

Rebellious Scholar
PREMA SHAH
(A Biography of Prema Shah)



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Narendra Raj Prasai

Translated by
Anu Raj Joshi

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A Biography of Prema Shah by Narendra Raj Prasai,
Translated by Anu Raj Joshi.

Dedicated to Jal Shah

Publisher's Note

Nai Academy, ever since its establishment on January 29, 1996, is meditating in the world of Nepali Language – concentrating on the idea of ‘universal brotherhood’. Founded with the aim of uplifting ‘Nepali Literature’, it has always honored norms and values of tradition and culture, and will always continue to do so. Recognition of talents in the country and abroad is one of the main objectives of this literary organization.

Nai Academy has been engaged in identifying and appreciating talents in the field of Nepali art and culture; language and literature; social services; science and technology; school of thoughts; games and sports; and alike. It is also engaged in conducting various cultural programs from time to time as well as in publication of different series of books.

Nai Academy, ever adhering to pure Nepali values, norms, and assumptions is well on course to give exposure to every talent's constructive skills in a nice and pleasant manner. Indeed, after being born and expecting a cherishing life, it is the solemn duty of each and every one to dedicate oneself to singing in praise of one's motherland. In this context, this organization, Nai Academy, is proudly inspired by the belief that

service in the literary field is also an important aspect of service to the whole nation.

Nai Academy considers publication of this book entitled 'Rebellious Scholar : Prema Shah' by renowned literary figure Narendra Raj Prasai as another glorious achievement of this organization.

Late Prema Shah is crowned as the queen of erotic literature of Nepal. The life story of such literary celebrity by unparalleled biographer Narendra Raj Prasai will not only contribute in immortalizing the literary celebrity Prema Shah, but also will certainly enrich Nepal's literary treasure-house with yet another invaluable book.

Nai Academy congratulates and thanks Narendra Raj Prasai for his new success in biography writing. Thanks also goes to Anu Raj Joshi, the eldest son of Literary Century Person : Satya Mohan Joshi, for his translation work.

• **Nai Academy**

Translator's Note

On the surface, Narendra Raj Prasai had sounded to me like no more than an ordinary. But, in the inside, I found him quite miraculous.

He is the one who in close collaboration with his counterpart belonging to Nai had honored Madhav Prasad Ghimire as the National Poet of Nepal.

More than that, Nai has honored Satya Mohan Joshi, as Century Person (after evaluating all the contributors to Nepalese literature in the history of 200 years).

Nai stands for Yug-Dampati the epoch-making literary couple of Mr. Narendra Raj Prasai and Mrs. Indira Prasai. The both are renowned writers, each having written multiple dozen of books published at different dates. Nai is synonymous to Nai Academy as both of them are two of the founding members of the same and the both are running the literary organization very efficiently from top executive positions.

The efficacy of Nai's lobbying is immensely commendable. So much so, ultimately, Nepal Government had validated both of the above mentioned literary titles – National Poet and Century Person – in respective due time. Nepal Government

This time, I am reminded of a Chinese adage: A hungry chick encountered a broken grain of diamond. It expressed to itself, “How happy I could be if it turned into a broken grain of rice!”

Until reading the original version of Narendra Raj Prasai’s ‘Rebellious Scholar : Prema Shah’ in Nepali language, Prema Shah, for me, was not more than a broken piece of glass. But, now, I realized that she is a never falling shining star.

Narendra Raj Prasai is the one who discovered this shining star. He deserves great appreciation, this time too.

• **Anu Raj Joshi**

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Rebellious Scholar
PREMA SHAH

Letter to Jal Shah

(Introduction)

Dear niece Jal Shah!

I remember we cried together in telephone at the demise of Sister Prema. That time I could not come to your residence even though I was in USA. Now, she has already left. But I never thought she would go away from us so soon. I was very sad for many days.

She had loved me very much. She was very frank with me. She used to talk about herself, about paternal house, maternal house and about the entire life. She was never tired of talking with me because she had many things to talk about. So, we used to have long talks in telephone too.

Almost 20 years back, once, she came to my house carrying a bouquet of flowers. She handed the bouquet to us 'Nai' couple jointly.

Do you remember the varieties of flowers in that bouquet? They were red, white and yellow roses.

“Dd (elder sister)! How beautiful is this yellow flower, right?”

I remember how Indira had expressed her joy at the flowers.

I also remember what Sister Prema had replied,
“Jal did the choice of colors!”

Sister Prema’s dignity, thinking, and, wish were all very great. Familial pride of Rana’s and charm of Thakuri’s could be seen in her, even when she visited someone’s house. She had charismatic personality and courteous behavior. Totally lost to her qualities, I had wanted to follow her footsteps.

Sister Prema was a magnificent writer. All the writers (her contemporaries, predecessors and successors) often admired her as a world class writer. But, only a small portion of her talent had chance to flourish. Circumstances did not permit her to exhibit all of her talent to expected level.

Around the year 2001, she had told me that she was writing a novel. But, dear niece, I never saw that novel.

Dear Jal!

I had told you that since Sister Prema didn’t write, I will write. And I did write.

Once you finish reading this book ‘Rebellious Scholar : Prema Shah’, thoroughly, you might feel, “Why did uncle highlight so much on mom’s thinking on ‘sex’?” But you should not take it negatively. ‘Sex’ in itself is not bad, embarrassing or uncivilized topic. Rather, ‘Sex’ is one of the true manifestations of god.

You know, many centuries-old temples we worship are full of images displaying sexual

activities. Talking about sex is neither against religion nor against culture. Obviously our ancestors were very wise to provide sex-education publicly through icons and images in temples. No one knows for sure how sex became taboo or uncontrolled or chaotic in later time period.

Sister Prema was a broad minded writer. She was very wise in thinking. Her views on sex, in essence, are based on universal truth. She is great for ever because of her honest presentation of 'Sex'. Her courage to write erotic literature is the cause of her success. Her well-known writings 'Pahenlo Gulab' (meaning, Yellow Rose) and 'Eutai Sambhog' (meaning, The Only Intercourse) would not have emerged without her in-depth realization of sex psychology.

To write on sex during her time was a herculean task. Forget about writing! Those days, even male genders did not dare to talk about sex in front of others. Even the boys of that time were used to read literature (with sexual touch) in hiding only. But, she courageously composed a poem on sex and bravely recited that poem 'The Only Intercourse' in front of audience at a literary program in public place. She is the pioneer of erotic literature in Nepal.

Needless to mention, no one can stay away from sex. Sex is the integral part of every life of all the living beings. However, man the wisest of all creatures considers talking openly on sex matters as uncivilized (to various extents depending on what society the man belongs to). And, Sister Prema is the one who dared to talk about sex in public, but, in non-vulgar manner.

Because of this, she was eventually crowned as ‘Rebellious Scholar’.

Dear niece!

Sister Prema had revolted against that society which dictates that a wife should pass her entire life with her husband, irrespective of how unfit or immoral he is.

Her principle on then existing social practices was not limited to her literary creations. The coincidence, perhaps very rare, is that her real life turned out as the true reflection of some parts of her principle. She had divorced her first husband (arrange marriage) because of her deviation from then existing sexual norms. Few years later, she got married with another. She divorced the second husband, too, due to her differing conscience on sexual relationship. Thus she became rebellious.

Dear niece!

You may remember, I had started writing about her by writing in ‘Nari Chuli’ (meaning, Ladies at the Top). Now, this ‘Rebellious Scholar : Prema Shah is the full form of what I wrote in ‘Nari Chuli’ as well as many updates.

Once, I had told her,

“Sister! I will write your biography.”

She laughed and said,

“I will write my autobiography. You must read that!”

It has been so many years since we brother and sister talked so. But where is her autobiography? How can people read about such a renowned talent?

Dear niece!

Any idea if she wrote autobiography? And put aside somewhere? I feel that she didn't. But, on numerous occasions, she had told me different stories of her life. I have summed up all to the extent I could remember and prepared this manuscript. Had I had a chance to ask her to read, this book could have become even more authentic. I could have been luckier to experience smiles on her face while she read this book. This moment, I am reminded of her smiles when she read the above mentioned 'Nari Chuli' the fruit of my 20 years of endeavors. She had said, "What a nice book!"

Dear niece!

I wrote 'Rebellious Scholar Prema Shah'. I wrote her joys and sorrows. I wrote her experiences. I wrote her ideals. I wrote her contributions. But, it is impossible to include all!

Prema's Childhood

Unbelievably true, Prema Shah lacked even the parents' warmth right from her early infancy. She was separated from them on the 14th day of her birth and was taken from her parents' house in Shreepur, Birgunj (away from Kathmandu Valley) to her maternal uncle's house in Pulchok, Lalitpur in Kathmandu Valley.

As recorded in horoscope data, she was born on Friday, 28th July 1944. However, in general practice, her date of birth was referred as Friday, 29th June 1945. Her name in horoscope was Girirajlaxmi Shah.

Her father Purnendra Bikram Shah and mother Ambika Shah had five children. The daughters were named Shashi, Prema, Sharada and Punam. And the son was named Puran Bikram.

Having lost attachments with the parents from early infancy, she belonged only to maternal uncle's house. Here, the maternal grandfather Bigyan Sumsher JBR, who held the prestigious high position of an Army General, provided every possible support for the best nourishment and unparalleled upbringing of the infant. Her childhood as well as teenager days flourished lavishly at the General's house.

On the 14th day that she came into this world, she was entrusted on the lap of a wet nurse named Tulsidevi Koirala. Although she was in the prime of her youthful age, she devoted 24 hours a day in the care of the infant child. The truth is that, the wet nurse was the all in all in the world of this infant child. In Prema Shah's memory, the wet nurse never neglected or slackened in taking care of her since from her early childhood. Rather, the wet nurse was found whole heartedly devoted in her duty every night and day. Prema Shah had put her feelings about the wet nurse in her diary in this way, "My mother did not breastfeed me. For me, the wet nurse Tulsidevi was more than a real mother. I don't want to make unnecessary comments on the others, but, I must say this much about my 'wet nurse' mother – she and only she was my goddess in my real life."

In the maternal uncle's house, Prema Shah was regarded like an angel and more than an angel. Everybody loved her. Not only the wet nurse, every member in the house paid due attention in her care. She did not have to face any problem. She never felt lacking in anything. Her childhood days passed in a heavenly environment of nature. She never had to bother thinking about her parents and their house which was her true house by law. For her, the maternal uncle's house was her sweet home. In her ignorance, she was of the notion that nurse mother Tulsidevi was her true mother who gave birth to her.

Prema Shah had devotional regard for the nurse mother Tulsidevi. Once, she along with her young daughter Jal Shah had paid a visit to the wet nurse's house and introduced the daughter to her. On that

occasion, Prema had told the daughter Jal Shah, "Once I am well settled, I will do everything possible for the comfort of my mother (wet nurse)." But, that day never came. In other words, god did not listen to Prema's prayers.

The maternal uncle's house provided her with adequate support of all kinds. Facilities for learning and for sports activities were excellent. Tutors on different subjects were assigned right in the house for her primary education. Regarding this house, she had shared her feelings like this, "Everyone happens to have a house belonging to one's maternal uncle. But my case is different. I never felt my maternal uncle's house as the maternal uncle's house. For me, that very house was my own house. Irrespective of how unlucky I am, I always felt happy in this regard."

Prema's Education

Learning environment was very good in the maternal uncle's house. Prema had started learning alphabets in this very house. In this very house, she learned how to read and write. Tutors on different subjects were hired regularly to educate her in this very house. Having completed primary education in the house, she was enrolled directly in Class VI (morning session) in Patan High School.

She was self-esteemed about her physique and her beauty. Early from childhood, she never stepped out of the house without being well dressed. She never forgot her make-up to beautify her beauty. She attended her school in fancy dress. In her early school days, she attended classes in perfect make-up – cream-powdered face, gently but conspicuously painted eyes (with traditional lampblack), and diamond topped ears.

