

# **Indian Women's Plays**

II Semester Additional English Text Book

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The Swing of Desire

*Mayye Bhara, Manave Bhara*

Mamata G. Sagar

SCENE I

*(Music plays in the background, followed by a shower of applause. At one side of the stage someone is seated, busily writing something. She scribbles, tears the paper and writes again, and again tears it up. Showing her frustration, she sits holding her head. The light is focused on her. She raises her head and speaks to the audience.)*

MANASA: I am Manasa ..... what do I say about myself? How do I write these unwanted lines? The very thought irks me! Chhi! Disgusting memories ..... The age between twenty and thirty is a precious time for a woman when she is not bothered by sneaking strands of gray. Nor is there any care for the world; no haunting thoughts of death. If one wished to do something in life, one should do it then – or never ..... Such a precious time, so many priceless moments ... but for me, all gone.... All lost because of a selfish man! How do I write all this? what shall I write? – Was it a mistake to have married Pratap? Was I the only one there to quench his lust? Couldn't he find anyone else? I married him, believing his words of love and loved him wholeheartedly too..... But, in no time his love showed itself as a possessive demonic lust that completely destroyed me. How could I guess that it would turn out like this, that a corrosive lust would ruin my life? Right from the beginning he loved me like a madman. Not my talent, not my success, just my body..... (in a harsh tone.) No, none of his ploys can touch me anymore. Just one blow from me, and he is now shattered ..... and to such an extent that he hasn't recovered to this day. The incident is still so clear ....

*(Flashback: The light dims and focuses again. When the light is back, Manasa stands at one end of the stage. Pratap stands with his back to the audience.)*

PRATAP: ( Comes near Manasa and speaks humbly) When those useless fellows talk about you, about your figure ..... (Persuasively) look, Manasa, I can't tolerate the idea of your **being**

just a dancer to me, even after our marriage. I loved you and married you, hoping that you'd be a good companion, sharing my joys and sorrows, loving only me! I don't want to be with you just as a manager for your programmes. I am your friend! Your husband!

MANASA: (*Sarcastically*) Oh yes! That's why you stopped me from dancing, made me a child-bearing machine, an object of your wanton desires, isn't it?

PRATAP: Who says so? Have I not helped with your programmes over the years? You have performed several times even after our marriage! Tell me, why do you do this? You have staked my honour for a pittance! Tell me, what more did you expect?

MANASA: (*Angrily*) What did I expect, is it? How dare you use me and exploit my maternal instincts to serve your selfish motives? Whenever I think of it, I feel like strangling each one of my children. Chhi! ..... But why should I punish them for your sins? You are the one who must be punished. That's my reason for doing what I did!

PRATAP: Many things can happen between husband and wife.

MANASA: Yes, that's why I put up with everything all these years.

PRATAP: Go out and ask people, how much respect you command as my wife.

MANASA: (*Scornfully*) that kind of respect I don't need. I have my own identity and self-respect.

PRATAP: what is your identity, your self-respect? Your pride as a great dancer? Without caring a damn about others? Is that what makes you forget the love-starved children of yours, deafening you with the applause? How inhuman can you be? Tell me, what kind of a woman are you, what kind of a mother?

MANASA: is that why you make such a fuss these days, so I don't give more performances .... is that it? You never used to sleep all those nights when we quarreled. That's when I began to fear your love. You are so possessive. (*with determination*) But my art is more important to me. How would you know its worth?

PRATAP: Worth! What is the worth of your dancing around all the time? What happens to my home? What would people say?

MANASA: Society, people, family ..... you'll make me sacrifice my creativity for your false pride. What you loved was neither my talent nor my success; it was just my femininity. A woman glows at her husband's success. She never complains, never envies. Have you ever heard a woman envying her husband? Have you ever seen that happen? Why can't a man feel the same about his wife?*(She clutches his hand. He pulls away with a jerk.)* You can't bear people praising me, can you? That is why, however much you try to stop me, no matter what you do, I am ready to face anything for my art! I'm desperate now, I'll do anything!

PRATAP: Chhi! That means, being shameless ..... do you have to stoop to such levels?

MANASA: What I've done is no more shameless than the way you shamelessly tried to ruin my life.

