

The Sense of Amita

"Let's go ladies!" the driver shouted as he brought the mini-bus to a screeching halt.

The women sitting in the mini-bus were so engrossed in their conversation that they did not hear him at all at first. A little later they sensed that the vehicle had stopped moving altogether and realized that they had reached their destination.

"Wow! We have reached already?" They all got off the bus exclaiming or saying similar words of surprise. They were a group of friends who had planned to spend a weekend at a posh, five-star hotel in *Khandala*¹. Except for Aparna, none of them had set foot inside a five-star hotel before. Naturally, their reactions were full of wonder: "Wow!", "So nice!", "My God!" were some of the exclamations heard as they entered the hotel lobby.

After completing the check-in formalities, they assembled in the guest corner of the vast lobby.

"Each one of us has got a separate room. We will all go to our rooms, get ready quickly and get back here again in no more than 30 minutes!" Aparna spoke loudly to the group, "We are not here to doze off, right?"

Hearing this, Sujata said, "Do I have to sleep alone? Can I request company – like a male escort – in this hotel? Didn't you say five-star hotels provide whatever you want!?"

The rest of the women were shocked to hear this from Sujata. "Sujata, you, of all the people?" they all scolded her together.

Sujata was known to be the most "straight" girl in this group. She talked and behaved as if she could not stand even the shadow of a strange man. No one ever dreamed that she would say something like this! Yes, Vasundhara would have been better qualified to say that line! Her friends even called her *Vaasu*² instead of *Vasu*! Of course, her *Vaasu* nature was limited to just saying outrageous things. In fact, no one in this group had ever done anything more adventurous than just talking nonsense.

"I was just joking guys!" Sujata said quickly, "I was actually speaking for Vasu!"

It was no use! Her friends knew better now! Sujata had lost her reputation as a well-behaved, straight girl.

¹ Khandala is a hill-station between Pune and Mumbai.

² Vaasu (वासू) is a Marathi word which means "a person with amorous tendencies".

As asked by Aparna, all of them actually got ready in less than 30 minutes and came down and sat on the spacious sofas in the lobby. They were immediately approached by a young man – a hotel steward – who carried a tray of various cold drinks. The women picked their drink from an assorted collection of *kokam*³, lime juice, pepsi, etc. and lay back on their seats sipping contentedly. These women had spent all their lives cooking and serving food and drinks to others, and so, it was a magical feeling to sit like this on comfortable seats in an air-conditioned hall and be served drinks.

"It is a hallmark of five-star hotels to serve their customers before the customers even think of asking!" Aparna supplied an insight about five-star hospitality.

Even before she had completed her sentence, another young steward came by to the group with a tray full of all sorts of snacks – *pakodas*⁴, cheese cubes, samosas, and so on. The hungry ladies agreed with Aparna whole-heartedly and pounced on the tray of goodies that had just arrived.

After the acids in their tummies had calmed down somewhat, Aparna took them out of the lobby to a vast, sprawling grass lawn. As they walked on the cool, soft grass with some trepidation, Aparna informed them, "If it wasn't permitted to walk and sit on this lawn, they would have made it impossible for us even to enter! So, don't worry, just find a spot and let us all sit down."

The ladies stretched on the soft grass and started chatting. These women had known each other for more than 10 years. They were all married women carrying the usual burden of families and children. They had come to know of each other by way of various reasons – some because of school, some exercised in the same gym, some met at the bank, some ran on the same jogging track. After a while, a nice, closely knit group had been formed which hung out together, did things together, exhaled together. Now, they had all become such close friends that no subject was taboo for them. They shared all their pains and joys with each other. The successes and failures of their children, the tyranny of their in-laws; even the occasional sleepless night forced by a depraved husband was not spared a mention.

They didn't talk much about men. But when they did, their venom, their distaste, their utter disappointment, was quite evident. None of them, except Aparna, was happy with her husband – one was dull and boring, one had a short fuse, one was too tight-pursed, one was too nosy, one watched TV all the time, and most were unbearable at night!

Whenever they started discussing this topic of men, Aparna refrained from agreeing whole-heartedly. She just kept smiling quietly. Her argument was this: "You cannot judge all men based on your husbands!"

Today, the women all wanted to dig Aparna on this.