That time, she used to have Thai-cut hair style. She took pleasure in the feel of becoming like a beautiful ceremonial bride. A 'Hillman' branded black car was used for her to commute to and from her school. In those days, even the well-to-do public could not afford to even think about owning such a branded car. So, during the school days, her getups and dignity was extraordinary.

One year after she became a student of Patan High School, all the morning sessions of this school were moved to another school called Madan Memorial School. Then, she too became a student of Madan Memorial School. Here, she attended classes on tip-top silken dress. Envious of her outstanding getups, the classmates spoiled her dress by inking or by cutting with razors, secretly from behind.

Prema's bodyguard too was not less beautiful than Prema herself. Costumes they wore and tiffin delicacies they have had, clearly signified their superiority. Because of that, the students could not dare to approach in their proximity. Indeed, Prema's friends were very limited in number. She could not continue her study in this school either. She left after class eight.

The bodyguard or the one who escorted Prema Shah all along in the school was Saloni Thapa. She was picked for this job (in Bigyan Sumsher JBR's residence) from family relative Pushkar Sumsher JBR's residence where her service was found quite satisfactory. She was employed here with due consideration to her willingness, interest and demand as well. Her assignment in this house was to stay with Prema Shah like her shadow. She had to escort Prema wherever she might go. The school, neighbors, friends, shops or departmental stores or even movie theaters, wherever Prema went, Saloni followed.

Saloni Thapa too was very attractive. Moreover, Prema allowed her to use all the cosmetics she herself would use. Clothes and costumes worn just once or twice by Prema, also, would eventually fall into her hands. Daily tiffin for Prema sent in her hands was

shared too between the two during tiffin hour break in the school. That is the secret behind Saloni's sparkling appearance, second only to the beautiful Prema. Irresistibly lured by prime waves of youthful vitalities, typical of her growing young age, she happened to be attracted towards male fellows.

Saloni's perfectly mature youthfulness was sending appealing invitations to everyone including the teachers and the staffs in the school. In course of time, she happened to be engaged in intimate talks with a gatekeeper guard in that very school. That caused slackness in her to care about Prema in proper manner. Consequently, one day, after letting Prema to enter her classroom in the school, she walked away with that very guard named Dhan Bahadur. And she never returned to the residence of Bigyan Sumsher JBR. Then onward, Prema didn't feel the necessity of any bodyguard either, and decided to go alone to the school, confidently.

Ratna Dhoj Joshi was Prema's beloved teacher. Whereas Joshi was a man of calm, serious and controlled behavior, Prema was a dynamic young girl of uncontrolled behavior. Strange thing, Prema exhibited great honor to him. And, he treated her with no less affection. That's why he had helped her by all means. To prevent her from frustration, he thought of many helpful tidbits. Under such circumstance, he pushed her towards literary field. Needless to mention, his attempts contributed a lot for her to step towards writing career. She often remembered him in this way, "The only respectable one who had led me towards literary world is Ratna Dhoj Joshi."

Prema's high economic status including her getups, food and dignity were intolerable to both the envious teachers and the students so that she didn't feel comfortable in Madan Memorial School either. Then her school was changed to Tripadma School in the same district Patan or Lalitpur. She could not continue in this school too due to lack of friendly classmates. Her next school was Adarsh Kanya Niketan in Mangal Bazar. From this very school, she somehow managed to appear in SLC (School Leaving Certificate) exam in the year 1959 after having attended four different schools.

After SLC, she was no more interested in continuing her study. But his maternal uncle persuaded her to be enrolled in Patan College for I.A. (Intermediate of Arts). Here, too, she was not inclined towards her study. Instead, she started becoming active in literary field. She showed her compositions to her guru Ratna Dhoj Joshi. Irrespective of her poems being incompatible with then existing social norms and moral values, he appreciated all of them. It took four long years for her to pass I.A. in the third division in the year 1963.

Once she passed I.A., her literary activities increased multifold. She was engaged in writing poems and stories. About the same time, a valley-wide 'Inter-College Nepalbhasa Literary Conference' was held in Kathmandu Valley. She participated in this competitive literary conference with her story-writing entitled Prashnachinha (meaning 'Question Mark'). And she came out 'the first' in the competition with this very story-writing written in 'Nepalbhasa' language (also called 'Newari') which is quite different from her

mother tongue Nepali, the official language of Nepal. Mathura Sayemi became 'the second'. Mathura Sayemi, an established story writer since six decades and aged 80 now, is regarded, as the topmost novelist in the world of literature in 'Nepalbhāsa' language. So says, literary person Kashi Nath Tamot.

Distracted from study line because of addiction in literary field, it took four years for Prema to pass B.A. too, which could have been passed in two years. She had passed B.A. in the year 1967 from the same college (Patan College) in the third division. Then she joined M.A. class in TU (Tribhuvan University) , Kirtipur. That time, that was the only institution where master level classes were run.

After joining M.A., her body language changed drastically. Flattered by boy-classmates, she chose to concentrate in writing erotic literature. Everyone would encourage her to recite her poems. And she used to read her poems with erotic titles like 'I want to make love with the Sun'. Her classmates that time were – Daibgya Raj Neupane, Dr. Benju Sharma, Gopal Yonjan, Hiranya Bhojpure, Pitambar Dahal and so on. But the prince of her heart was Purushottam Basnet since 4 or 5 years back.

Whenever Prema would start reading her passionate poems of sensual or erotic nature, the girl classmates would start hiding their blushed faces. On the contrary, the boy classmates would jump repeatedly in big applauds. She continued her study in the environment of such bombastic encouragements.

Her chief guru in M.A. was Prof. Dr. Basudev Tripathi. Time and again, he used to counsel her to

refrain from rein-less excitements. Tripathi still remembers her distinctly unique sensuous glow, body language and manners of those days. The way she was fearless and restless, the way she was dignified and talented.

She loved to crack jokes even with the guru entering classroom to teach them, in this manner, "Sir, aren't you nervous-like to come in front of so many of us young girls?" She was very frank in reading and writing. Her interest in sexual subject matters was remarkably prominent. Moreover, she liked to discuss unhesitatingly with the professors on this topic. She was amicable in the class. But she couldn't stand excessive kidding and jumped too fast to counter. Struggling with social, familial and personal problems, she did pass M.A. in the year 1969 in the second division.

Around the year 1971, Prema devoted her free time in Banaras in painting. Meanwhile, at the inspiration of her husband Janavi Pratap Shah, she joined boutique painting course. In fact, she was interested in painting since her early days. Once she got married, the husband tried to help her fulfill her long-standing wish.

In connection with Prema's painting field, contribution of Tekbir Mukhiya is noteworthy. Actually, he was the one who taught her how to paint. That time, Mukhiya used to shelter nearby her residence. That made possible for him to visit her house at ease in the mornings and evenings. He is the one from whom she had learnt a, b, c of painting. He always says, "Prema was a mysterious lady. She was very

friendly, and, at the same time, very stubborn. She never gave up her style, manner and dignity. She was the princess of her own will."

While studying in Banaras, Prema used to stay in hostel and her husband stayed in nearby shelter. He had helped her a lot to study there in Banaras Hindu University. And she did complete successfully the diploma course on boutique painting from that university in the year 1974.

In the mean time she managed to study ceramics. Also, while at study in Banaras, she had an opportunity to exhibit some of her painting works in a painting exhibition organized by Indian Academy Relationship Committee, Patna. After her divorce with the husband, she went to Japan for further study on boutique painting. She stayed in Japan for more than a year. There, she did some part-time job too.

Prema's Name and Fame

Prema was in the track of singing and dancing since her young age. She was regarded a fearless, determined and dynamic writer among her contemporaries. Those days in Kathmandu, her mere appearance on the stage were followed by big applauds filled with sensational vigor and vitalities. Each time she recited her poem, the audience as a whole experienced as if she had escorted them to journey into a poetic world. Her motto and her poems have broadened the dimension of Nepali literature to a record high. Because of her incomparable talents, she earned name and fame. Eventually, she became a never falling shining star in the sky of Nepali literature.

Prema became popular within a short span of time, by writing. She became famous with her poems. She had devoted her heart and soul in writing. Even after meeting success after success, she never stopped writing. Sometimes she wrote poems, sometimes plays and sometimes stories. Other time, she wrote novels.

Because of writing, she became more and more popular. Her popularity knew no bounds until the climax of her popularity. Then, all of a sudden, she was

lost from the literary world. She became entangled in devoting all her time in basic needs. Health condition and mental tension did not permit her to continue writing. Almost a decade long literary journey was broken, totally.

Actually, her literary creativity had collapsed with the collapse of her relationship with Purushottam Basnet in 1970. Nevertheless, she was successful in maintaining her supreme literary quality throughout her creative period. Great critic Dr. Basudev Tripathi opines that she had developed her own track in literature which is so unique that it should be named after her own name as Prema-track.

Prema was a powerful magnet during the year 1966 when she was 21 or 22 years of age. Irrespective of haters or lovers of erotic literature, everyone in the field of literature was gravitated towards her under the influence either of her charming personality or of her creativity, or possibly, because of the both. In a circumstance like this, renowned literary figure Kedarman Vyathit had invited her as special guest to participate in 'First Nationwide Literary Conference' held in Jhapa in eastern Nepal.

Vyathit was then a government minister with portfolios of irrigation, electricity, communication, construction and transport ministries. He was the sponsor of this nationwide grand conference participated by all the prominent literary figures of the nation as well as some prominent litterateurs like Indra Bahadur Rai from India. Mahanand Sapkota was the assigned chairman of this conference.

The grand conference was fully packed with literary audience. In connection to the grand

conference, Kanchan Pudasaini has mentioned this, “Miss Prema Shah, slimmer than usual, looked nervous – as if searching for something inside her mind; also as if totally forgotten by someone. Not very long ago, at a literary program in Kathmandu, she had recited her poem entitled 'Come, make love to me', so it is said. Curious about this poem, some dared to test the heart of this mysterious virgin beauty. But, that literary creation of hers was neither a romantic expression nor an intoxicated lust of love. As she did not appear on the stage even after nearly two hours since the poems recital program had started, her presentation was requested through a chit to the chairman of the conference. Expectation from the beauty of the town who recently had openly invited with her poem 'Come, make love to me' was that – she would deliver something satisfying. But, the contrary happened. She came to the stage, read few charmless lines from a piece of paper and left to the disappointment of all.”

Literary people were lured by the aroma and charisma of her creativity, no matter where she went. Another literary person Bhagirathi Shrestha, who also participated in that First Nationwide Literary Conference held in Jhapa, says, “That time was Prema's time. Prema Shah was prevalent in everybody's mind. She was not only a beauty, but also an intellectual. And, she was not only an intellectual, but also a beauty. We shared the same room in Jhapa for three nights. Then it became known to me that love affair between Prema Shah and Purushottam Basnet was at the climax. There, she had asked me time and again, ‘Bhagirathi, please tell him to come to me’.”

She was rebellious in character. The root cause of this was her maternal grandfather General Bigyan Sumsher JBR. Her heart was filled with hatred for him. She often avoided encountering him. In case of argument, she was not scared to offend him. She was frank, a good orator and a justice lover. Her dignity was founded on those very basics.

The grandfather General Bigyan Sumsher JBR was a representative of tradition-old cruel culture. He did not treat inferior class people as humans. On the other hand, he did not have gut to speak in front of people of superior class. He used to slap the servants with shoes. He had punished cooks and maids by hurling them down the entire stairs. He also had sexually harassed and raped the maids. Those who got pregnant were wedded to a male attendant and the new couples were sent off with some money.

