the world of eroticism. The country's first online pornographic comic book strip is luring tens of thousands of internet viewers, who are logging on for a daily dose of stimulation and humour courtesy of the buxom Savita Bhabhi.

Savita Bhabhi is a busty and artfully drawn Indian housewife who loves her husband, Ashok Patel, but gets bored during the long days she spends alone at home while he is busy at the office. The full colour cartoons detail her fun-filled adventures with everyone from the door-to-door lingerie salesman ("Can you help me please... The hook is stuck.") to two energetic young men who lose their cricket ball in her garden and a hunky cousin visiting from the US. In every episode, Savita's bountiful charms and washboard-flat abdomen ensure she always snares her target.

But just who are the creators of Savita Bhabhi? The website of the full-colour cartoons, which appear in English and a number of Indian languages, including Marathi, Tamil and Malayalam, says the cartoons are the work of the Indian Porn

Search bar with 'Go' button and links for Advanced Search, Day in a page, Article archive

Most Viewed | Most Commented | Most Shared

- Pete Doherty: I was a bit unhinged
- The Sun on Sunday to launch soon, says Rupert Murdoch
- Vatican told to pay taxes as Italy tackles budget crisis
- Greeks rage at erosion of sovereignty while leaders haggle over deal
- Prehistoric cybermen? Sardinia's lost warriors rise from the dust
- Facebook hacker is jailed for eight months
- Blizzards to batter UK again
- WikiLeaks takes aim at an unlikely new victim: Unesco
- Prehistoric cybermen? Sardinia's lost warriors rise from the dust
- Employers reject jobs scheme that's all work and no pay
- Robert Fisk: I've lost a good, brave, honourable friend
- Vatican told to pay taxes as Italy tackles budget crisis
- Administrators set to meet with Rangers squad
- Pete Doherty: I was a bit unhinged
- 'My 10 days at an Eton summer school was a real shock to the system'
- Spotify: 1 million plays, £108 return
- The artist vandalising advertising with poetry



On Facebook Sign Up Create an account or log in to see what your friends are doing.

Click here... here... Cli

Empire, which has so far declined attempts by local journalists to find out more about its increasingly popular housewife. It also failed to respond to a series of emailed questions from The Independent.

On the homepage and an online forum in which they interact with Savita's army of fans, the individuals involved use only screen names. "Deshmukh" is the site administrator and the writer of the storylines, based – viewers are informed – on his "hot" real-life companion. In turn, the cartoons are drawn by "Dexta" and "Mad". Given the fantastical nature of the stories and the Lara Croft-like dimensions of the dark-haired, doe-eyed Savita, one has to presume that the creators are men. Either that or resourceful teenagers.

Yet, in addition to the team's refusal to speak, even anonymously, about their creation, there are other curious things about Savita's authors.

Not only do they use plenty of American slang but on the online forum they reveal they do not speak Hindi. At the same time, the cartoon characters and the settings are very Indian. Bhabhi is Hindi for sister-in-law, and in northern India in particular there is a long tradition in popular culture of flirtation between a man and his elder brother's wife. Could it be that the creators are Indians who moved overseas and have now returned to their mother country hoping to cash in with their saucy idea?

"I do think that India was waiting for some mature and contemporary pornography," said Patricia Oberoi, a Delhi-based sociologist and editor of Family, Kinship and Marriage in India. "And this is certainly Indian. It has a very Indian touch. A number of the themes are no doubt universal but the settings are very Indian. And in India there is this tradition of authorised flirtation between a man and his sister-in-law."

The cartoons about Savita and her late-home-from-the-office husband began appearing in March. Since then, largely by word of mouth, the site appears to have attracted up to 30,000 registered users. In true comic strip style, every day a new cartoon is posted by the administrators as the month-long story steadily builds to a climax. The administrators say they are keen to be contacted by viewers with script ideas to contribute, and by people who can translate the cartoons into other regional Indian languages.

Many commentators believe that Savita – who in true Hindu style is drawn complete with a traditional red dot or bindi on her forehead – is more about titillation than hardcore stimulation, and point out the intentionally ironic tone of the cartoons, even if the comments of some of the forum users and the real-life photographs they eagerly post would not merit such a description.

For all its history as a birthplace of some of eroticism's most famous works – the Kama Sutra dates back perhaps 2,000 years and includes chapters not just on sexual positions but also on how to deal with lack of sexual energy, while countless statues and carvings in southern India feature bare-breasted people and even naked Hindu deities – modern India remains a country seemingly ill at ease with sex and relationships.

