

CHAHAT KA RANG

THE COLOUR OF DESIRE

By Harry Jivenmukta

our special place was
quite unique.
one hundred and twenty three
paces up the road,
my paces,
bigger than yours.
on the right hand
side there was a
path still discernable
amongst the growth
of weeds.
along the path for
twenty three steps
and then suddenly
in front, directly,
the small abandoned
shiva temple.
abandoned, why
no-one knows the reason.
you can walk all around
the temple.
behind are three
pink blossom trees
that cover the earth
in thick rich carpets
of perfume and colour.
only ten paces on
the right again
and there is the
little stream that
makes its way down
into the village.
the strip of life that
quenches thirsts
washes clothes

and washes away the
waste of human life.
that special place which
became our kingdom.

and the colours of
desire were all there.
the virgin white of the
temple walls,
the dark shadows inside.
the pink blossoms
on the trees.
the green of plants
all around.
the changing colours
of the stream water,
now blue, now brown
now without colour.
and your colours.
the pink of your
lips and nipples.
the black of your hair and eyes.
the white creaminess
of your skin
and the colour of all your changing
moods in passion.

at first you were so shy
to cover the 123 of
my paces.
to you it might as well
have been another country.
you tried all sorts of things
to deny the small
journey of steps.

you agreed that we
needed somewhere for
love
but couldn't envisage
anywhere outside
the walls of your garden.
i told you that the
world was very big
and you agreed but
told me that your
heart was only small
fluttering with confusion.

i told you that it was
alright to travel only
those few paces, and you
agreed but insisted
it was too far for you.
too far for you, or
too far for your father,
your upbringing, your
embarrassment?
we could not even snatch
a kiss at your window,
me reaching up,
you tumbling your hair
down, and resisting
at the thought of
your father's face.
i told you how thirsty
i was, and you
agreed that it was cruel
to deny me a kiss,
a small touch.
in circles we wandered

around and around
the same discussion.
yes, you said but...
but...but...you said.
no i said. no buts.
in the end i suffered
so much pain whilst
you hid your needs
i don't even know
where or how.
i don't know what to do
you said.
what do lovers do?
i said i didn't
really know
but we would just
see, let it happen,
hold hands, i suppose
and kiss.
then what? how?
don't think about it
i said, just wait and
see.
my body, you said,
look at it.
i looked, and looked,
the curves, the hollows,
the points, the
colours, the beauty,
the desire, the
madness.
what will you do? you asked.
i was silent.
what could i do with it?
the magic, the softness.

what if someone finds out?
you asked.
what if they don't?
i asked
and it went on
round and round.
all i know, i said
is that lovers should
be alone.
it is right.
you asked me
describe the place.
well, i started,
it is 123 paces up the
road from your gate.
on the right there is
a little overgrown path.
it is overgrown because
no-one uses it.
you see? i asked.
go on, you insisted.
23 steps along the path
there is a temple,
a shiva temple.
it isn't my religion
you said.
it doesn't matter
i retorted.
i cannot go to a hindu temple.
you were determined.
it doesn't matter
i said, and anyway
it is deserted,
no-one prays there
anymore.

not convinced you asked
me to continue.
behind the temple there
are some pink blossom
trees
and on the ground it
is ankle deep in
beautiful flowers and
scents.
that sounds nice, you said.
it is more than nice.
we can sit there
together
you know the stream
that comes down into
the village?
well it comes past there.
we can have clear
pure water to drink.
it sounds lovely, you said.
but i have never been
out of these walls
on my own.
you won't be on your
own, i began....
my father would
kill me and you.
i don't care, i insisted.
anyway we will be
careful and only
go when your father
is out and your
servants are hiding
from the heat of the day.
in the end i gave up.

i thought we would
never go because
she was so shy,
frightened.
i went there alone
every day
and never saw anyone
else or hear any
unnatural sounds.
the temple was silent
and the trees only
rustled their leaves
lightly in the breeze.
the stream babbled
but only when i was
standing right by it.

everything has its season
and one day when
your father was out and
away for many days
you agreed to walk
123 steps with me.
come at 8pm, you said
lowering your voice in
conspiracy.
i will walk but only
as long as i want to.
i might not go there at
all.
alright, i said.
i would have agreed
to anything just to
get her to turn her
ankle out on to the

road
the day went very very
slowly.
the sun sets at about 7
and at eight it is
inky dark.
but i can always see
i could get there blindfolded.
there was a moon, though,
large, and hanging
low in the sky
trying to fall down
under its own weight.
i'm here, you called
very lightly
as i nearly passed you
on the way to your
window.
you held my hand.
i was surprised
but kept quiet.
follow me and step
where i step, i said.
at the gate to your house
you hardly paused
then stepped out on to the
road with me.
we kept to shadows
and walked silently
for a while.
how many paces left,
you asked, whispering
and agitated.
not many, i lied.
i hadn't counted and anyway

with her the paces were
shorter.