One of the family members in the house of such Army General was Prema Shah, his grandchild. And she was a writer. Under her shadowy protective surroundings, the general had engaged himself in dirty, immoral and inhumane activities. But this grandchild was too smart to be fooled or silenced. She began to think of teaching him a lesson. So she recorded his activities in her diary. Embarrassed, perhaps, to publicize her own household affairs by herself, she had ventilated her bitter feelings to Narendra Raj Prasai.

Having witnessed the general's cruel, immoral and inhumane activities as a child, as an adolescent, and as a young youth, she was completely fed up. She needed to ventilate her feelings somehow. Obviously, her writings reflected all those scenarios in one way or other. In fact the general's house became her school of

erotic writing. She could never let go those scenarios from her mind.

Those events at home played significant role in her attitude and life style. Moved by such events, she judged justified to write on the genre which the local society at that time considered immoral genre. Thus she became the pioneer of the nation to write erotic literature, shamefully digesting the shame. And, she is hailed even after her demise to this date, not only as a pioneer but also as an incomparably successful traveler into the world of erotic literature.

Prema Shah's dynamic personality was very influential. Her friends were stunned by her talent. Her classmate in M.A., Hiranya Bhojpure , who is a singer as well as musician and lyricist, has said, "She is a writer with modern thinking. Through her writings, she went on unveiling herself completely, and completely unveiling the society as well by heart and by words and by deeds."

During her M.A. days, she had become extremely popular in her circle. No one was untouched by the influence of her celebrity. Mystified by her magical writings, very few could resist the irresistible urge to meet her. Under such circumstance, one time popular duo Hiranya Bhojpure and Ganesh Rasik, too, went to see her.

That was about the year 1968. Very often, Hiranya Bhojpure and Ganesh Rasik were seen singing together on the stage. Organizers of music program in Kathmandu never forgot the duo whose popularity was at the peak level. Approached by such popular duo and moved by the duo's indomitable spirit, she agreed that the duo would furnish music to a song she just composed.

Unfortunately, this beautiful song did not get recorded during her life time. However, this song is well preserved inside the temple of Nepal's literary world forever, and ever, and ever.

Who knows,
One day
Time will stop between us!

Who knows,
When all the memories fade away,
You and I will have
Separate nights and different days!

Who knows,
There will be no more words to talk
While talking!

Who knows,
Amidst lovely touches,
A single touch would
Spoil the entire aroma of the flower!

Who knows,
Towering of the peaks result in
Crashing avalanches!

Who knows,
In spite of all the precautions,
There will be a blunder
Affecting the entire life!

Who knows,
A single flight
Ends butterfly's life.

Who knows,
Even without any accident,
One simple thought may cause
Even the mind's death!

Prema's Beauty

Boys followed her blindly during school days. Once in the college, after SLC, her study was greatly hampered by having to get clear of the boys every now and then. Many males got themselves lured by her beauty. Mostly, the educated ones could not help being gravitated towards her. The other way round, she had numerous opportunities to observe and study colors of many males. But very few of them suited to her likings. Even though Purushottam Basnet was already in her heart, secretly, number of boys wanting to escort her could not have been counted on fingers. That was because of her free and frank behavior; also because of her attraction towards boys. Needless to mention her attractive posture and beautiful appearance!

During her college days, many boys attempted to become close to her. Some even tried to promise her the stars and the moon. The truth was that, beautiful as she was in appearance, she was free and frank in character and had beautiful manners. Her getups too used to be magnificent. On top of that, her careful facial make-up with expensive special cosmetics made her even more beautiful. Indeed, she was a princess of imagination.

Learned scholar Dhruva Chandra Gautam opines that she was an embodiment of incomparable beauty. Her amicable manners pleased everyone. When she wrote, she wrote poems and stories that mystified the readers, male readers in particular. At school, at college and at the university, she often had to remain clear off the boys in order to continue her study. In the mean time she became addicted in literary creations.

Prema Shah was always attracted towards males, in spite of her busy appointments. She was an expert in dating business, in a manner that was courteous, gentle and dignified. According to many, a gentleman named Bamdev Pahadi had received her words to get wedded. Later, she broke her promise so that he was heartbroken for quite some years. He used to complain about this among his near and dear ones. But she defended this rumor as one sided love. Renowned Iswor Ballav has said that Mr. Pahadi used to wait for her on the way and had even asked her photo. When this activity became too much, she had requested Hemraj Sapkota (son of Mahanand Sapkota) and some others to counsel Mr. Pahadi.

Sometime during the year 1965, Bamdev Pahadi the failure in love affair with Prema, used to walk hither and thither aimlessly like a mad person. When this rumor spread all around and reached Chuhandanda in Terahthum district, two well-known social workers there, Padma Prasad Upreti and Hari Charan Sitoula, inquired his whereabouts. They found him, counseled him and cooled him. They took him to Birendra Inter College which they had recently established. And they seated him in the position of

the Principal of that very college. But, even after that, he was found mentally disturbed time and again for quite long time due to his inability to forget his love affair with Prema.

People in Pahadi's favor used to say Prema betrayed him. But, unbiased people in the intellectual circle used to say like this, "She is an incomparable beauty, as pure as 24-carat gold." True, many educated males fell into one-sided love affair with her, because of the fact that – she was educated, smart and beautiful and also because she was a talented tantalizing writer. Just because she responded with warm smiles and reciprocated with nice words, many males misunderstood her. Mystifyingly, they took her as another Mona Lisa. Each individual interpreted her warm-heartedness excessively, so that many males became broken-hearted.

Another gentleman who got close to her but later kicked out by her is Puskar Lohani, an intellectual. Whereas she was engaged in writing erotic literature, he used to write on homosexual and lesbian subject matters. There was a sort of writing competition between the two. Prema might have admired his writings or she might have talked with him warm-heartedly or both of them might have exchanged humorous jokes on several occasions. Whatever could have happened had already happened. But, Puskar Lohani never gave up complaining, "I had loved her, but she betrayed me", even after her death.

Irrespective of good or bad times in relationship between the two, Puskar Lohani was never biased in the evaluation of her writings and her personality. He

was never tired of appreciating her talent. Indeed he is another dedicated admirer of her beauty and her talents. He always says, “I regard Prema Shah as a top class talented writer. Not only that she was at the topmost position in writing in her genre, she did study a lot before writing. Influential writing, heart touching oration and nonconformist thinking seated her in high position, even higher than that of the well-known Parijat's position.” According to him, “Parijat's evaluation does not seem fair. Indeed a certain clique was engaged in aggrandizing her excessively. So, it will not be wise to compare Prema Shah with the others. However, I must say, Prema Shah and Prema Shah only is the one who wrote for very limited time, yet, touched the unlimited ceiling in the sky. Moreover, in writing affairs, I consider quite unnecessary to discriminate her as a female writer. In those days, more than 55 years ago, she was the only person who dared to speak up and write on sex genre; that too, very interestingly as well as in non-vulgar manner. Whenever she talked openly on sex, she used to be surrounded by many writers. Among those who followed her all around remarkably were – Purushottam Basnet, Upendra Shrestha, Bamdev Pahadi, Dwarika Shrestha, Basu Rimal 'Yatri', Madan Regmi, senior novelist Kanak Dip and I myself.”

How many gentlemen came close to her and how many walked away! This is very, very personal matter. Some became successful even in assassinating her character while some remained devoted to her throughout their entire life. But the truth is that friends who remained mentally clung till the end were very limited in number. Yet another friend, very intimate

with her, was Dr. Dhruva Chandra Gautam. However, Purushottam Basnet was the only guy who sacrificed his life in her love – by words and by deeds. He loved her from the bottom of his heart. He went deep down into the ocean of her love. And he could never come out of that ocean.

Many lust-mongers were active seeking chances to feel her heart, simply because she was in the bloom of everything including her beauty as well as her intellect, and, also because she belonged to high class rich family. They plotted quite a number of plans to reach near her. Even though she escaped from many plots, some gentlemen were just invincible.

That was the time when nutritious diet delicacies typical of high class Rana families had contributed in arousal of young Prema's sexual desire to the uncontrolled level. Moreover, as she joined M.A. class, she started exhibiting her complexion and beauty to the maximum possible extent. That contributed further to her ever attractive personality. According to Prema's then classmate Dr. Benju Sharma, while studying M.A., Prema had established friendship with a girl named Omkumari Acharya from Dharan in eastern Nepal who was staying in nearby girl's hostel in Kirtipur. Then after, she even used her room for refreshing her make-up and for dress change as well.

No one knows more about Prema Shah than her contemporary friends. Dr. Benju Sharma is the one among them who could read Prema's mind. The two were friends since they started joining M.A. She wrote an article on Prema Shah in Kantipur daily dated 27

Jan. 2018. An excerpt – “She was not just beautiful, but very beautiful. It was impossible for anyone to not like her at that time. But very few had gut to express in front of her. A descendant of well-to-do family, she lacked nothing. So it seemed. While sitting close together and experiencing her unique personality, seriousness and tender heart, I felt that something was not perfect inside her. And that imperfection was growing like an empire. She used to open her heart to me.”

“Those days, Prema's lovers kept on coming. ‘Today, when he comes, please leave me free’, she used to say. She used to take up position in Kirtipur height with Omkumari and me, so that the others might not see us, but we could see whoever came, right from quite some distance. Sitting there, she used to fix her hair, re-apply lipstick, absorb sweat with face-powder-cloth and look bright. On the day her lover was supposed to come, she used to wear a flower on the hair. She looked passionate on that day. Afterwards, she had told me the reason why she could not marry him. She told me that she was innocent in this matter, and I believed her.”

Writers who were favorite to her and writers who were within her reach while she was studying M.A. for higher education were – Ratna Dhoj Joshi, Diamond Sumsher Rana, Kedarman Vyathit, Bijay Malla, Parijat, Purushottam Basnet, Dhruba Chandra Gautam, Dwarika Shrestha, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha, Madan Regmi, Shailendra Sakar and others.

Although she and Dhruba Chandra Gautam were from the same district, they got introduced

around Kathmandu in Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya's house in Kuponjol, Lalitpur about the year 1966. That day, Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya, a minister of Nepal Government, had invited writers Purushottam Basnet, Prema Shah, Dwarika Shrestha, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha, Madan Regmi, Harihar Raj Joshi, Puskar Lohani, Upendra Shrestha, Dhruba Chandra Gautam and others at a literary seminar organized in his house lounge. The two from Birgunj, Shah and Gautam, became familiarized in no time. She mentioned him till later date, "Dhruba has helped me in my need." Gautam also used to respect her and love her. The thinking of the two was in harmony with each other. In this connection, Dr. Gautam has said, "We often happened to meet in Birgunj. Whenever I went there, we did come in contact. In every meeting, we used to have interesting chat. During our meeting, we used to ride on three-wheeler rickshaw or walk together. The achievement of the meeting used to be walk-together or ride-together around Birgunj for pleasure.

Prema Shah and Dhruba Chandra Gautam had trust on each other. They used to discuss about their new writings. Both of them had best regards for each other in the literary field too. Whereas Dhruba Chandra was a sober gentleman, Prema was very smart in body language. But Dhruba could not venture to take liberty in public. So, even though they were close together, it was like miles apart.

'Nai' couple too was well aware of intimacy between Prema Shah and novelist Dhruba Chandra Gautam. So, once, 'Nai' couple had organized an evening dinner in 'Nai' Residence in honor of three

persons – Jal Shah (accompanying her mother), Prema Shah and Dr Dhruva Chandra Gautam. On that occasion, Prema filled Gautam's glass time and again, even though she herself did not take any drop. It is said that, Gautam too was a man of gentle heart. More than a renowned novelist, he is a dedicated humanist. He likes to present himself as a singer too. Obviously, he did sing songs on that occasion. Prema used to admire him because of his benevolence. She used to take him to her house and entertain drinks of his favorite brand.