Gone is the sensuality contained in traditional Indian art, dance and literature, and the enforced conservatism at times seems suffocating. The overwhelming majority of people's marriages are still arranged by their parents – though that may have been the case in centuries past – and a woman is still expected to be a virgin on her wedding night. So-called honour killings, when family members murder a woman who dares to marry outside her caste or tribe, remain common.

Some of those attitudes may be slowly changing, at least in some parts of urbanised, educated India. While mainstream Bollywood films remain remarkably chaste (the majority of actors and actresses refuse even to kiss on screen for fear that it will damage their reputations) Indian audiences are getting used to seeing a lot more flesh than ever before. Indeed,

Facebook social plugin

From the blogs



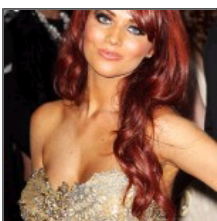
Why David Cameron owes unemployed single mothers an apology

How would you describe an unemployed single mother, with moderate depression, who can't afford new s...



Can we shop our way out of a recession?

The idea that a lot of shopping translates into a healthy economy is dubious. On the three prior oc...



How social networking made public vanity acceptable

When did it become acceptable to brag about oneself publicly?



'French beer is unknown. We must change that'

Click here...

Click here...

SPONSORED FEATURES

Career Services

Jobseekers Recruiters

Searching for a new career?

Upload your CV and search hundreds of jobs to find your next role only at iJobs

Search jobs

Job Vacancies to fill?

Excellent launch rates and a brand new audience, only at iJobs

Find out more

DAY IN A PAGE

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

18 February 2012 Go

Stereotypes die hard. 'The Very Hungry Frenchman', the BBC's current television series following che...

many of the latest music videos are all but indistinguishable from a US rap music production.

Publishing too, is seeing a change, with the growth of so-called Indian chick-lit that could hardly be described as pornography but which is still far more frank and forthcoming than lots of other genres. Last month saw the publication of *Almost Single*, the first work by Advaita Kala, a confessional-blogger-turned-novelist. Her publishers went out of their way to promote the story of a single young professional woman's experiences in Delhi as decadent and daring.

Urvashi Butalia, a feminist writer and publisher, said comic strips and graphic novels were an increasingly important part of English-language publishing in India. She also believed the success of the Savita Bhabhi project mirrored a shift in parts of Indian society towards a more progressive sensibility. "Bollywood is increasingly focussing on bodies, male and female, and there is an increasing acceptance of sexuality," she said. "Also, Mills and Boon, which is mildly pornographic, is coming to India in a very big way."

But other commentators believe the inspiration to create *Savita* must, at least in part, be a result of India's continued repressive atmosphere.

Sarnath Banerjee, a graphic novelist who is currently working on a book of stories about sexuality in India, said that writing pornography required a number of different skills. "Writing good pornography, or erotica, needs rigour and an understanding of humanity. You are an anthropologist looking at socio-psychology," he told the news magazine *Tehelka*, which recently devoted a lengthy feature to *Savita*.

"You have to be repressed to write good pornography. For me, I was fascinated when I saw these prostitutes in Amsterdam, coming as I did from the usual anal middle class and its protected environment, where sexy was Ms Peters, the geography teacher."

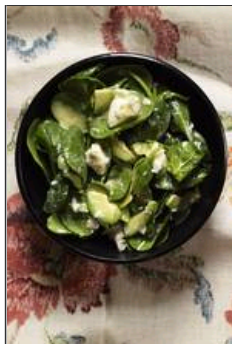
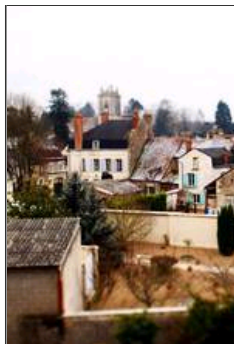
[Tweet](#)

Comments

[MORE IN ASIA »](#)

Independent Comment

Please enable JavaScript to view the [comments powered by Disqus](#). [blog comments powered by Disqus](#)



The Independent
2 Derry Street London W8 5TT
© independent.co.uk

[Terms & Policies](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Code of Conduct](#)
[Email newsletter](#)
[RSS](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Syndication](#)

[Subscriptions](#)
[Work for us](#)
[Evening Standard](#)
[Homes & Property](#)
[iJobs](#)
[Advertising Guide](#)

[Novaya Gazeta \(English\)](#)
[The Journalism Foundation](#)

[Advanced Search](#) | [Day in a page](#) | [Article archive](#)

© independent.co.uk