how many paces left,
again after only a
few seconds.

keep walking, i said,
my hand sweating,
curled around her small
and innocent one.

it's too far, she stopped.
no! no! just a bit
further.

i can't.

you have come nearly all
the way, i hissed and
taking the initiative
pulled her along.

i would never have
come if i thought it
was this far, she
complained.

i stopped suddenly
and pressed her
into the shadow of trees.

someone's coming down the
road, i whispered.

you pressed yourself
behind me,
shaking with trepidation.

i was in heaven as i
felt your body and your
perfume envelop me.

the person walked by,
absorbed in a mantra
to saraswati devi.

i could have stood there
forever, feeling your
breathing rising and
falling against my body.
we must go back, you
insisted, almost in tears.
alright i agreed and
turning to you i held
your face next to mine
and watched your
moonlit features
hypnotise me.
you also gazed
and held your breath.
our lips touched and
then the spell was broken
as you turned away
and implored me to
return you to your home.
at your gate you paused
then told me i should
go home.
why? i asked.
what do you mean? you asked.
why can't i come and
stand at your window
with you for a while?
then i kissed her again,
this time holding her
so she couldn't turn away.
why did you do it?
she wanted to know.
that's what lovers do,
didn't you like it?
i asked.

no. i mean yes i
mean no. don't. don't.
she was confused.
that's what lovers do
i repeated.
she looked at me
bewildered and i
not knowing what else
to do
gazed back at her.
chandi, i said
chandi, chandi,
you are so beautiful,
your lips are so sweet,
your eyes so pure
and innocent.
kiss me, i asked.
she didn't move
so i kissed her,
longer.
she closed her eyes.
she tasted so sweet.
she shivered with love.
she glowed in the moonlight.
she went inside.
i went home.
the next time i saw her
we both started
speaking at the same time.
no! i said
it wasn't wrong,
we just didn't do
it properly.
first, i didn't count
the steps.

second, it was dark.
even if we had got there
we wouldn't have seen
anything.
third, you are so nervous.
this last comment
silenced us both
as if i had
uttered something
obscene.
if i am so nervous
why are you interested
at all? it stung.
look, i said,
listen to my plan.
we should go at just
after noon because
it is the best time.
there's no-one about.
everyone's keeping out
of the sun.
believe me.
and why, she asked
did you kiss me?
because that's what
lovers do. i was flabbergasted.
three times, she added.
because i love you,
i reiterated for the
thousandth time.
at least it felt like it.
so, if we go at about
2 o'clock, we'll meet
no-one on the way
and we will see all

there is to see. and
didn't you like it
when i kissed you?
i blushed.
she blushed.
she didn't answer.
today at 2pm then
i decided.
no, not today, she said,
tomorrow.
agreed. i sounded
very formal even
to myself.
she busied herself
with other things
for the rest
of the day.

when i saw her at 2pm
i knew we were
not going anywhere.
she was looking nervous
and apologetic,
her eyes pleading
for me to be understanding.
then what? i asked.
go to my room, i'll
come in a few minutes.
i had been to her room
before, to work on
odd jobs, but never
alone with her there.
i was surprised
but didn't argue.
the house was quiet

and i slipped into her
room and stood
behind the door
so no-one passing
might see.
this was dangerous
territory.
the room was rectangular
with the door in the
short side and
her window opposite.
just a big bed
some drawers and
a fancy chair
with an intricately
carved backrest.
i waited, hardly breathed.
this was her room
with her perfume.
she came in silently
and simply sat at
the edge of her bed
her eyes were cast
down to the floor
and her hands held
in her lap.
we just stayed like that
trying in our own way
to come to terms with
the opportunity,
the fear, the unknown.
eventually she looked
up with vague
eyes, difficult to
discern any intentions.