The most trusted guy whom Prema had relied on throughout the years from 1963 to 1983 is Mr. Kashi Nath Tamot, a helpful gentleman. Other close friends were Kanak Dip, Basu Rimal 'Yatri' and Madan Regmi.

Prema Shah was a mysterious lady. Even the near and dear ones were not aware of what she had in her mind. But, everybody knew that she had permanently imprisoned Purushottam Basnet inside her heart. But, her desire for him never fulfilled completely. Too many, more than too many, hurdles came in between the true love of the two and they were separated day after day. And she remained starved of her true love for ever. Afterwards, she happened to express on more than one occasions, “In this world, there can be no suitor as worthy as Basnet.” However, her diary reveals this, “If JF Kennedy (ex-president of USA) happens to come alive in front of me and proposes me, I still have a desire to live the rest of my life with him, faithfully.”

Her wish to have a husband like Kennedy was not fulfilled. Nevertheless, she got the opportunity to

live the later part of her life in the land of that very Kennedy. At the other side, irrespective of where Prema was or where she did go, Purushottam Basnet is forever hanging on to Prema's love. Whereas almost all of many other admirers of Prema started forgetting her gradually, to this date, Purushottan Basnet continues to appreciate her, admire her and want her forever, and ever, and ever.

Prema and Purushottam

They met for the first time in Kathmandu in the beginning of the year 1962. She was studying I.A. He was staying in government run 'Boys' Central Hostel' in Laldurbar. That is the same building where today's Hotel Yak & Yeti is situated. This hostel was, later, moved to Tahachal.

The two were of the same age group. The both had similar views. In no time, they were in good speaking terms. They happened to meet again and again. By that time, Prema had begun to attend literary programs. Meanwhile, Purushottam had begun to admire her interest, inclination and dedication in literary field. Prema on the other hand was attracted more and more towards him because of his friendly and co-operational behavior as well as his appreciation of literature. That was how the relationship began.

While he was in the Central Hostel, literary journal 'Mukut' (meaning, 'Crown') used to be published under the editorship of Purushottam Basnet and Hemraj Sapkota. About the same time, Prema was already in a position of getting her articles published in journals and papers. Those who encouraged her in this matter were Kedarman

Vyathit, Bijay Malla and Ratna Dhoj Joshi. Once her articles were published in 'Sharada' journal, she became interested in getting her articles published in other journals as well. In the process of getting her article published in Mukut journal, she happened to reach close to Purushottam. Soon, her articles started getting published in Mukut too.

Whatever she wrote, she showed that to Purushottam. In other words, he became the firsthand reader of Prema's writings. He began to be impressed by her courage and talent. More than that, her literary personality, as well as bodily beauties had attracted him towards her. She too could not resist herself being attracted by his honesty, intellectual maturity as well as handsome physique and personality.

In the year 1964, a literary conference was held in National Theatre, Kathmandu. Prema recited a poem entitled 'Aau Malai Sambhog Gar!' (meaning, 'Come, make love to me!'). That became extremely sensational. At a time when majority of females in the society felt shy even to expose their faces proudly, a beautiful young girl openly appealed the mass of audience with such erotic poem. What a courage! (This poem did not get published in any journal. But, she was successful, sometime later, to get its prose version published in the monthly journal 'Mukut'.)

Great literary person Kedarman Vyathit had thanked and congratulated her right on the spot in the conference for her talent and courage in writing and reciting such a sensational poem. Another well-known writer Vijay Malla too had congratulated her right on the spot for her talent as well as courage. Next, who came forward to congratulate her, was the handsome

guy Purushottam Basnet who is also a writer. He did congratulate her. And, he did so whole heartedly with a lovely pat. That lovely pat of appreciation took Prema to another peak of literary world. Then onwards, contemporary literary world witnessed the two walking together very frequently.

The relationship between Prema Shah and Purushottam Basnet continued to advance day by day. He gave up his staying in the hostel. He returned home in Sifal Height. He commuted on Japanese brand 161 cc Honda Motorcycle. Since he belonged to a rich family, he could afford to acquire branded transport vehicles of his choice. At that time, only exceptionally few could afford to have such branded transport vehicle. According to Krishna Bhakta Shrestha, “Purishottam Basnet was very rich. The one who had helped Tarini Prasad Koirala was Purishottam’s father. That time, former prime minister of Nepal BP used to stay in Tarini Prasad's house in Chabahil. Purishottam's father had helped not only Tarini Prasad, but also many activists of Nepali Congress Party from time to time, financially.”

Those days, very few motorcycles were seen in Kathmandu. Often seeing Prema Shah in the back-seat of deep-red colored motorcycle (with number plate U.Ka. 1105) driven by Purushottam Basnet, many literary figures including Kedarman Vyathit, Bijay Malla, Parijat, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha, Dwarika Shrestha, and Madan Regmi had expressed that she was very lucky. At the same time, many envied the courageous, brave, and lucky gentleman Purushottam Basnet who had the opportunity to escort such a talented, young and beautiful girl.

The rumor of love affair between Purushottam Basnet and Prema Shah had added colors to every literary program in those days. The two were aware that their frequent participation in literary programs had led them to the ocean of love. And it did not take long for this to become transparent to all in the society. Krishna Bhakta Shrestha has said, "That time, they looked like a married couple." Indeed, they looked like a mutually devoted couple matchmade by the almighty. Wholly dedicated in his love, she even composed poems dedicated to Purushottam Basnet's love and care, and affection.

Oh handsome guy!
Please don't look at me
While the heaven and the earth is dating.
You will make me overwhelmed by mystic desire.

Along the track of your vision,
This life goes on prolonging.
In the dawn just approaching,
The sighs of tiredness fly away with the faint fog.

Then,
My dream,
In the condition of
Remains of a dead temple of love,
Becomes a beautiful song.

This reality of life,
Barely at the level of survival,
Is acceptable,
But, scary.
Let this reality of life not show up
Like a dream
Only to wait for
My first night of sleep.

So,
Oh handsome guy!
Please don't come near me.
Better,
Never look at me.

Looking at your beautiful caring eyes,
My mind
Wanders in the prime of your love.
And keeps on flying like a butterfly.

Yet,
My desire never dies.
Under your eyes and under sparkling sands,
Innumerable drops of my true love
Try to float like the pearls.

But,
Alas!
Unknowingly,
The evening of doubt falls
On my sincere wishes.

So,
Oh handsome guy!
Don't come with lust of love
In the wine-pot of your eyes
And ask me to drink.

Please stop your practice of waiting
With glowing eyes
In this lonely trails,
Where my life travels.

Put out this delicate lamp of memory,
While it is still the day!

Purushottam Basnet used to go to meet Prema Shah in Bigyan Sumsher JBR's residence in Lalitpur almost every day. However, he was not that much appreciated person in that family. The simple reason, Rana family considered him an already married person. But his marriage was a marriage in name only, which the Rana family did not want to accept. True, his marriage took place in his village Okhaldhunga when he was just 14 years of age. And he never met the bride after the marriage event was over. Also true, his in-law side had threatened Prema Shah and her maternal uncle's family time and again that, if Prema gets married with him, they would take this polygamy case to the court and file lawsuit against them. On the other hand, there was caste problem. He was a Chhetri whereas she was a Thakuri. Further, there was political problem. He was a political activist very active against the existing Panchyat System of Government in the country. That was why he was considered totally unfit to be married with Prema Shah.

The love affair between Prema Shah and Purushottam Basnet had continued to advance even without family support. The Rana family stopped extending any kind of warmth for them. They faced more and more hurdles and embarrassments on their journey of love. In spite of this, the unwelcome guy, Purushottam Basnet, did not stop visiting the Rana residence.

Very few people used to be present in Rana residence at the time of Purushottam's arrival. That was conducive for their cozy intimacy. But in later days, as she could not stand the chiding of the Rana family any more, she asked him to stop coming in

that house. Hurdles in their journey of love were compounded by social constraints too as they belonged to different conservative castes, Thakuri (Rana) and Chhetri (Basnet).

Series of day-long hours of sitting together did not quench each other's thirst of love between Prema and Purushottam. They exchanged many love letters consolidating their love. She used to address him as 'Dear Basnetji' and he used to address her plainly as 'Prema'. Her letter to him started with 'Dear Basnetji' and ended with 'Timri Prema' (meaning, 'Your Prema'). While reading her letters, he never realized the passing away of time. No wonder, she was very much talented, particularly in prose writing. Unfortunately, all those invaluable love letters along with letters of former prime minister of Nepal BP Koirala and Dharnidhar Koirala were confiscated in a police raid in the year 1970.

Their love affair started at the age of 19 or 20. In course of time, the affair flourished and they were planning to get married. But the family of Bigyan Sumsher was against the idea of her being married with an already married guy who belonged to lower social class. They had counseled her time and again to drop his company. But she was determined in her mind, not to go away from him who she had already seated in her heart.

Because of the ongoing love affair between the two, once, there was a big quarrel within the family circle. During the quarrel, former Nepalese Ambassador to India, Daman Sumsher spoke violently against Basnet. Prema could not stand the

offensive words against her lover to that extent. Consequently, she took up arms against Daman Sumsher (her own another grandpa, the elder brother of Bigyan Sumsher). With a pistol in hand, she did go after Daman Sumsher and shot at him. However, he was saved by the others by intervening her target. That being the case, her maternal uncle Barun Sumsher sometimes mentioned her as a communist. The grandfather Bigyan Sumsher almost always said, she was a communist.

When she joined M.A. in TU, Basnet used to go there to meet her. With the maturity of their age, the love affair between the two was advancing towards matured level. Well-known literary figure Bijay Malla was a well-wisher. While only one of the two was with him, he praised the other who was not present. In presence of both of them, he used to admire the both. He had wanted to see complete success of the love affair between the two.

The world of love between Prema and Purushottam was very colorful. It became even more colorful, also, because of 'Indira Resturant' in New Road, Kathmandu. The youth couple used to spend hours and hours in this restaurant, sometimes only two of them, and, sometimes with the company of quite a number of friends. Everyone who went to that restaurant in the evening could find these two love partners sitting there cozily. Apart from this, the two love partners used to visit other interesting cozy places around Kathmandu with literary friends.

Prema Shah was not interested in politics. She was more than happy in literature. But, Basnet was

involved in politics more than in literature. Indeed, he was a very active activist of then banned Nepali Congress Party. So, overtly seen as a literary person, Basnet was covertly engaged in political activities of Nepali Congress, very actively. That was the time of Panchyat System of Government in the country. The government was extremely repressive against politics of opposition nature. At a time like this, when former prime minister of Nepal BP Koirala was in jail, Basnet used to send newspapers for BP inside the jail. When he reached Banars after being freed from the jail, Basnet used to go to Benaras to meet him from time to time. Banaras used to be the headquarters of Nepali Congress Party.

The love affair between Prema Shah and Purushottam Basnet flourished to peak level. They decided to visit Banaras before getting married. So, they went to Banaras by air. There, Prema too met former prime minister of Nepal BP Koirala along with Basnet. They stayed there for one week. Their time in Banaras was spent on exploring streets in the morning and romancing while swimming and boating in the Ganges River during the day.

Soon after returning Nepal from the romantic visit to Banaras, it was decided by all concerned that their marriage would take place the next year. Unfortunately, the same year Purushottam's father Makardhoj Basnet expired in 1970. There was no question of marriage rituals being performed during the mourning period of one year. Just before the completion of the mourning period, the government issued arrest warrant against Purushottam Basnet. And, he went underground.

Following the arrest warrant, Police raided every possible location in search of him. Bigyan Sumsher JBR's house also was raided. That became a great prestige issue. The Rana family persistently pressured her from all sides to forget him and to get married with a suitable bride of high class family, Rana or Thakuri.

With the passing of each awful day, Prema Shah began to lose her confidence that an underground fellow revolting against the national government would ever be able to come out to any reputable position in the society. Moreover, her family had been lobbying against him that he is not a virgin bachelor, but someone who already had married certain other girl.