PRATAP: *(Angrily)* You ..... what you've done is prostitution. Do you know that? MANASA: Pratap, prostitution is what people like you do to satiate their bodily hunger, their lust, not what one does for one's own good.

PRATAP: *(Shouts)* Manasa!

MANASA: Don't shout. Be quiet. You envied me like no man ever can. Don't deny that. Whatever a man does, is always okay. But when it comes to women, we always have to please them. That's the only way to keep our peace and sanity intact.

PRATAP: Have you gone crazy or what?

MANASA: Chhi! My body has become rotten these six years as an object of to our lust. You condemned me to be merely a child-bearing machine for you. You stifled my art. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

PRATAP: I am not ready to forsake my honour and that of my family by making a public exhibiton of my private life.

MANASA: and I am not ready to strangle my dreams! That's not easy, as you should know! The twinkling stars, the smiling moon, the lovers' tryst, the newborn day --- are all signs of a new life! Pratap, perhaps I wouldn't have said or done anything if our children were born of love. But you abused me. Do you at least love these little ones who apparently meant so much to you? Not even them? You are disgusting. It's better not to give life, than to destroy it with lack of love. I can't bear to think that my children were not of born of love, but of lust.

PRATAP: will you stop your harangue! Are these the words of a loving mother?

MANASA: Oh you can be sarcastic and flaunt the motherhood tag at me!

PRATAP: Who? Who is that man? Tell me, which one of my children is that bundle of sin. (*He clutches her hand and swings her back.*) Will you tell me or not?

MANASA: (*with anger and pain*) I won't say ..... I won't. Whatever you do, I won't. Who is that child, who is its father, you'll never know. I will never tell you that.

PRATAP: (*Releasing her*) Oh God! What a farce! (*Sinks down.*)

MANASA: (*After a pause*) You know, I understood your plan to keep me tied down with child-bearing when I spoke to your sister. Then, I was in a more pathetic state than you are today. (*Lights fade.*)

## SCENE II

*(The lights come back. Pratap is seen sitting on an easy chair. He appears thoughtful. The left side of the stage has an elevated platform to indicate a bedroom. A child playing near him comes to sit on his lap. Pratap hugs the child impulsively but then his expression changes and he tries to push the child away.)*

PRATAP: (*Frowning*) Get up!

CHILD: No!

PRATAP: (*Loudly*) Get up, I say!

CHILD: (*Clings to him*) No, I won't!

PRATAP: (*Pushes him away*) To hell with you. I'll get up myself.

(*The child begins to weep and runs to Manasa as she enters.*)

MANASA: What's wrong with you, Pratap? Why did you do that?

PRATAP: Tell me, whose is he?

MANASA: I won't.

PRATAP: Just because of that one cursed child, I can't love any of my children.

(*Muttering to himself*) Any child that I pet, I think it's not mine.

MANASA: (To the child) That's enough of playing. Go to bed now.

(*The child moves towards the bedroom.*)

PRATAP: (Coming near Manasa) Tell me Manasa! Please. (*Angrily*)

You'll be in a great trouble if you don't tell me. I warn you ....

(*With disgust*) Oh! All of just get lost!

(*Exits from the stage, Manasa goes to the child.*)

MANASA: Why are you sitting like this? Aren't you sleepy?

CHILD: I am bored ..... Why is daddy angry? I'm sleepy now, tell me a story.

MANASA: Okay, I'll tell you the story of '*The darling girl of Mutturu.*' You should sleep then without asking questions.

CHILD: Go, Amma. You tell the same story everyday!

MANASA: (*Seriously*) I know just that one story, sweetheart!

(*Begins to sing.*)

Darling girl of Muttur

Her words sweet as nectar ...

( *The child continues the song. Manasa and the child are on the left side of the stage. The following story can be enacted in the centrestage. The story can be enacted in the Yakshagana or Chhau forms or the actors can dress up like puppets.*)

CHILD: Darling girl of Muttur

Her words sweet as nectar  
It is spring when she sings  
Such joy to all it brings  
Muttur's blooming beauty  
She's so sweet and dainty  
No mother, poor child  
Dear father, old and mild  
While she sang here merrily  
All land danced happily  
The star-lit village swooned  
As the little girl crooned  
To the melody the trees did quiver  
Humming the tune in a whisper  
Darling girl of Muttur  
Nothing without her, O brother  
No summer, nor winter  
No life here, O sister  
Without Muttur's darling daughter.