chellaya, she whispered,
do you want to sit down?
my throat was so dry,
like a desert,
i couldn't get a
word out.
she touched the
bed covers next to her.
i obediently went
and sat down,
a respectable distance
apart.
i can't do it, she began.
it's too far and if
someone found out
i would be in trouble.
it's the shame that
my father will have
to face. you know
how it would be.
then what? what can
we do? i asked.
chellaya, can't you
bring some of your
blossoms here, to me,
here, to this room?
i thought then, that
something was possible.
she was happy to have
me in her room.
i would bring my
secret kingdom to her.
yes, i said, i could.
she half turned to
look at me, and

we sat, holding hands
and gazing.
a kiss? i asked.
just one? she questioned.
i don't know, i replied.
no, not just one.
we kissed ever so
lightly, our lips
hardly touching.
chellaya, she asked,
do you really love me?
chandi, you have no idea
how much.
wait here, i instructed,
and rushed out of
the room.
i ran the 123 paces
and 23 paces and
past the shiva temple.
i gathered up handfuls
of pink blossoms
and made a bag
out of my shirt front
by holding it up.
i returned looking silly.
if someone saw me
with these blossoms
gathered up in front
like a girl out
collecting things for
her pot pourri....
but no-one saw me
and i entered her room.
she was still sitting
in the same place,

waiting.
sit on the floor, i said,
over there against the wall.
she did as i asked
a little smile playing
in the corner of her mouth.
i stood over her and
holding my shirt up with
one hand, collected
a handful of blossoms
in the other.
close your eyes, i said.
she did and held her
face up to mine.
i showered the blossoms
on her head, her hair
her eyes, her nose,
her mouth, her chin.
they fell gently down
into her lap and
all around her on
the floor.
she didn't open her eyes.
i crouched down and
kissed one blossom
from her face, then
another.
open your eyes.
she did and looked
all around her and
in her lap.
put your head on my
lap, she said.
i lay down and
had blossoms for a cushion

in her lap.
she collected blossoms
from all around her
and showered me.
she bent over me
and let her hair
caress my face.
she kissed me,
the first time she
had done it herself.
we sat on the bed
again, after she
had carefully collected
all the blossoms and
piled them at the top corner
of her mattress.
her eyes were pools
of longing and i
gently eased her backwards
until she lay feet
dangling, on her back.
as i kissed her
i brushed her breasts
with my hand and
she arched
just slightly to
meet my touch.
three clips at the
side kept her
covered.
i unclipped slowly
deliberately
as she acquiesced
and offered herself
to me.

her nipples were tiny,
pink, upthrust, hard.
her breasts were so soft
so milky white.
i took a handful of
blossoms and spread
them over her.
her nipples looked out,
peeping through.
we kissed then
and i lowered my
mouth to her breasts.
i took up a blossom in
my teeth and, rising,
dropped it
into her mouth.
your breasts, i began,
but she blushed with
shame and confusion.
she hid her face in
her hands and let me
suck her nipples.
biting, sucking, licking
around, over, on,
breathing hard,
her little heart racing,
i could hear, her
eyes blazing and dying,
crazy and confused
at peace, now
at war within.
we just lay next to
each other after that,
feet dangling.
somehow, as long as

our feet dangled
we were not in bed
together.
it was still alright.
just love not sex.
she covered herself up
and gazed at me.
i love you, i said.
she closed her eyes.

the next day at 2pm
i arrived with a small
container of water
from the stream.
chandi, from my kingdom
i bring you fresh, cool
spring water.
she got a cup.
i poured the water
and she raised it
to her lips.
i stopped her.
no, my chandi,
i will hold the cup.
she handed it to me
and i raised it to her
lips.
she drank just a little
and smiled at me.
she gave me a drink
after that.
i sprinkled some in
her hair and it
trickled down
her front and back.

she was surprised
by the cool drops
streaming down her
back.

i licked the drops
from her face,
her chin,
her neck.

i turned her around
and ran my tongue
down her back.

she took her top off
herself this time.

i lay her down and
sprinkled droplets on
her breasts.

she shuddered in
ecstasy as i licked them off.

days later,
at the shiva temple
i found a small
silver container.
inside, some sindoor.
for you chandi, i said.
what is it? she mused.
sindoor.

explain.
well, i started,
when a woman is
married she puts
her thumb in it and
then brushes it into
the centre parting
of her hair.

the bright red can be
seen by all.
she is telling the world
that she belongs to someone,
that she wants it to be
known.

chandi stood in front
of her mirror and
took the small container
from the table.

after looking for a long time
into her own features
she put her thumb
into the red powder
and raised it to her
hair.

i am yours now, she simply said
as she ran
her thumb
along her hair parting,
leaving a red streak
of powder.

i belong to you.
but it's not your religion,
i reminded her.
you are my religion
chellaya.
she devastated me.

the next day i took
my mother's bindi paste.
you have to put it on
your forehead.
why? she asked.
well, it's a special paste

that stops a woman from
getting spiritual energy
for herself.

it means that she will
get everything from her
husband.

it means she is nothing
without him.

i am already yours, she said.

it is my religion, i replied.

she took it and smeared
her forehead.

i laughed so much.

why? chellaya! tell me!

i couldn't stop laughing.

you're supposed to put
one finger in the paste

and learn to press

just right, so

it makes a circle

on your forehead.