She began to realize the absurdity of getting married with someone who is actively engaged against the country's government and is already married to some other girl. Of course, she knew beforehand that his marriage had taken place when he was a child of fourteen years, and, he had told her that he had no relationship with her, moments after the marriage ritual was accomplished. No doubt, Prema had trusted him, and, had faith in him, so far. Notwithstanding this reality, because of constant pressure from family side and also because of the communication gap ever since he went underground suddenly without informing her, Prema dared to forget him in a sudden whim.

Inspired by amazing flowery words of her elder sister Shashi Rana and maternal aunt Kanakrajyalaxmi Rana (wife of maternal uncle Barun Sumsher Rana),

she had decided to forget Basnet. That was about the time when family members around him never stopped talking like this, “The rebel politician acting against the government can never rise from the underground. Only a fool would marry him. Such a marriage would not bring any happiness. Marrying such an anti-government agent would bring cries throughout the entire life.” The elder sister persistently recommended her a rich man called Janabi Pratap Shahi. She was under so much intense pressure that she had had no any other choice. At last, her marriage was settled with Mr. Shahi. Finally, her marriage with Mr. Shahi, an Indian citizen, did take place in India. Ultimately, in this way, Prema had turned Basnet's temple of love down into ruins.

The Rana family was overwhelmed with joy on the occasion of Prema Shah's becoming a wife of Janabi Pratap Shahi, an Indian citizen. About the same time, Prema's maternal uncle Barun Shumsher Rana had belittled Purushottam Basnet's close friend Krishna Bhakta Shrestha in this way, “Did you see? Ha, Ha, Ha! Didn't we protect our nephew? Could your friend marry my nephew? Are you still boasting?”

Barun Sumsher Rana, then, was the editor of ‘The Rising Nepal’ which is the English language official mouthpiece of state owned Gorkhapatra Corporation. Krishna Bhakta Shrestha was the co-editor of the same. In later days, Shrestha rose to the position of the editor of Gorkhapatra (Nepali language daily newspaper, the main publication of Gorkhapatra Corporation) and finally to the General Manager (the chief of the same Corporation).

Almost two decades later, Purushottam Basnet became the Executive Director of Gorkhapatra Corporation around the year 1991. Barun Sumsher Rana continued to work in the same organization under him. To be precise, Barun Sumsher was then the editor of 'Sunday Dispatch', an English language weekly of the same organization. Later, this paper could not gain popularity. Notwithstanding this fact, Barun Sumsher did fulfill his official responsibility under Basnet without any prejudice. They had exchanged their views on betterment of the paper from time to time, frankly – as if, both of them were not aware of the past events and the enmity.

Purushottan Basnet was an honest learned man. He was a holder of M.A. and LL.B. degrees. He was a man of 'simple living, high thinking'. He had no greed of any kind. He was considered one of the very few clean persons in Nepali Congress Party. To this date, he is living a simple life with a glorious clean image.

In the year 1970, Purushottam Basnet was arrested while underground. Undoubtedly, the Rana family itself, closely affiliated to the government at that time, had conspired to put him in jail. Politician Basnet, seating his love Prema in his heart, was staying away from her against his will. He did come out of jail after few years, but he realized that, by this time, he was already too tired of life. Having failed in love affair with Prema, he did not think of loving anyone else. As a matter of fact, his love with Prema was his first love. And, that was his last love too.

Purushottam Basnet not only loved Prema whole heartedly, he was a dedicated lover of her talent too.

He always wished for smooth continuation of her creative talent for ever. During his meets with Nai couple, he used to express repeatedly, “In later days, Prema has stopped writing. She should have continued her writing.”

Purushottam Basnet’s mind was troubled by facts about Prema’s unsuccessful first marriage. An already married old man had married her by cheating. She divorced him when she knew that the husband was not only old and married, but also father of several children; moreover, he had married her only after vasectomy operation.

The fact that Prema the princess of his heart was cheated by more than one man at different times made Purushottam badly wounded deep inside his heart. Renowned author Bijay Malla had endeavored to reunite Prema and Basnet after her divorce with Mr. Shahi, but she refused.

When Purushottam Basnet became aware of the fact that Prema had married Ramesh Karmacharya, he had prayed for nothing but her happiness.

One day in the year 1985, Purushottam Basnet was having boot polish under ‘ficus religiosa’ tree in New Road, Kathmandu. Prema Shah happened to come to the same spot. She asked the cobbler to repair her slipper she wore. The cobbler, after inspecting the slipper carefully, told her that the slipper had worn out beyond repair. In fact, the slipper she wore had become worn out hopelessly. Basnet’s kind heart could not help himself ask her, “I know the place to repair this. Over there, let's go!”

Prema heard what Basnet had told. Actually, she was not aware of the fact that Basnet and his friends had been standing there on the same spot. Basnet's intention then was to buy a new pair of shoes for her from a nearby shoe store. But, she flatly rejected his proposal. The two had simple exchange of words for a while, in a formal manner. Next moment, she left the spot, carefully managing somehow to walk on the same shoes. In this connection, Iswor Ballav used to say from time to time, "Having have to see the pathetic economic condition of a talent like Prema Shah, my charm of life vanishes." By that time, Prema Shah was not in a position to be able to afford even for some nice clothes to wear.

Purushottam Basnet would want to help Prema, by all means, at all the times. But he was aware, too, of her pride and self-respect. He knew, too well, that she would never accept his help. That being the case, he could not do anything in Prema's life except to watch her sufferings from quite a distance, silently.

Purushottam Basnet had wished and wanted her to choose a reliable life partner and live happily. But, never could he become happy, for having had to see the miseries and sufferings of a woman whom he loved so much beyond imagination!

In the eyes of Purushottam Basnet, Prema was very much talented. He was not unaware of the fact that she was very impractical too. But, Basnet's prime youth ended with Prema and her love. To be precise, he never forgot to say distinctly and proudly, "My first ever love was Prema. She was my last love too."

The fact that Prema's daughter Jal Shah has risen to a top class actress has relieved Basnet to some extent and he is more than happy in this regard. Just to have a glimpse of Jal, he had watched numerous movies with Jal Shah starring, and had felt at ease.

In the year 2002, Nepali Congress Party had specially invited celebrity actresses at a program organized to evaluate then political environment in the country. Prema's daughter Jal Shah too had attended this program. Amidst the program, Basnet happened to have an urge to ask Jal Shah to hand over his visiting card to Prema on arriving home after this program. But, he could not give the visiting card to Jal Shah. He was embarrassed by a feeling how Jal Shah might react, and what Prema might think! Nevertheless, he cast a careful watch on Jal Shah for quite some time to his satisfaction.

"I did a big mistake by marrying an Indian citizen in a hurry. I failed to honor the true love of my true love Mr. Basnet." Prema Shah had ventilated this to some of his near and dear ones including Bijay Malla, Iswor Ballav, Dhruba Chandra Gautam, Hari Bhakta Katuwal and others. Having listened this very feeling of Prema, Bijay Malla had once again tried to reunite Prema with Basnet. But she refused this time too.

Once, Bijay Malla who knew every details of the two had told Basnet, "The love between Prema and you is like 'love and hate'." To this, Basnet had commented, "But I loved Prema at all the times. I never hated her."

And, in the real life, Basnet, as a worshipper of Prema Shah's love, has been living a lonesome life. Even after her death, he could not forget her love. Indira Prasai has rightly said, "I have never seen a lover as gentle, dedicated and commendable as Purushottam Basnet."

Prema's Wedding

Prema Shah had wanted to get married, desperately. But she was annoyed by being not able to find any suitable groom for her. No doubt, the number of suitors who proposed her was just too many to be counted on the fingers. But, someone with whom she could spend her life was not in sight to her liking. At last, she was ready to get married with a certain gentleman.

As soon as Prema Shah passed M.A., the family was engaged actively in searching a suitable groom for her. Her elder sister Shashi Rana found Janabi Pratap Shahi, a resident of Patna in India as the one suitable for her, beyond any doubt. He was educated, handsome and rich. He was a son of the reputed man recognized by British India as Raisaheb and was a landlord of lands in Patna and Banaras. The whole family liked this recommendation and the process went ahead. By this time, Prema's behavior changed noticeably. She gradually had begun to cut off her contacts with her contemporary friends, specifically the boys who used to follow her all around in her admiration. By the time his marriage date was finalized, she had in her mind only one guy. That guy was Janabi Pratap Shahi. On Friday, July 2, 1971,

Prema Shahi was wedded with that very Shahi, an Indian capitalist.

Janabi Pratap Shahi was very rich, handsome, tall, muscular and dynamic. At the same time, he was older than her by more than fifteen years. Notwithstanding whatever might be the facts, she began to dedicate herself to this life partner Shahi. Obviously, she surrendered all her incomparable beauty and all its charms to him, gladly.

Soon after, following the marriage, the Shahi couple began to make compromises on crucial matters. Top in the agenda were – they would move to Nepal; build a house in Kathmandu; and, most importantly, have issues.

But, it did not take long for him to neglect these promises. She began to read him as a talkative fop. Herself a holder of M.A. degree, she began to doubt whether his boasting as double M.A. (M.A. in Political Science as well as in History) was really true. That being the case, one day she requested one of her intimate friends, Mr. Kashi Nath Tamot, to accompany her to Banaras for one week. At that time, Tamot was an overseer employed at Nepal Government's Department of Buildings in Babarmahal, Kathmandu.

Kashi Nath Tamot accompanied her to Banaras as he could not say 'no' to her request. His job, once he was in Kashi Hindu University, was to make inquiries in concerned institutions to verify, whether Prema's husband was really a holder of double M.A. degrees. For this purpose, both Prema and Kashi Nath Tamot had collected relevant notes. She was somewhat relieved when she came to know that his

husband Shahi's M.A. certificates were genuine. However, that did not bring any significant improvement in her dissatisfaction in her private conjugal life with Mr. Shahi.

The couple had reached at many understandings regarding their compromise to advance their conjugal life. Notwithstanding the promises he had made, Shahi neglected even to take her to his home and start the process of conceiving to give birth to issues. Then, it did not take long for her to come to know that he was already a married fellow and father of many children from his first wife.

Once she realized that her status was a second wife, not the first, and he already had children from the first wife, she was not happy at all. To add fuel to her resentments, he had neglected, time and again, to come in contact with her. As a result, she had started complaining. The matters deteriorated as he slowly began to show slackness in his love and care, and he failed to honor her feelings and dedication towards him.

Gradually, her faith and trust in him started fading. The truth of the matter was that – Prema considered, in a conjugal life, bodily contacts alone is not a crucial factor. She expected her husband to reciprocate her with love and care and faithfulness, at all the times. Unfortunately, Prema's expectations ended in complete failure. Moreover, she came to know that he had undergone vasectomy operation before marrying her.

Prema had tried to straighten the matters several times in this way, “My husband! I have had already surrendered my love and everything to you, but, I am

experiencing again and again that you did not care about reciprocating my love.”

But, more often than not, Shahi had turned deaf ears to her pleadings. Prema had wanted Shahi to be a whole sole husband of hers and hers alone. But he did reveal the fact that he wanted neither to give up her first wife nor his house nor the children. These mutually contrasting ambitions between the two in the couple brought forward hurricane of disaster in Prema's life. After quarrel after quarrel, finally, Prema decided to get divorced.

At the initiation of Prema, the bond of marriage ceased to exist as they got divorced officially. She repented throughout her life ever since she realized the fact that she had failed to become a full-fledged wife; instead had become a second wife whose status was not better than that of a concubine. In spite of this, she could not forget Shahi's plus points. She considered him like this: Apart from his irresponsible role in the private matters between the two within the couple, he was in general a good and helpful gentleman, socially. At times, she had wanted to meet him to the extent that even after the birth of Jal Shah, she had gone to Patna to meet him along with the daughter. According to Jal Shah, at that time, she was around the age of ten years.