MANASA: and then one day, as usual, she goes to the forest to get firewood. She sings and picks flowers. She decorates her hair with the flowers that she had strung. The king of the neighbouring land comes along on his horse. Having heard her song, he stops .....

KING: (*Appearing to ride a horse*)

Where are you from, O princess? You sing so well!  
One who sings so sweet should be in my kingdom and not in a forest.  
Come, O princess, you must come with me.

GIRL: I am not the princess of any land. I am the darling girl of Mutturu, the trees don't swing in the forest, the birds don't chirp, the animals don't drink water, the river won't flow. No, no, I can't come with you.

KING: If that is so, then you should sing only for me. You should sing only in my palace. If you do so, I'll marry you. I'll make you my queen.

GIRL: No, king, no, you can't hold my song ..... I can't sing for you ..... leave me ..... let me go.

MANASA: The king put the darling girl on his horse and carried her away to his kingdom. There he imprisoned her in one of the upper chambers of his palace and pestered her saying 'Sing, sing .....for me.' The darling girl gave up food and water, and wept all the time. In Mutturu too, people gave up food and water because they missed darling girl's songs. The flowers didn't bloom, the animals in the forest gave up hunting and went on a fast. The forest didn't dance, the town didn't rise, drought set in at Mutturu ..... then, in the palace, one evening, when the darling girl was crying, she heard the distant tunes of a flute. She peeped out of her window and saw the Lord of the Wind playing the flute on a faraway hill .... From that day, the wind god played his flute for her every evening, and she would catch the tune and sing for him. As she kept singing and singing, the song rode on the cool breeze and reached Mutturu. The people there heard it, felt revived, and went about their work as lively as ever. The flowers bloomed, the forest danced, there were rains from time to time, the sun shone, and the moon smiled. The girl showed the world that her song was not for the king. But that made the king angry and he left his kingdom feeling humiliated. The girl knew that there was no joy in palaces and riches; the real joy is to sing while picking firewood and so she came back to Mutturu.

*(Song in the background)*

The darling girl of Muttur

Her words sweet as nectar .....

No life here, O sister

Without Muttur's darling daughter.

*(As the song continues in the background, lights fade.)*

### SCENE III

*(The lights come back. Pratap's sister is silently packing a suitcase. She wipes her eyes from time to time. Brother-in-law(Bhava) is pensively puffing away at his cigarette)*

SISTER: Did you understand what I said? *(Bhava is silent.)* You never listen to what I say.

BHAVA : *(Frowning)* Oh, shut up. I'll get a headache now with your ramblings.

SISTER: why do you shout like that? Why can't you talk properly?

BHAVA: I don't like to talk unnecessarily.

SISTER: Look, it's better to mend things before everything is ruined.

BHAVA: there are some things that can't be repaired. It's better to leave them at that.

SISTER: Look don't jump to conclusions.

BHAVA: Anyway, my decision won't change.

SISTER: But what will happen to me? Tell me, is there something wrong with me?

BHAVA: Nothing.

SISTER: Then?

BHAVA: We can't get along with each other, that's all.

SISTER: But why?

BHAVA: I don't know.

SISTER: What do you mean?

BHAVA: I mean .... Oh ... I just don't know.

SISTER: That's very fine! I don't understand your strange behavior at all. What does it mean that you don't understand your own actions? Can anyone act totally without reason? Why should you treat me like this? Haven't I done so much for you?

BHAVA: You shouldn't cling to an unhappy relationship.

SISTER: As if it's easy to break bonds .... Look, I won't ask what you do outside. But, at home, with me, can't we be happy? Look here, we shouldn't part like this.

BHAVA: Do you think I am a computer? That I'd store all those feelings you want to feed into me? *(After a pause)* It's not enough, you see, that a woman satisfies one in bed. She should satisfy man's intellectual need as well. So, there's no point. How will you .....you wouldn't understand at all.

SISTER: Why not? I understand everything. I may not rise up to your intellectual standards. But, I .... I love you so much!