she stood in front of
the mirror and laughed

as well at the

smear across her forehead.

i will practice, she said.

am i yours now? she asked.

i am yours, i replied,

but for you to be mine

you must visit my

kingdom just once.

why?

because it is a shiva temple

and you must marry shiva

before you marry me.

why? she insisted.
it's not even my religion.
but you said i was your
religion.
it has to be done right.
tell me, she said,
as we kissed and
i ran my hands over
her body and down
her thighs.
when i was a boy
i saw the whole thing.
i will tell you what
i remember.
the girl who is going
to be married
has to visit a shiva
temple.
first she has to lay down
and spread her legs.
someone looks to see
what's there.
the priest? she was
incredulous.
no, the women, i replied.
who will look at me?
she asked.
well..., i was embarrassed,
i suppose it will be me.
she opened her mouth
to say something
the closed it again.
go on, she said.
then the girl has to
go into the temple

alone,
and say some mantras.
she has to stand
with her legs apart
and lower herself onto
the lingam.
until it goes in and
she bleeds.
i don't understand.
she was desperate.
it means, i said
quickly,
that the girl has sex
with shiva first.
she belongs to him first
and then she can
go to her husband.
she blushed furiously
at the word sex and
the pictures in her mind.
she turned away and
curled up in
shame.
i couldn't get her
to face me and
went home in the
end
after kissing her
back and hair.

the next day when i went
she obediently stood
in front of the mirror
and applied the
sindoor and bindi.

but she was quiet.
i didn't say anything.
we sat on the edge
of the bed and
i kissed her.
she still blushed
but said nothing.
do you want some
more blossoms?
i asked
no, she said quietly.
stream water?
no, she answered.
can i kiss your breasts?
these type of questions
always made her
blush
and usually
made her cross in a
loving sort of way.
she just undid her
top and offered them
to me.
i enjoyed them
immensely.
but even with such
a treat before me
i had some misgivings
about her silence.
she moaned through
her silence
and her eyes betrayed
her badly.
the lust, the longing,
was obvious.

chellaya, she asked
after such a long time
of silence.

yes, i answered.

do you want to look...?

do you want to look...?

what? i asked as she

stuttered and

stammered in confusion.

do you want to look...?

unable to finish she

just pointed between

her legs.

my legs turned to jelly.

of course i wanted to look!

of course!

i controlled myself.

chandi, you don't

have to if you

don't want.

i was magnanimous

but hoped anyway.

i am yours, she said.

you can if you want to.

of course i wanted to

but she had left

it open,

so we both just sat,

i staring at her

sex

imagining.

she bare breasted

blushing silently.

i kissed her so much

to try to soften

her
to try to get her
to smile.
but i didn't look,
couldn't unless she
smiled at me.
her breasts were so
beautiful, enough
for me,
for now.

chellaya, she said,
i want to ask you
some questions.
alright, i said.
i don't want you to smile
or laugh.
just answer.
and just answer
what i ask.
alright, i agreed,
getting a bit suspicious
at all the conditions.
right the, she said,
describe the shiva temple.
it is about four paces wide
and four paces long.
it has a low entrance
that you have to bend
down to enter.
it is painted white
and has a cone on
top.
and inside?
it is dark, there is

only the light from
the entrance, no windows
and it is painted
white inside as well.
opposite the entrance
there is a small
shrine against the wall.
there is a small
shiva statue and
a place to burn incense.
and what about
the lingam?
it is smooth,
in the middle of
the temple about
as high as my knee
from the ground.
this was difficult for her.
describe it more, she
asked.
it is about as high
as my knee.
it is round and long
about as thick as
my thumb at the
top
and as thick as
my wrist at the bottom.
it is made of stone
and is smooth.
at the bottom all
round it is a
gutter, to collect....
i paused.
go on.

to collect blood or
other liquids.
she was quiet but
disturbed by the thought.
and why should i marry
shiva first? she asked.
it is the way, i
answered simply.
but why? she insisted.
because we are human
and shiva is a god.
gods care for people.
we are so small.
god is so big.
i don't know...
it has always been
this way.
will i have two husbands?
no, i will be your
husband.
shiva is your god.
what if i don't...can't?
then nothing.
you don't have to
but....
what?
but...you will only
be partly married.
the women who don't
observe the tradition
are looked upon differently.
will you stop loving me
if i don't?
no, i wont.
it doesn't matter,

it isn't your religion
in any case.
yes it is
because i am yours.
i was confused.
she always made things
seem so difficult.
all i wanted to do
was to kiss her and
hold her and
feel her all over.
i didn't want to
think about the why,
the what, the point
of it all.
i will do it, she said,
for you, because
you love me so much.
you would never ask
me otherwise.