³ Kokam is a fruit juice made of an Indian red fruit called kokam, also known as 'night mango'.

⁴ Pakodas are an Indian variety of fried vegetable dumplings.

"Aparna, you must tell us why you think otherwise! We want to know what glorious experience you have had with men!" Vinita started the attack. Vinita hated her husband; she also hated her own parents for luring her into an arranged marriage.

In response, Aparna gave them a mysterious, faraway smile, took a deep breath and said, "Ok. Here is what I think. I think you say all those bad things about men because you have forgotten that you are *women*, that you are *feminine*. You all think like those *dolls* in the books or movies.

"You are obsessed with old, filmy ideas like *love* and *loyalty*. You want your men to shower love on you, every day and forever. And that too on *you* alone. You want to share everything with your men, and you want *them* to share every damned thing with you!

"All these ideas, these expectations are idiotic, just a mirage. Well, in my opinion anyway. I think men are just *men*. They are naturally capable of giving just one thing, if at all – and that is sensual pleasure. Getting anything else out of them is bonus, like winning a lottery!"

The rest of the women were astonished at this opening statement from Aparna. It was jolting, forceful, and promising. She surely was in a mood to share her mind frankly!

When she got murmurs of disagreement and sounds of discomfort from her friends, Aparna continued, "Let me do one thing for you. Allow me to narrate to you the story of a girl. It will give you some idea of what I am trying to say."

All her friends immediately agreed; they perked up, sat up straight, stopped eating and trained their attention on Aparna.

Aparna started her story.

"This is a story of a middle-class college girl called Amita. I will not bore you with the whole Mahabharata, like where she was born and what she ate for breakfast, but just narrate a couple of key episodes, ok?"

Everyone nodded approvingly.

"So, let's just say Amita was a beautiful and intelligent girl and then fast forward to her college days.

"On this particular day she came to her lecture hall as usual. It was the first session of the *Marathi* class. The professor had yet to arrive. The lecture hall was abuzz with the usual noise and mischief. Boys were trying their best to attract the attention of the beauties in the room. Amita was now quite familiar with the attraction between men and women. As a younger school-girl she used to recoil at the scenes of kissing and fondling in the movies. "*How*

disgusting!" she used to think. But now the same scenes sent unknown sensations through her body, making her hot at certain places. She would start imagining herself in the place of the actress on the screen, and then she would feel even more hot and restless. She wasn't attracted to any of the boys she knew. She could not stand the thought of letting any of them do things to her. So, she had no alternative but to endure the strange and powerful sensations arising in her body.

Amita was thus lost in her own thoughts when she suddenly realized that the class had fallen very quiet. She looked up and saw a tall, handsome man standing near the whiteboard. He was certainly not one of the students. But, he also did not look like a professor. His hair was mostly black, his face was clean-shaven, and he wore an elegant half-sleeve shirt tucked in dark gray trousers. He looked lean and in superb health. He was probably in his thirties. He surveyed the class with his piercing brown eyes. He made eye contact with Amita and she felt as if he had lingered just a fraction of a second longer before moving on. Then he smiled at the class playfully and said, "So guys, shall we have a nice chat in Marathi?" His voice was deep and it created strange vibrations in Amita's body.

So, he indeed was their new professor of Marathi.

"My name is Ajay, and you will all call me Ajay! No Sir or Madam please!" he said to the class in an amiable tone.

It felt as if he really was just chatting with the students. As he continued running his eyes through the classroom he made equal eye contact with both boys and girls. This was unusual – all other professors, majority of whom were male, avoided even looking at the girls, as if they did not exist. Ajay also kept walking through the aisles of the classroom constantly, thus enhancing the feeling of informality and reducing the psychological distance between him and his students. While walking, he would suddenly stop at a desk, smile pleasantly at the student sitting there and then move on.

In no time, the entire class started liking their new professor very much.

When the bell rang, Professor Ajay collected his notes and left the hall. Students also followed him out. But, Amita just sat where she was. She felt as if she was in a beautiful dream. Once or twice Ajay had stopped next to her and smiled at her. He had this mischievous, almost teasing, twinkle in his eyes, a piercing, searching look, and yet his eyes seemed to reassure her that he meant no harm. She could feel the presence of his strong male body just a few inches from her, and yet, instead of feeling fear, she felt protected, safe in its presence. His smile was gentle, tender, as if he were her older brother.