*(She covers her face to stop herself from crying and sinks into a chair nearby)*

BHAVA: *(Speaking to himself)* There's such a difference between innocence and ignorance. I appreciate your innocence, but your ignorance irritates me. Do you know how far this irritation has gone? So far that I can't bear you in bed beside me. I can't say why this is so. I am haunted by the feeling that I am using you. You have suppressed yourself so much that I can't communicate with you at all. I feel depressed. I'll be destroyed. Please spare me the guilt. You can't know how this troubles me? Oh! How do I explain all this? *(He addresses her)* Don't cry.

SISTER: What else can do?

BHAVA: Pratap and Manasa may come in any moment. It doesn't seem everything is fine with them either. And if you cry like this...

SISTER: What's wrong with them? They have kids and all. What more one want?

BHAVA: Yes! Kids, makeup, party, club, kitchen, puja, bed, blanket! This is your world. You don't even want anything else. I just can't stand women.

SISTER: You. You...I don't know how to deal with you.

BHAVA: That is why I say. you can't get used to my way of life. And in the way, I can't get used to yours!

SISTER: Chhi! What kind of a man are you! You can't understand a woman's nature, her feelings, and sentiments.

*(Manasa enters. Sister and Bhava stop talking.)*

BHAVA: Come, Manasa , come.

SISTER: Manasa, are you free this evening? We could go and get that Saree changed.

MANASA: Certainly, why not?

BHAVA: Where are the children?

MANASA: It's a holiday. They must be playing somewhere.

*(Pratap joins them)*

SISTER: Why are you late?

PRATAP: I have a headache.

BHAVA: *Okay, come and sit down. You'll feel better after a cup of coffee.* SISTER: *(Looks at Bhava)* You'll ruin your health if you drink coffee all the time.

PRATAP: Akka cares so much for you! You are really lucky.

BHAVA: Well yes, you know it only when you have to bear with it!

PRATAP: *( To his sister)* You have kept him well under your control.

SISTER: You can mind people only up to a certain extent. You can't do anything once they cross their limit.

PRATAP: *(Looking at Manasa)* Yes, you are absolutely right.

MANASA: I'll get the coffee. *(Leaves)*

*(All of them look at her as she leaves. Uncomfortable silence. As soon as Manasa returns with the tray. Bhava starts talking to ease the tension.)*

BHAVA: Listen to this, some 15 days back, a patient was admitted in hospital. He was allergic to clothes. You'd just come out dressing him and he'd take them all off. Whenever a female nurse went his room he'd ask for clothes. If you gave them to him, he'd say 'Give me your clothes'. He did the same thing to one of the new nurses and scared the devil out of her.

(He laughs alone. Pratap with coffee in one hand puffs away at his cigarette. Manasa stirs sugar into her coffee. Sister sits silently.)

BHAVA: What? Didn't anyone find it funny?

PRATAP: Bhava, let Akka stay back this time.

BHAVA: Who's objecting? She can definitely stay.

SISTER: No, no. If I stay back, he'll have problems.

BHAVA: That's okay. I can manage without you.

SISTER: No. I want to come.

PRATAP: (Looking at Manasa) Akka cares so much for you, Bhava! BHAVA: (Sarcastically) Yes, yes. Who denies it?

SISTER: What do you mean by that?

BHAVA: (Pretending to explain) That means, if you stay back, Manasa will have some company and it will be a change for you too.

SISTER: I don't need any change.

PRATAP: We'll think about that later.... This has been a bad day. Really getting bored.

BHAVA: Okay then, What do we do? Yes! Let's play the word-making game. What do you say?

PRATAP: Fine. (They rearrange their chairs for the game.)

BHAVA: The rules are like this. I'll say a word, you'll have to respond with the word that comes first to your mind. Okay? (Everyone sits up.) But you don't get time to search for a word or think, right? It should be a quick response, okay? Ready? On your mark ..... set start!... Animal...

SISTER: Cow

PRATAP: Lion

MANASA: Prey

BHAVA: Flower

PRATAP: Decoration

SISTER: Fragrance

MANASA: Thorns

BHAVA: Colour

SISTER: Yellow

PRATAP: Red

MANASA: Black

BHAVA: Water

MANASA: Flood

SISTER: Thirst

PRATAP: Sludge

BHAVA: Sky

MANASA: Night

PRATAP: Clouds

SISTER: Sun

BHAVA: Green

SISTER: Grass

MANASA: Forest

PRATAP: Moss

BHAVA: Words

PRATAP: Honour (stands up)

MANASA: Fight (Looks at him.)