The liking of Shahi towards Prema could not be described in words. Because of the fact that he was an intellectual, too, holding two M.A. degrees, he had the inherent ability to appreciate and admire, not only Prema's beauty, complexion and posture, but also her academic background of M.A. degree as well as her writing skills and talent. This being the fact, he could

not remain happy even after their divorce as he was haunted by guilty feelings and self-humiliation, from time to time.

On the other hand, Prema used to ventilate her feelings in this way, “I can't avoid this painful experience as the consequence of not getting married with my true love Basnet who used to care about all my concerns and who entertained my wants. I did what I should not have done by marrying Shahi. More than that, I failed to face the changing reality. Instead, I divorced him in haste. Both these events are the causes of my disastrous life.”

The conjugal life between Prema Shah and Janbi Pratap Shahi had lasted for only four years. But, they did not forget to wish for well-being of one another. What is remarkable is the fact that Prema did not want to take even a penny (in amount or in cash) from that richer than the richest Janbi Pratap Shahi. She was a greedless creature of nature. Without any ambition to grasp riches, she had readied herself to start her conjugal life with him. Without taking any riches from him, she left him.

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Sometime later, after the divorce, Prema Shah got employed for a job in Hotel Everest Sheraton in Kathmandu. Here too, there was no lack of admirers of her beauty. The truth was that every male there was attracted by her beautiful complexion and her speaking manners. In course of time, from among quite a number of male staffs there, both good and bad, all of a sudden a young youth appeared in front of her. Due to the mystic influence of his charisma, it did not take long

for glamorous her to accept him as a near and dear. He was Ramesh Karmacharya.

Ramesh Karmacharya, then, was a friend of Somnath Ghimire, an associate professor as well as a journalist and a literary person. Ghimire has described him like this, “I have had met him in Chitwan (a district in Nepal) during young age. He was an admirer of football (soccer). He spent his time by playing football. He was an expert in cracking jokes and funning. His style of talking was very unique. In later days, I used to meet him around Tankeshor in Kalimati, Kathmandu. There, he had settled in a rented shelter. He worked in small business of Upahar brand tea. He readied packing boxes which his wife Mainya Karmacharya used to fill. Then he used to hand-carry those tea boxes to different shops in the locality.”

Because of his funny character, Ramesh Karmacharya was somewhat familiar to many in the locality as if like a celebrity. According to his childhood friend Bhanu Prakash Joshi from Chitwan, “Tulsi Bahadur Nyachhyon, maternal uncle of Ramesh Karmacharya, had taken him to Chitwan to let him go to school. But he was not at all inclined to learning. So, he was seen most of the time in his maternal uncle’s shop that sold kitchenware and other household utensils. When he became mature enough, the maternal uncle procured a Jeep brand vehicle for business purpose. Then he used to carry passengers to and from Rampur, Sharadanagar, Sunauli, and Parsadhaap in the same jeep. Later, he had opened a driving school ‘Driving Training Center’ in Kalimati in Kathmandu. But he was a rolling stone for ever. He never could

stick in any profession. Honestly speaking, I have never seen a funny creature of that much bombastic nature.”

Ramesh Karmacharya used every tactics he had to influence and attract the incomparable beauty Prema Shah. The two have had met some time before in Patan Industrial Estate in Lalitpur while seeking job there. He was a master of talking big talks, flattering, kowtowing, and even telling lies. So much so, he had seduced her with words like this, “You and only you can be the fairy who would step on the golden stairs in my house.”

He had told her that he was a virgin bachelor, still unmarried. She really got mystified in his words. No need to mention, she was very naive at her heart. In one hand, he was persistently seducing her. In the other hand, she was in real need of a reliable life partner. The heart of the matter was that she desperately wanted to bear children. The social tradition of the land also demanded that she needed a spouse in order for her to maintain social status. Under circumstances like this, after two years of love affair, the two decided to get married.

In the year 1979, Prema Shah was escorted by Ramesh Karmacharya to the famous temple of Guheshori in Kathmandu. In the witness of the image of goddess Guheshori there, the groom put holy ‘Sindoor’ (vermillion powder) on the bride’s head, traditionally. Next moment, each garlanded the other. Both vowed in front of the goddess to be dedicated to each other to flourish the marriage. Having accomplished their marriage in a very simple yet authentic religious way, they lodged in a rented house in New Banesor, Kathmandu.

Immediately after this marriage, Prema had begun to devise plans that would astoundingly surpass her first marriage and had dreamed of a fascinating fantastic life ahead.

Professor Pitamber Sharma Dahal has opined that Karmacharya's posture too was almost compatible with that of Prema's first husband Janabi Pratap Shahi. The noticeable difference was that – “Karmacharya was fatter whereas Shahi was taller and fat enough. And, Karmacharya's education was not higher than school level.”

Kashi Nath Tamot says, “Ramesh Karmacharya's house is situated nearby the stone spout beside the temple of Kumbhesor in Lalitpur. Previously, he had worked in Patan Industrial Estate. That very time, he used to do small business in his house dealing in some stationaries. But, Prema Shah was totally unaware of his very low standard of living that he maintained by doing such small businesses, inconsistently. Seemingly, he was tip-top. But, in reality, he was not very much above the homeless street dwellers. Nevertheless, he had convinced Prema Shah in this way, ‘Look! Ours is inter-caste marriage. Presenting a beauty like you, belonging to a high class noble family, as my wife in front of my conservative parents in my house will be my great foolishness. I am afraid they may be tempted to insult you which I can't stand at all.’ With such flowery lies, he succeeded in duping her, again and again. And, Prema remained mesmerized.”

Prema had been content with Ramesh Karmacharya's colorful world of love until one day, unexpectedly, a lady appeared before them. Prema

became nervous by her body language symbolic of terrifying anger. Immediately after entering their room, she grabbed at his collar and began to tear his clothes, shouting violently. At the same time, she began to swear and misbehave Prema. Prema did not have any word to express whereas Karmacharya was shivering in fear. And that was the end of Prema's another dream of settling a happy conjugal life. That was the moment when Prema knew that Karmacharya's marriage with Prema was his second marriage.

Somnath Ghimire has said this, "Nothing was in harmony between Prema Shah and Karmacharya – their age, education and caste." Once, this couple, while paying homage to the temple of Sankata in Kathmandu, had visited Ghimire's rented room. At that time, Ghimire had asked him privately at the next corner from her in whispering voice, "How you happened to get married with her, at least 5 or 6 years older than you? Your caste too does not suit. Neither does your profession nor educational background. Moreover, you are already a married person." "You know, this is our love-marriage!" was what he answered, exhibiting his yellowish teeth in smile. Kashi Nath Tamot has said that he was born in the year 1950. In this very connection, Bhanu Prakash Joshi has said this, "We are almost of the same age. I was born in the year 1951."

Ramesh Karmacharya had not had told anything to his first wife Mainya Karmacharya about his love affair with Prema Shah or about his second marriage. As he did not turn up at his home in due time for many days, rather many months, she had become suspicious about him. So she had been spying after him. After investigating for many days, she knew that he was

staying with the new wife. She also found out where they were staying.

The first wife intruded the room where his husband was staying with the new wife. Next moment, she terrified both of them. Indeed, the fight between the first wife and the husband was fierce one. The moment Prema realized that she had happened to become the second wife of this husband too, she spat right on the face of the husband in the presence of his first wife.

Prema Shah had even had to endure a condition of life or death situation, because of Ramesh Karmacharya's immoral activities. She was helpless at that time to do anything other than to blame herself and to endure the unbearable suffering. While she spent her days in confusion and depression, the first wife was active in chasing her away. The first wife even went to Kashi Nath Tamot's house and aggressively complained against her. Gradually, Karmacharya, too, had begun to, silently, support whatever the first wife said. Even though Prema had spat Karmacharya on the face, the conceiving baby inside her womb had already started moving.

The next year after the marriage, Jal was born. She was born on Friday, Sept. 19, 1980 in Patan Hospital, Lalitpur. After the birth of this daughter, at least, one of Prema's prime wishes of life, to become a genuine mother, was fulfilled. Following this, Prema did not hesitate to swear Karmacharya, in front of all, as a betrayer, liar and cunning fop. She made up her mind to walk far away from his life, along with the infant baby.

Still in her maternity period, Prema Shah, betrayed by Karmacharya, departed towards Sarlahi district in eastern Terai region of Nepal, along with her infant baby. Sometime in the past, she had got one and half Bigah (2.5 acres) of land there in Jutpani locality through Nepal Rehabilitation Office. That place was totally unsuitable for her. One could only imagine, her dwelling in such harsh climatic and social conditions might have been tougher than the toughest exile. But, the specialty of her personality lies in the fact that she never wanted to beg mercy or bow down.

She endured countless humiliations, hardships and pains, but did not want to compromise with her self-pride. Delicate as she was, being grown up in happy luxury of one of the biggest towns of the country, in company of number of maids, associates and relatives, this Jutpani locality was like remotest of the remotest, toughest of the toughest and harshest of the harshest place for her to dwell. But, she struggled and, somehow, she survived.

Ramesh Karmacharya traced her and reached at her dwelling in Jutpani in Sarlahi district. Prema had already begun to teach in 'Navjivan Vidyashram' school there. Actually, she was staying in a rented shelter. As he reached there, she was astonished beyond imagination. The hurting wound in her heart caused by his betrayal had not yet healed. As Indira Prasai has rightly said, Karmacharya had completely destroyed and shattered the delicate hearted Prema Shah into ashes.

As soon as she saw Karmacharya, she drove him out, shouting 'Get out!' Jal Shah has narrated that, at

that time, wild Prema had pushed him down the stairs. While he was stepping down in panic, she hastily released the stairs-shutter to let that fall on him. And the wooden shutter did hit him hard on his head. Then, he somehow managed to go away from there in pain and panic. The rumor about this incident spread everywhere including the school where she was teaching.

When teacher Prem Prasad Acharya, one of her well-wishers in the school where she also used to teach, asked, “Why did you do that to him?”, Prema’s answer was simple – “I punished only this much to that criminal-like dangerous creature!”

Prema's Letters

Prema Shah had trusted, loved and honored a gentleman called Kashi Nath Tamot. At one time in the past, she had secretly wanted to treat him as a love partner. As he was a house tutor of her maternal uncle Barun Sumsher Rana's sons – Deepak and Ajay – , she used to address him as 'Mastersaheb' (meaning, teacher). He used to address her as Didi (meaning, elder sister). Irrespective of protocols, they were close to each other. The two were in touch with each other from the year 1963 to 1983 only. After this, there was no contact between them.

While she was studying Boutique Art in Banaras Hindu University during the year 1971 to 1972, her only intimate friend was Kashi Nath Tamot. She used to open her heart to him whenever she needed to ventilate her feelings. She used to share her private feelings, tears and joys and anxieties with him through letters. Some of her secrets are known to him only, and no one else. His reliable advice then had boosted her self-confidence. She consulted him for every tidbit.

The house she had rented after her second marriage was situated nearby his house. She had told him the facts about her both marriages. Indeed, she

considered him a very reliable friend. He was then an overseer in Nepal Government's Department of Buildings situated in Babarmahal, Kathmandu.

While she stayed in Banaras, she wrote letters to him for about two years. She had also written one letter while she was in Kathmandu. She wrote about her tears and joys, anxieties and whatever she had in her mind. She had shared him everything about her. The letters are the representatives of her thoughts at the then relevant time. Needless to mention, the letters also reveal her literary style and talent.

Letter – 1

23rd April '71

Mastersaheb,
Namaste!

I have already written three letters to you, but did not get answer of any. Even if you didn't get my letters, how could you not write to me? Is it because you too are overwhelmed by selfish nature like so many others in general who speak flowery words while face to face, but forget when out of sight? If not so, why didn't you write? I am very much worried. To stay away from all in this way is scary in many ways, despite some pleasure. Difficulties and problems are just too many.