But, of course he was no brother! He had sent her heart-beat into a sprint and she had to hold tightly to the desk to stop the wobbling in her knees. Amita had never been affected like this by a man.

The next few sessions of the Marathi class were no better for Amita. She would turn all red and hot when Ajay was nearby. Once she got up involuntarily as if to answer some question, when Ajay hadn't asked any. When Ajay gave his reassuring smile she smiled back awkwardly and sat down quickly. Amita's fantasies now included Ajay! She knew it was crazy to fantasize about her professor, but she could not help it. She felt a terrific attraction to Ajay. She was certain that Ajay had noticed her condition because his glances at her were now more frequent, and tinged with greater interest and even some concern".

Aparna paused here to check how her audience was doing.

"So, Amita basically fell in love with Ajay, right? What next?" Vinita said with some impatience.

Aparna nodded and continued.

"Well, one day Ajay invited Amita for a cup of tea at his staff quarters. He had been given a small one-bedroom apartment by the university. Amita was surprised at herself when she quickly said yes to his invitation. "*You didn't hesitate even slightly!*" she scolded herself later.

She wore a beautiful sari when she went to Ajay's apartment the next evening. Ajay was stunned when he opened the door and he did not hide his reaction. "How *beautiful* you are, Amita!" He said openly and enthusiastically.

Amita was red with embarrassment but she made a flitting eye contact with his deep brown eyes and smiled. Bowing slightly – as if paying tribute to her regal beauty – Ajay motioned her in, "Please come in!"

As Amita entered the apartment, Ajay closed the door behind her but did not bolt it, and motioned Amita to take a seat on the sofa. She surveyed the living room which was sparsely but tastefully furnished with cherry-color wooden furniture, purple sofa seats, and quite a few abstract paintings on the white walls. A large wooden wind-chime hung from the ceiling that constantly made soft music as a steady breeze came through the window. A large bookcase held behind its glass doors collection of literary books – Marathi as well as English. There were papers strewn on a small coffee-table.

The room at once gave the impression of artistic sensitivity and intellectual restlessness.

As Amita sat down on the two-person sofa seat, she was afraid and prayed at the same time that Ajay would come and sit right next to her. She was astonished at the games her mind was playing. On one hand, it was shouting in her ears, "*Are you crazy? What are you doing here? Do you even know what a man can do to you?*" And on the other hand, her instinct was undaunted and it kept telling her that there was no need to worry, that Ajay was a good man.

Ajay went into the kitchen and came out holding a tray with two cups of steaming tea. He placed the tray on the small glass table and sat down right next to Amita! Once again Amita remembered the strong male presence she had felt in the lecture hall, and once again her body reacted the same way. Her knees felt wobbly and her cheeks became flushed with red.

Ajay noticed this and said, "Amita, I am so glad you came! Please relax. This is not a classroom. I am not your teacher, and you are not my student. I am just a guy and you are just a gal."

When Amita raised her eyes to meet his, he kept his hand gently on her wrist and added with a smile, "Of course, a most beautiful one!"

Amita was startled at his touch but did not flinch. His words were comforting and even the touch felt reassuring; it surprisingly calmed her down a bit. When Ajay asked if he could bolt the door, she nodded without hesitation.

Ajay returned to his seat and continued, "You know Amita, I felt the attraction between us just like you did right from the first day. My condition is no different. Check this out!" and he took her hand and placed it on his chest. Amita felt his quickened heart-beat and felt a strange sense of vindication, a feeling that she was not crazy after all!

"See! I am as normal as you are! But, Amita, if I say anything wrong, or do anything you don't approve, please stop me right away!" Ajay said to her in a soft, pleading voice.

Ajay's words were soothing. They made her feel closer to him, almost equal to him; they strengthened her courage. She nodded and indicated her approval by slightly kneeling in his direction. Her knees had stopped wobbling now.