SISTER: Chatting (Looks at both of them.)

BHAVA: Sense

SISTER: What one does not know (Looking at Bhava.)

MANASA: What one knows

PRATAP: What one needs to know (Stands behind Manasa.)

BHAVA: Life (Getting up from his chair, excitedly.)

PRATAP: What is lost (Moving restlessly.)

SISTER: What is over (Changing her posture.)

MANASA: What is achieved (Walking to the centre of the stage.) (Pratap to the right, Bhava to the right, Manasa at the centre.)

BHAVA: Memories

SISTER: What is forgotten

PRATAP: What is not forgotten

MANASA: What has to be forgotten

BHAVA: Lust

SISTER: To compromise (Moves towards Bhava.)

MANASA: Ploy (Looking at Pratap.)

PRATAP: Women (Looking as Manasa.)

BHAVA: Relationship

MANASA: Priceless

SISTER: Love

PRATAP: Meaningless

BHAVA: Marriage

PRATAP: A fix

MANASA: A tragedy

SISTER: Companionship

BHAVA: Husband

SISTER: Companion

PRATAP: Master

MANASA: Tyrant

BHAVA: Children

SISTER: Treasures

PRATAP: Life

MANASA: Affection

BHAVA: Love

SISTER: Husband

PRATAP Children (Manasa doesn't answer Sister and Bhava, say seriously.)

BHAVA: Manasa. what do you say?

SISTER: You must say something.

BHAVA: You lose if you don't answer. Come on, quick.

SISTER: God, you'll lose. Say something, quick.

BHAVA: Try. Manasa.

MANASA: My dreams, the dreams of my life

Rise from the depths of myself

Oh! My living passion

Come as beauty

Come as a gesture.

(As she croons to herself. Nunn and Akka keep urging her to answer. A slow fadeout.)

PRATAP:What can she say? She doesn't know what love is or how to love a husband. She doesn't know that at all. How can she speak? This woman...do you know what she has done, Akka like a prosti...

BHAVA: (Interrupts angrily) Pratap!

PRATAP:Yes! She says, one of those children is not mine. Does it matter if you have such a wife or not? And then ...

SISTER:Be quiet.

PRATAP: (Comes near Manasa)Look how she sits. As if nothing has happened. After ruining my peace of mind. No way, I can't live with Ibis disgusting woman. She can get lost with that bastard child of hers.

(Pratap rushes out. Lights focus on Manasa, Bhava and Sister. Slowly, Bhava and Sister move away. As the background music grows louder, the light focuses only on Manasa. She gets up as though she is responding to the music. The sound of applause is heard backstage. Manasa speaks dreamily.)

MANASA:I want to be independent. I want to be a star ...a butterfly g in the sun. I want to fly away, spreading my wings far and wide. I want to be a song, to step to the tune, to dance and sway and ... I want to chase my dreams!

My dreams, the dreams of my life

Rise from the depths of my being

Oh! My living passion

Come as beauty

Come as a gesture

My happy dreams, my colourful dreams

Come like jingling anklets

Step to my hearts rhythm

Tread softly with swinging grace

Play to my hearts tune

O! The dreams of my heart

Come. Come. Come.

(Lights fade Sound of music and applause is heard from back stage.)

SCENE IV (The music and applause, from the previous scene fade. There are three on the stage along with Pratap. They are talking as they enter.)

A: Wow! She dances so well. What perfection! Why was she wasting her talent for so many years? These two eyes of mine are not enough to behold the beauty. This kind of perfection is definitely the fruit of good deeds done in the previous birth.

B: Isn't she Manasa, the one who left her husband and had an affair another man? That's what people say about her.

PRATAP: (Looks at him immediately) Yes, she is the same Manasa.

C: Do you know why she left her husband?

B: Tch! Who wants to know all that? (Looking at Pratap) Do you know. PRATAP: A woman should always be good and honest to have a happy family life. She didn't leave her husband, her husband left

C: Any idea how old she is?

PRATAP: Who bothers about age as long as she is beautiful? This is the fate of all artistes. They never achieve happiness in their lives.