How did you reach Kathmandu? You had to take trouble because of me. So sorry, whoever helps me has to suffer! Forget about this, and, write me as soon as possible, right today without delay! Your letters will help me pass time and

relieve tension, if not more than that. Please spare some time to listen to my hard feelings in the letters that will follow. Not at ease to write more in this letter as I have not received any letter from you till now. Please do write! Please don't disappoint me by not writing. OK?

Bye for now.

Remembering you all the time!

• Prema

One moment!

Please don't let anyone else know that I am here and that I am studying here.

Letter – 2

23rd Aug 1971

Mastersaheb,

Today, just now, I received your letter dated 18th August. I have already dropped a letter in your name, a short while ago. No problem, I will write this one too, right now. To write to you is to gain my presence of mind. What else do I have in my life! Nice to know you have reached the home country without any inconvenience. But, you had to carry the load of sorrows as gift from my side. I am very sorry for that. Don't know how and when I can be free from the burden of owes I have incurred on the others.

Well. I got your letter. I am so glad to read the letter, I have no words to express! But, what I

understand from your letter is that you have not received even a single letter from me, so far. Don't know, what could be the reason. Hope, you will find them, one by one. But the pleasure I have had a moment before, while reading your letter, is fizzling out. Simply because, you used to write very long letters; but this time you sent just an aerogramme. Why?

I am afraid, you too are trying to avoid me. This letter, you wrote, maybe just for formality. Right? Up to you! I have no one and don't know if you may choose to be on my side. To try to keep you on my side seems an impossible dream. But, staying alone like this is so torturous! That's why, even though I don't want to imprison you into my embrace (in the manner you seemed scared in Birgunj), I have wanted you as an intimate friend forever. Not an elder brother, not a younger brother either, I have found you closer than them – an intimate selfless close friend. May I know why you are trying to stay away from me? Are you fed up with my miseries?

Did you stay two nights in Birgunj in my mom's house? She must have praised me too much in front of you in Pulchok. Let her praise! I don't want to clarify about myself with anyone. Why should I? No one is mine. Nor am I anyone's. My soul is so dead with this rotten belongingness!

OK. You went to Pulchok, but, did not tell anything to Buba (grandpa) about my condition, till now. Am I right?

What to do! Hadn't thought of telling all my miseries. But, certainly, I will do, since you mentioned it. I could not resist myself from laughing, because of the words in your letter. Everyone is afraid of truth and reality. These days, man's ability to distinguish between true and false and to face the truth is becoming rare. No problem! Don't tell if you can't or don't want to. I don't want anybody's favor, either, to exhibit my identity. To this date, nobody tried to understand me. Now, with whom I expect me to be understood?

The mom (in Birgunj) is the daughter of Buba (grandpa). So Buba and Muma (grandma) will believe their daughter rather than believing me. I am the one who should face all the insults and humiliations. No one will like to share my struggle and sorrows. While everyone consoles me in the front with crocodile tears, they will laugh at me in the back, by clapping hands.

Mastersaheb, I had wanted to write every detail about my miserable life in this letter, but, I changed my mind, because, you too may not believe what I say. What's the use of writing! I have to live the life I have, and, I have to die this very life I have. OK, I will not write.

But, you too are lacking in facing the truth and speaking the truth. You are disturbed even at the sight of someone and are confused by that someone. So, I will not tell you about the mishap I have encountered. In this world, no

one can be relied upon. Everybody is a liar, everyone is cunning.

Mastersaheb, you too, sketch my picture and shoot at me until completely shattered! What else is left for me now?

Finally, I beg your pardon from the bottom of my heart for whatever trouble I might have caused you for the sake of my health gain. Won't you forgive me? True, forgiveness is not a matter of give and take. One has to feel the one's responsibility, and I am feeling it now.

Oh! Don't get disappointed with Shanti Chhetri. This is life. Better, not get entangled in this business, if possible. But, it's almost impossible to deny one's desire, completely. Just look at my case! Don't know what obsession made me jump into this ocean of fire! What did I achieve? Nothing except getting exhausted! Your decision to not get married for another 2 or 3 years is commendable.

I have nothing to say on the news about the Academy. You know, I have already quitted the literary field.

Well, do you know why had 'Pakhe' gone to Birgunj? Please let me know, where he is now.

Is the 'cat' trying to become scary again? Death to him! Mastersaheb! I am intolerant to the enemies. Intolerant (in good sense) in friendship too!

What else about you, may I know? How did you manage to get leaves sanctioned in the office?

Do write me, quick! I am alone here, very nervous. No one to talk with or make inquiry or work with! Chaos is here, all around. This happened to be the life!

Mastersaheb! Don't tell anyone (even me), about me.

Please write letters to me without any delay. More often than not, I go to look for letters. But, in the pile of letters, I seldom find any letter in my name.

Please remind Buba about the new coat I have ordered at Jujubhai Tailoring and ask him to keep that safely for me. Please do it today without fail.

Mastersaheb! Please dispatch two copies of 'Bishyantar'. Trifala' (medicinal powder) too! Please!

• Prema

Letter – 3

31st Aug '71
Baranasi

Mastersaheb,

I have sent a registered letter to you, yesterday. Enclosed is a letter to Ratna Pustak. Look! This letter may be annoying. But, I am sharing the truth. Lucky that we understand each other. So, I believe you will not get angry.

Today, I didn't go to college due to stomach disorder. It is because of change in food here. I don't take 'roti' bread. Being used to rice, I take rice every day. The vegetables served here are coco yam, green bean, lady finger. Sourish vegetable typical of south Indian mess which I have joined is also available. Usually, food quality in our mess is good.

You know, since I did not go to the college today, I went downstairs several times and looked for letters in my name, but could not find any.

Now, I got new room. Upstairs, four bedded! (Everybody shares four bedded room modified from three bedded due to lack of sufficient rooms. The old one was fully packed. This new one, too, is fully packed. Extension of this new one is going on.). The room is very nice. My three roommates are museology students. But, I don't talk with them unnecessarily. I have not established friendship with them. I am not in habit of making friendship with whoever comes in contact. I am content with reliable few. Have friendship, already, with three 'M.Sc. Research Scholar' girls in the Radio Room. They are very friendly. One of them is Chandramohini from Gujrat. Another one is my intimate. But, I have not shared my secrets with her. No use of disclosing my miseries, right? Sending her photo, please keep for yourself. Although my belongings are upstairs, I sleep in Radio Room with her during nights. The girls in my room often complain, "Do we smell bad so you don't come towards us? Scared of our company?"

The university here is fully packed with students as the new session has begun. So, the senior students (M.A. Final) are busy in ragging. (Make fool of the new comers or even harassing by rude and rowdy behavior, in the name of welcoming!). Ragging has been going on since 3 or 4 days. They had tried to rag me too. They came even to pull me out from my room; yet, they could not rag me. I am told what they have said, "How can she escape from us!" But they just mew in front of me. Mastersaheb!, what can they do to me who had been a leader-like in the university in Kathmandu. It is said that they have talked like this, "It would be a great fun if we could rag that Nepalese."

Well! Yesterday evening, some girls swarmed into my room forcibly, encircled me and ragged me with nonsense questions. But I sent them away rebuffed. You know, they are very jealous of me. Don't know why!

Yesterday evening, I was sitting disappointed as I didn't receive any letter from you. Meanwhile I was informed that someone had come to see me. I was puzzled, who might have come! Excited, I rushed outside. That was Ram Prakash accompanied by another Nepalese (from Mahendranagar). They gave me your letter and the coat. Can you imagine how happy I was? I felt as if really meeting you. Meeting someone from homeland in a foreign country is so amusing.

Your letter this time is very sensational. A long letter could be very much assuring. Always

expect convincing letters like this. Hope, you will understand. While reading your letter, I became emotional with both good and bad feelings. You know, as I am writing this letter now, this time too, my eyes are filled with tears. I never knew I am so weak of heart like this. Perhaps, man is the weakest of heart among all the creatures. So, it gets hurt even by the smallest things. That must be the reason your lines, "As soon as he reached his rented room and knew that his dream had shattered, he was completely lost in imagination. Meanwhile ...” in the letter, has badly pinched me. Very true, when a man's dream or wish is shattered, he or she is wrecked. Yet, one must be strong enough to face even more blows. Don't take it as me teaching you. Try to remember the song by Dharma Raj Thapa, 'Bad experiences give good lessons'. Isn't this a universal truth? Now, these days, I am impressed by small practical things like this, rather than by lengthy intellectual explanations.

I got IC Rs 75 that you sent. It is so kind of you, I am always indebted to you. The relation between one another can be so mysterious, right? What a miserable circumstance! Although I don't believe in rebirth or in the relationship during the previous birth, I consider the relation between you and me in the present life as divine created coincidence. And, coincidence has much significance.

Yes! Soon (in about ten days), I will send two articles (stories) for 'story special issue' of 'Pratik' or 'Pahad' and 'Madhupark' (literary

journals). Please keep my space reserved. First one will be for 'Madhupark'. Please keep the remuneration from this for yourself.

Regarding some money I am supposed to get from Central Office here, I did not get it due to many hurdles. Our dean did forward the recommendation to the central office. But, the central office opined that casual students also have to pay fees. When I presented my arguments and convinced them, they told me that in that case they will forward it to Deputy Registrar's Office, and if they approve, I may get. I followed up there too, but it is on pending lot. It is said that I may not get it.

You mentioned the rumor that Kashi Nath is missing. I could not help laughing despite being in such difficult situation like this. Still, I want to laugh. People do guess! Parsu (Pradhan) was almost sure and certain about our relation, right? Wise fellow, at least he uses some conscience!

I believe that you must have told Buba about the facts without any fabrication. Please do tell him all without hiding any facts, so that the fact becomes crystal clear to everyone beyond any doubt. I want to see your truthfulness.

Not yet met Jeevan? Do meet her sometimes. This friend does at least try to understand matters. Well, I don't remember the number of letters I had sent you. How many did you get? All of them were sent in the address of the office. If you are not getting them, cross check the staffs there. They may be tempted to hide

them, out of curiosity that so many letters are coming in your name. So, please be careful about this possibility.

So sad about the news of auntie in Lazimpat! Life is strange. Broken relations may remain clinging somehow. Where is Geetu? Still there or already left for Patiyala? Any news about her?

Please send me Madhupark special issue with Lamichane's story, Bishayantar, Nepal Bharati published from Patna containing our literary visit, and Bihar Samachar issue with my three poems, by book-post. First, the Bihar Samachar and the Bishayantar, then the Madhupark and some other papers if available. O.K.?

Today is Sunday, an off day here. It's night time now, 9 p.m. exactly. I am sitting in Radio Room instead of my room upstairs. Chandramohini is fast asleep out of tiredness. She had returned here in the evening after visiting her local guardian in the morning. As soon as she came back, I had taken her to Lord Bishwonath Temple to pay homage. Back from the temple, we dined in the mess and came to this room. Another friend, Meera, is studying as her M.Sc. exam is in hand. The other friend, doing research work, has gone upstairs in another friend's room.

It was raining a while ago. Very refreshing lovely drizzle! This time, cool wind is blowing. Till a moment ago, the girls were making fun with great noise. Now, becoming quiet, slowly!

Experiencing, the old age is coming. Beginning to hate cracking jokes and making fun! Love to keep quiet and get mad!

No, Shahi has not come back yet. He did not answer my letter either. I talked with Dada (the friend with whom he used to stay whenever he goes there) in Patna via trunk call. He told me that – Shahi is still there, has received my letter already, and will be coming back in few days. But, I could not talk to Shahi directly as he was not in the house. No idea, when will he return. His financial support for my two years session, too, is becoming a dream.

