

In Custody – a synopsis of a film and its parallels with my life.

I want to record the details of a film I saw recently because it has impacted upon me greatly and changed the way I live.

It's in Hindi and Urdu with English subtitles. A newspaper asks a professor of Hindi to visit an ageing poet who specialises in writing Urdu poetry. This poet has fallen out of sight of the public world. The professor goes to the poet's home town and finds his home by asking lots of people on the way. A woman opens the door into a courtyard. She is abrasive and we find out that she is the poet's first wife, replaced recently by another, (a former prostitute), because she couldn't conceive a child for the poet. The professor is directed upstairs by way of an outside stone stairway.

Entering the darkened room, the professor finds the famous poet lying on a big bed. The poet is overweight and later tells the professor that he is 'riddled with disease'. He dismisses the professor's request for an interview telling him that no-one reads poetry any more and no-one really cares about the creative arts.

Over a short time we learn how the poet spends his day.

He gets up in the early afternoon, usually when four or five hangers-on turn up at his room. They always order Biryani from someone outside; neither of his wives will cook for his friends. At the same time they order bottles of whisky, although the poet says he prefers rum with his Biryani. Once everyone has eaten and drunk to excess, the afternoon and evening is spent listening to the poet reciting some of his existing poetry, or thinking up new lines, to the delight of the hangers-on. His wives hate this daily routine and tell the poet that he is useless and a waste of time.

To really emphasise the point, the director sets up a scene that leaves nothing to the imagination. As the poet staggers into his second wife's

room to see his young son, he falls over in a drunken state and vomits on the floor. The young wife, as well as spitting hateful words at him, grabs a handful of sheets with poetry written on them and throws them at him saying, 'clean the vomit from my floor yourself'.

Both his wives are hungry for money, and care nothing for the poet. The first wife tells the professor that if he wants to record the poet reciting his work on a tape recorder, she can arrange it as long as she is paid for it. She then sets up the recording session in a nearby brothel, probably the brothel where the poet met his second wife.

This film is so moving for me because it mirrors my own life in many ways. No-one cares for my poetry either, or it seems for any creative arts of any quality. The women in my life were also only interested in materialism and money. I spent much of my life drunk to excess to avoid the realities of petty materialism and greed. And at least the poet has a few hangers on to listen to his words, even though their prime motive is to eat and drink for nothing. I get drunk and have to read my own poems to myself. And finally, whilst pound notes have a value, the sheets on which my poetry is written are useless and perfect for cleaning up vomit.

And so, it leads me to the conclusion. I am interested in only three activities in my life; my Zen, Tantra, and writing. I have never yet met one person who even understands what I do. Alone, at least, I don't have to put up with people who I don't like. This film has taught me that I can continue to laugh and enjoy my unique creativity and when I leave this body, whoever comes to clean up after me will dump it all in the bin. This is not a negative ending, though, because if you know the truth you will have no surprises. It means I need to live my life to an even fuller and freer extent while I can, and someday, when I am 'riddled with disease', I will be able to think of the poet in the film and know that there are still moments of paradise right to the end.