C: That's ridiculous! By the way, how would you define success? Is it enough to eat all day and sleep all night? Think a little. Who wouldn't feel frustrated if such a talent had to be sacrificed for the child-bearing?

A: Indeed. Someone with real talent and great aspirations in can never be stopped.

(Pratap mows away from the group as if insulted.)

B: Do you know where her husband is now? (Turning towards the audience) Sonic say he goes around the town like a mad man. Some say he visits prostitutes.

A: Some say he has become a sanyasi.

C: Is it? Yesterday someone said he was lying near the gutter in a drunken stupor with a dog sniffing around him.

B: (Laughs) Was the dog checking to see if he was alive or dead?

(All laugh loudly. Pratap exits in a huff)

C: How many children does she have?

B: Had she time for that? Her poor husband loved children, it seems. Heard that he has started an orphanage.

(Lights from the left side of the stage. Manasa enters and moves, close to A, B,C;listening to them. A, B, Care oblivious of Manasa's presence).

MANASA: No! No! This can't true! My children! My dear little babies. Not that I had fervently wished that they be born yet they are my children, after all. My lovely little darlings...

A. Family, wife, and children, how nice!

MANASA: Like getting trapped in quicksand while trying to reach the stars.

B: That's life: to aspire, to achieve, and then one day die.

C: If that's life, then why do we struggle so much?

MANASA: Life means living every moment. Every moment is a step towards fulfilment.

A: People want to experience the joy and sorrow that every moment brings. They want to live every moment.... But all said and done. once you have seen her dance. you don't feel like saying anything more about her. She is a very good dancer! And, she is so beautiful! Like sparkling gold, like a flawless pearl! Like. she was born to be admired! How could she have given up all this for a husband! Really, I can't imagine. I think I have fulfilled my life's desire by watching her dance.

MANASA: Aah! What sweet words! These were the words that I craved for, while I was with Pratap.

A: Poor lady. She has gone through a tough time in her life.

C: God! I won't wish such a fate for my wont enemy also.

A: God! What is God?

B: God? Oh, that's just an idea that changes colour to suit people's whims and fancies.

A: No it's a huge reproductive organ! A very active one at that! One that suspends thousands of entities into nothingness like a fish laying eggs in water. But it can only create. The tragedy is that having created, it can't manage its creations.

MANASA: Isn't it foolish to blame an unknown God for the sins of mankind.

C: Her husband has lost everything, it seems, and is now begging from door to door.

B: Mortal woes can drag a man down to any level.

MANASA: Yes, mortal woes do drag one down to any level.

C: You mean that he has left her?

*(A,B, C exit. Manasa comes centre-stage. The light focuses on her when she speaks. The background, away from the light. Shows a scene similar to the opening scene with a chair and a writing table with papers strewn around. Soft light slowly illuminates the stage.)*

MANASA: He wasn't like you describe him. Yes, he has left me—forever, I suppose! But he deceived me. I feel the rage of that betrayal and the suffering. But he hasn't escaped the consequences either. He is still tortured for deceiving me. Even though he declares that left me, that one arrow I shot hasn't let him rest in peace, and never will, I know that! No matter what a man does, society is ready to support and defend him. But for a woman, the smallest mistakes become monstrous. She is insulted and thrown out of the society. She belongs nowhere, has nowhere to go, no place to live.

*(Manasa moves to the chair and sits down as if preparing to write)* Now I am back to what I love most—my dancing. I dance to forget the bitter moments of my life. I dance for my satisfaction. I dance because I wish to.

*(She closes the book as she hears a knock on the door. Pratap enters. He looks exhausted and weak, as if he has aged overnight.)*

MANASA: *(To herself)* Why, isn't that Pratap? What has happened him? He looks so weak! *(Takes a step forward, then stops.)* Perhaps it's just a trick. He must be here with a new plan to ruin my life again. He thought that I'd never be able to manage without him. *(Loudly)* Who is it? What do you want?

PRATAP: Don't you recognize me?

MANASA: I am sorry. I don't seem to remember ...

PRATAP: Don't say such things, Manasa! It's I, Pratap, your husband.

MANASA: Oh! I had forgotten. Yes, what is it?

PRATAP: How long will this go on?

MANASA: What will go on?

PRATAP: I can't put up with this any more.