Ajay moved his hand to her shoulder and pulled her gently towards him and inhaled in the fragrance of her soft flowing hair. As Amita felt his strong, muscular arms pulling her close to him, she melted like butter and raised her face to his. Ajay pressed her soft and warm lips under his own. He kissed her in lingering and gentle strokes, as if teaching her how to kiss, and at the same time feeling every cell of her sensuous lips with his eager mouth. Amita was breathless and she responded eagerly and without hesitation. Ajay started kissing her face, her eyes, her neck, her ears, her shoulders and with every kiss Amita started panting harder and harder. She didn't know what was happening to her, but she was sure she wanted all of it."

Aparna paused at this point and scanned the faces of her friends just like a spiritual leader might survey his audience of devotees with utmost love and empathy. They were all watching her, awestruck and with total attention. Sujata had her mouth slightly open as if in a trance.

Aparna said teasingly, "I think this story would be too heavy for you. I should not have brought it up at all. I think I should stop here!"

All the girls got so mad at this uncalled-for disruption and at Aparna's outrageous accusation that they literally lunged a few inches in her direction as if to beat her up!

"Ok, ok! Calm down! I will continue the story," Aparna said, "So, where were we?"

"Ah yes. Ajay and Amita were now going at it full-speed. They had both got down to the plush carpet and were lying down in each other's arms. Ajay proceeded to unhook her blouse. It was for the first time that day that Amita thought of resisting – but with no real conviction. Ajay moved her blouse out of his way and fondled her beautiful, soft breasts. Amita felt a lightning ripple through her body as his coarse, large hands brushed against her taut nipples. Ajay continued his attack raising Amita's temperature higher and higher. Her entire body was in a state of delirium and vibration. This was a completely new experience for her. She had never imagined that such pleasure could be had in a man's embrace. Every square-inch of her skin started begging for Ajay's touch.

Ajay also kept whispering in Amita's ears. Once he said, "Amita, I want to give you a lot of pleasure, a lot of happiness."

Another time he said, "Amita, you have such a beautiful body! I want to make you aware of it."

Amita agreed completely and the sound of her own name caused her even more excitement. She continued growing more and more comfortable in Ajay's embrace and to his lovemaking.

Deep in her mind somewhere she still felt a faint twinge of doubt, a sliver of fear, a prick of hesitation. But, the desire was much stronger to continue this journey of unbelievable pleasure.

Ajay's hands and lips were now traveling down her chest. With gentle pressure, he caressed the young, taut skin of her belly and tried to slip his fingers further down. At this point, as if by a reflex action, Amita grabbed his truant hand and held it. Ajay stopped immediately. He did not use force to continue; he accepted this young woman's resistance to something that she had no clue of, no prior experience of.

He just held her close to him and kissed her passionately for a long time on her mouth and then whispered in her ear, "Amita, trust me. I will not do anything to hurt you; I will not do anything that you will regret. I promise. I just want to set you free!"

Amita smiled. She had already trusted Ajay completely, which is why she had even allowed him to go this far. She felt assured that Ajay really meant to give her pleasure, to make her happy. She responded to his statement of reassurance by snuggling closer to him and putting her arms around his neck. Her clothes were now strewn all over the carpet, but she didn't care. She noticed that Ajay was still fully clothed, which surprised her a little, but also assuaged her fear of what was going to happen next.

Having received the green signal from Amita, Ajay put his hand on her slender legs, first caressing her toes, then squeezing her calves, and then fondling her round knees. Amita had no strength or desire left to resist him, she lay limp close to him, savoring his touch and the incredible sensations she felt in her body. Like an expert musician Ajay was creating music in her body with his fingers and lips. He gently squeezed the tender and warm flesh of the inside of her thighs making her twitch and shudder uncontrollably. She had no idea her body contained so many incredibly sensitive spots and that a loving man could manipulate them to such unbelievable effect.

Ajay finally touched the most delicate and sensitive spot of her body sending the music to a feverish pitch. The music got louder and louder and in less than a minute Amita shook with a most stunning explosion between her thighs which felt like a dam of water crashing and sending waves throughout her body. She lay limp for several minutes exhausted and unable to move but enjoying the beautiful sensations. She barely noticed Ajay whispering in her ears "Just close the door when you leave!" and quietly slipping away.

After heaven knows how long, probably 20 minutes or so, Amita came to her senses, noticed a blanket on top of her and no one around. She straightened up, got dressed quickly and left the house by closing the door as Ajay had instructed."