MANASA: Why? What's your problem? You belong to a great family, have more than enough money, lots of respect! What do you lack?

PRATAP: Please don't use such harsh words. My memories haunt me day and night.

MANASA: Oh! You think I have no memories at all? I had so many desires. And I loved you so much at one point of time!

PRATAP: I have suffered for what I did to you. Do you know how tortured I feel? Please, Manasa. You've stayed alone long enough. Let me come back to you, please. I'll forgive and forget everything. Let's turn a new Page.

MANASA: (Sarcastically) I appreciate your greatness! I thought as much when you came. that there must be a motive behind your visit.

PRATAP: No, not at all. I realized how important you were to me once we moved apart. I still love you.

MANASA: (Oh. love! Do you know what love is? Do you know its worth? I shan't repeat my mistakes and fall into your trap again. How dare you come here and say that you love me, after the way you treated me?)

PRATAP: Manasa, please listen to me. Please understand.

MANASA: I have understood you very well. Don't expect sympathy from me. PRATAP: Look, you had a goal and you've achieved it. I want us to get back together now. I won't ask you about your past. You don't have to tell me about your relationships... not even about the man you had the affair with. I'll forget it as a bad dream and forgive you. We won't talk about these things in the future.

(Manasa looks at him. stunned. Pratap comes close, grips, her shoulders.)

PRATAP: Just tell me one thing though, which is that child? Don't worry, I'll accept it as my own.

(Manasa turns slowly to face him. His hands slide from her shoulders. She places her hands on his shoulders.)

MANASA: (Sarcastically.) Wah! I must applaud you. What greatness! (Moving slightly away from him.) You look like forgiveness personified!

(The light focuses on Manasa and Pratap in the unlit area.)

Why bother to pretend? Neither I, nor my children matter to you. All that matters to you is your ego. I know, your ego gets a boost by proving me wrong. Anyway, I have nothing to tell you about my children or me. Who are you to forgive me? Foul-minded men like you don't even deserve a second chance. Go away. (Lights fade.)

## SCENE V

(Lights come on. Sister enters.)

MANASA: Have you come alone? (Sister looks sad and doesn't speak. comes Manasa comes forward and holds her hands.) What happened?

SISTER: Manasa, you have won. You overcame all obstacles that blocked your success. You have proved your worth as a woman, as an individual. But look at me...

(Light focuses on Akka and Manasa. Slow music plays in the background.) I lost myself somewhere in the futile attempt to hold on to my husband and my family. I have nothing left: no identity, no aspirations, no life, nothing to call mine. I am tired of chasing this mirage called happiness!

(She drops into a chair. Manasa hugs her and smooths her hair. Light focuses on them before a gradual fade out.)

## CURTAIN

About the Author:

Notes: The plot of The Swing of Desire (Mayye Bara, Manave Bara) deals with the disharmony in the conjugal life. The play presents the conjugal disharmony from the male as well as female point of view. The conjugal disharmony from female point of view is presented in the episode of Pratap and Manasa. Manasa is a renowned dancer and gets married Pratap who has worked as her secretary for many years. After their marriage, he has prohibited from performing

dances. After birth of some children, Manasa is willing to restart her profession of dance. When her husband tries to stop her, she causes an eternal haunting agony to him by stating that he is not father of one of their children. He undergoes a great amount of humiliation on one side and is unable to enjoy his fatherhood with his children without knowing which of them is not his child. Subsequently Manasa is abandoned by Pratap. Manasa resumes her dancing profession. After some years, Pratap is found among the audience witnessing Manasa's performance. There is a gossip among them about Manasa and her husband. Pratap meets her and pleads with her for their reunion which Manasa refuses. He requests her to clear the confusion about the child which he has not sired. She brushes this request aside and sends him away.

The conjugal disharmony from female of point of view is presented in the episode of Sister and Bhava. They are sister and brother-in-law of Pratap. Pratap is dissatisfied with his wife because he thinks that she is not intellectual match to him. He is irritated by her ignorance. So he breaks his conjugal relationship with her.

GLOSSARY chhi—expression of disgust

akka—elder sister

bhava—sister's husband

sanyasi—one who renounces the life of a householders

(Translation from the Kannada original by Chaitra Puttaswamy)

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