After speaking thus, Aparna fell silent, stared in the distance, and did not say anything for a long minute. It was a signal that the story was over.

Vinita could not bear the silence and blurted, "Oh, I don't believe this story! I don't believe this guy Ajay went away just like that! No man would waste such an opportunity!"

Sujata added, "Oh, this is just one of those adult stories you can easily find on the Net! And I don't even know what the whole point is!"

This time no one reacted to this remark of "straight" Sujata. In fact, after hearing Aparna's explicit narrative, they had all suddenly become quite comfortable discussing sexual matters, just like you might shed your inhibitions about clothing while walking on a nude beach!

Aparna turned her eyes towards her friends and said calmly, "Dear friends, I hate to inform you that this is not a fable, not a concocted tale, it is a true story! Every word of it actually happened!"

After several seconds her female friends got the significance of what she had just said. They were thunderstruck. "Aparna?" they all shouted in unison. And then there was a sudden cacophony of all sorts of questions getting shot at her.

"But, where is Ajay? Your husband is not a professor!"

“Did you guys get married? With so much difference in age?”

“Is that why you never complain about your husband?”

Aparna motioned them with her hands to calm down and said, “Girls, you are missing the point! The story is about a girl who got introduced to the world of sensual pleasure in a most wonderful way, thanks to a considerate guy. How many of us can say that about ourselves? Many of us don’t even know such pleasure exists within our own bodies!”

Aparna’s face looked flushed red as if she was recovering from a happy memory. Pausing briefly, she continued.

“Every girl deserves to begin her sex life like Amita. But usually it begins with a selfish husband purchased in the market of arranged marriages and ends with him. I think partly we are to blame for this situation. We waste our young years in chasing men for silly things like loyalty and commitment and sharing – and we forget that we are *women* first! We are *females*!”

“I know there aren’t too many men like Ajay who have the ability to be tender, and who have the willingness to help us discover our sensuality, our sexual potential! But, I am certain they are out there if we don’t stop looking”.

“Do you mean to say that those other things are *not important*? That we should only have sexual relationships with men?” Vinita asked. Her tone had a curious mixture of excitement and indignation.

“I am not suggesting that! We should try to have all kinds of relationships. But, I am not sure if men are even capable of things like *commitment* and *intimacy*. My point is: we *must not* forget the most basic and the most important type of relationship – the one that makes us a *woman*! The story is not so much about Ajay as it is about the *woman* in each of us.” Aparna replied.

Everyone fell silent at this point, trying to digest what they had heard.

Then Aparna continued, “And yes, Amita did fall in love with Ajay; who would not? She had a tremendous crush on him. She was grateful because he made her self-aware. He made her aware of how much sensuality, how much energy lay within her.”

Aparna looked away at the spurious gray clouds in the distance for a few seconds, and continued, “Theirs was a short affair. It was hard, painfully hard, but Amita got over her infatuation, her desire for permanence, her desire for continuity. Ajay helped her get over that. He explained to her that he really just wanted to set her free. And he indeed had! Amita was in such a terrible funk before they had met at his apartment.”

“What happened to Amita?” Madhura, who was listening quietly thus far as if she could not be associated with such moral sacrilege, asked.

“Well,” donning a wicked smile, Aparna replied, “She met other men in her life – of various types. Eventually, she wanted to be a mother and raise a family, so, she got herself a husband who was committed *to the family.*” Aparna stressed the words “to the family”.

Serving the final blow to her already stunned and dazed audience, Aparna said, “Don’t think that time has run out on you! If you believe in discovering the woman in you, in uncovering your feminine secrets, you can still look for your Ajay! Maybe he is hiding inside your husband. Or maybe he is out there somewhere. Just follow your instinct like Amita did! But, be sure to look for the right things!”

Sujata immediately got up saying, “Oh yes! Let me get started right away!”

Just when she had finished her sentence the young man who had earlier brought them drinks appeared again and said politely to the group, “Ladies, lunch is ready. Will you please join?”

All the women immediately trained their eyes on him and glared at him like hungry cats ready to pounce on a mouse! He was startled to see their strange stares, and fearing bodily harm moved away quickly!

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