Wait and see! What else can I do except praying god in this helpless difficult time? Your Rs 75 has helped me a lot. Believe me, if you have read about the story of Samaritan in bible, you are my Samaritan in my heart!

Well! Tell me about your daily life. Do write me without any delay. Let me know the news about the present house in Pulchok in detail.

How is Muma now? My heart breaks down whenever I happen to give a thought on her, even though I try to be strong. I have enclosed a reply letter to Buba, please hand over to him. Next, please let me know headline news of our country. Is it true that Kirtinidhi has resigned from premiership? What about Parijat? And Bimal? And any other news?

Don't stop writing to Shanti (Chhetri). Otherwise, she may think you are very selfish.

Don't get disheartened with her. First love seldom succeeds. It is the same for all. You loved blindly. But you have to love with determination. Do love intentionally with purpose!

Oh! Had thought of writing something, but forgot. Let it be.

Mastersaheb! Don't know, what moods prevailed while writing this letter. But, I believe, whatever I have written are true facts. The rest of the time, my soul remains dead. What I am doing here (studying or learning) is just a sort of time pass.

Please ask Buba to manage the acquisition of my coat. Unless pressured persistently, the tailor will not bother. It has already been overdue by so many months. What did the tailor do? Not interested in the customer who has already paid, and, always looking for collecting advance payments from new customers. Well, lack of money is everybody's problem. But he should have tried at the least. That is the only coat I have. Should we let the tailor keep that for himself?

Oh! It has become long. This writing pad belongs to a girl named Hirabati Singh. Today, I have used many sheets belonging to her. So I will stop here. Don't forget to write soon! What else did sister Subhalaxmi write from home? Please convey my love to her.

Now onwards, don't put 'Mrs.' in front of my name and address. None of my friends here knows that I am married. Please don't forget this, OK? Bye!

• Prema

Letter – 4

15 Sept. '71

Mastersaheb!,

I got your letter. I am not annoyed. Such small things are not the things to mind about in friendship. I read Buba's letter too. Neither joy nor sorrow! What can I expect except poison from a man blinded by prejudice? Well, forget it.

Our university is closed since 13 Sept. (even before 'Diwali Festival' vacation) due to student strike. All the students (boys and girls) were ordered to leave hostel within 24 hours. So everybody packed up belongings and has already left. I moved to Melow Hostel and am staying alone. Shahi has arrived here yesterday from Patna as I called him on trunk call and asked him to come. Well, we will come to Kathmandu in few days.

While in Kathmandu, we will stay in a certain hotel. He will stay only two days. But, I will stay throughout the vacation period (about 20 days). He will go to Patna for some work. After vacation, I will go to Patna by air, and, from there, go to university. Nothing special, except this. We are coming very soon. Look! Don't tell this to anyone except Pulchok. Other things, we shall talk after meeting.

• Prema

Letter – 5

BHU
17th March '72

Mastersaheb,
Namaste!

I got your letters, both the two – Inland letter and the enveloped one with a nice new postage stamp. I am pleased and refreshed after reading the inland letter. I had got it in the afternoon. You mentioned, “Stab me with a knife or dagger, but don’t shoot me with words!” Doesn’t this boomerang upon you, too, while hurting my heart? Yet, I didn't mind. And no way, I can mind. The world is such that everyone happens to have someone with whom the one can open the one’s heart. For me, you are the one, and only one, with whom I can open my heart. I have shared every tears and joys, both bad and good feelings with you. I have received innumerable consolations, protection, help and support from you. I have no regrets even if you scold me or hurt me. But, what I can’t forget is that – I have become a big fool several times in several spots while trying to do something for you or remembering you. I feel bad about this. So, I don’t want to be a fool again.

I feel, why take initiatives! Gradually, I will turn from an excessively trusted person into an untrustworthy person, for you. This is what I should try to do. Never write such words again! Never think like that, please!

Mastersaheb!

It is true that what you have supported me and helped me in the past and still doing so is your greatness and benevolence. But this very greatness and benevolence is regarded in the society as foolishness and is charged with so many blames. Directly or indirectly, I am feeling responsible for all the inconveniences and embarrassments you have to face because of me. Perhaps, I can't repay you if that has to be done in terms of money. But, it is something to be felt by heart. So, I may repay even with my life if necessary. No doubt, closeness and mutual co-operation may bring happiness to each other. Even ultimate freedom from hurdles and obstructions! In closeness, I never discriminated the genders (so far as friendship is concerned). Even now, I say, in non-sexual terms, that only a male person can be the best well-wisher of a female person.

Well! I don't mind whatever you tell me. You are not an unknown person. I know, you are a true well-wisher of me. Your letters and honest advice help me to correct my mistakes. Mr. Shahi, too, suggests me many things. Although he seems to be right, I feel that, more often than not, he is exaggerating or boasting or dominating. Sometimes he talks meaningless, and sometimes even disgusting with the flavor of a boring husband. Many of his advices or complaints or order-like statements are either too confusing or impractical or irritating. Why so? Is it necessary that a husband need to be

conscious, right in front of his wife at all the times, that he is a husband? Can't he sometimes behave or counsel like an honest and selfless friend does? Husbands are stubborn and dominating creatures, perhaps! But, you are so simple in this matter. I have no difficulty in understanding you. And, I am not of the view that only a husband can be my well-wisher, and only he can tell me to do this or that. Indeed, you are not my enemy but a well-wisher friend as well as a brother, younger brother.

I do love my husband. I had loved him ever since I got married. I had loved him whole heartedly, even forgetting my egos and me myself. I myself am a proof to myself that when a woman starts loving, she does so wildly and amazingly. You know what I got from him in the interpretation of my true love? 'Doubt' ! Actually, I doubt him. I realized that my true love has become bitter for him. Perhaps, love and sugar has the same characteristics; the only difference is the taste.

I know you are taking so much pain for my cause. I too reached Patna in nervousness due to loss of contact with him – no letter, no information about whereabouts! I went there without informing warden, but, in co-ordination with roommate and research scholar. There in Patna, Dada told me that he had left him 6 or 7 days before without telling him anything. I could not sleep the whole night and I kept weeping. I felt so lonely and helpless. After one night stay in Patna, returned to

Banaras by morning train '8 A.M. Delhi Express'. Traveled up to Mughalsaray by train, then, took a taxi in order to travel fast and reached Banaras at 3 P.M.

Came out of taxi at the cross road and took rickshaw to his rented house in Banaras in the address given by Dada. It took me almost one hour to find out this rented house. Meanwhile my air bag was left in the rickshaw and most of my clothes were stolen.

He was there in the rented room. He was chatting with friends. I was quick to complain – “You have been in Banaras since so many days, yet, neither did you come to meet me nor give any information.” By saying so, I didn't do anything wrong. Did I? I am his wife, and, I said so out of wife's love.

Your reaction (“You are presenting your restless character. One should get married, and, you did it. That is good. But, from your and many others' conjugal life, I have realized that after marriage, one forgets the one's aim and objectives, being entangled in worldly material things.”), in response to what I had written (“This marriage has made me very passive in my works.”), is absolutely correct. Man's activity comes to standstill after marriage, only to restart after some time. I am not of the type, who remains passive forever, in the interest of my personal pleasure only. But I need some push from someone to restart my work. Of course, my husband always asks me to do something or to

write as before. You have seen his manner. Lucky to have a husband like this! But, I feel he is trying to dominate me or even give orders unnecessarily. I and my talent, thoughts, and imaginations are always against becoming submissive. How I happen to rot by being inactive like this? Due to prolongation of honeymoon period or because of lack of intellectual sympathy! I am double minded.

Mastersaheb! No matter in whatever direction I walk or run or disappear, I do so determinedly. I am becoming straightforward and overwhelmed in all matters, including love affair, like legendary hero Kalidas. (Notwithstanding all this, I am well mannered. First time in life, I am struggling to face so many challenges. And, first time in life, I have surrendered myself to make love.)

Ignorant as Kalidas, I am cutting the branch of the tree on which I am sitting, and, roving night and day from place to place in search of a true love. Like him, I too am neglected by my love. Whereas Kalidas ended up as a famous great poet, I may end up like an ascetic retiree devoid of worldly affairs.

Well, forget it! You must be annoyed. But, what shall I do? My facts and realities are worse than all this. Where can I ventilate my bad feelings except you?

I got a letter from Shanti after a long time. She is not to be blamed. Everyone becomes

occupied and entangled after marriage except very few lucky ones. Nevertheless, she is very happy and satisfied. Cheer up with her! But, I wonder in curiosity, how happiness is with others! And I only am so unlucky! I suppose, you didn't attend her wedding party. Right? Do write letters to her! So, these days, your room is packed with visitors? Any other news about Kathmandu?

We are arriving on 20th March. Details, while we meet!

I had intended to bring her along with us, but there is some problem. She is a descent girl. But it all depends on God. Let me wait and see! She often inquires me about you. She is right over here standing beside a table and fishing something inside her purse. When I asked if she had to say something to you the Mastershaeb, she asked me to write at my discretion. The next moment, she said, "Give my Namaste to him." So, I am sending her Namaste to you along with this letter.

Our exhibition and the fete will run from 18th to 20th. One of my paintings and three boutiques will also be on the show in the exhibition. In this fete, I, Aava and Shanti Singh are jointly running a stall consisting of fast food and some stationery. Hope to sell off all your items. This much for today!

• Prema

Letter – 6

21st March '72

Mastersaheb!

Got another letter from you, yesterday morning! This letter will be short to your liking. Our exhibition opened from 18th till 25th. My painting and boutiques were also in the show. My stall opened for three days. Food items were sold well. Some Post Cards were sold and some of my personal items too were sold. Khukuri was of attraction to many; but in India, weapons are banned to be kept at homes. License is necessary to keep even a small weapon like stabbing knife. Hence, the Khukuri could not be sold. It was told that Khukuri is a danger. Had I known about this beforehand, I would not have brought it here. Just became burden-like!

Mr. Shahi had gone home after making plan for me to go to Patna on the 19th. However, while packing for my departure on the 19th, I received a telegram reading, 'Don't start'. Things are like this. No idea when will he come to Kathmandu again. Please write letters for me.

• Prema

Letter – 7

6th April '72

Mastersaheb,
Namaste!

Since you did not come to airport this time, I think you missed a chance to see a beautiful

take-off, if nothing else. The Boeing 737 jet plane had departed for Banaras, Delhi and Agra. It is hundred times different than other planes. The cabin is very wide and air conditioned. Seats are very attractive and comfortable. While taking off, it took off fast, powerfully and in steep manner like a rocket. Even after take-off, it was so different. It was hilarious and thrilling like playing swing in full rush. Bit scary too! Lunch served was heavy enough too, perhaps due to delay in departure. In my feelings, the two wings almost touched the sky.

Well, most of the things here are as they were before. Few new incidents were witnessed. One of my close friends (a Research Scholar) had left the hostel to stay with local guardian without informing her parents. Now she had done court marriage with that very local guardian. She was already engaged with a rich foreigner while she went home during an earlier vacation. Isn't this strange?

Next, an engineering faculty student was found pregnant and she delivered a son after rushing to hospital. But her 'Beloved' is missing and nobody knows his whereabouts.

Then, in our own hostel, one girl had a miscarriage while washing her face in the bathroom in the early morning.

Now, listen about the recent dreadful incident that took place on the 4th day of the month!

I was returning from my department to the hostel at 3:30 PM. The situation in the hostel was quite unusual – tense, rush, and, at the same time, calm!

Right outside the gate, the gate-keeper treated me mysteriously with this dialogue, “You know, one girl in your new hostel has committed suicide by hanging!” I was stunned. Rushed upstairs! Beside my old room (number 54), a south Indian girl in room number 53 had hanged herself by using her wrapper cloth as rope on a hook in the ceiling of her room. We were shivering in scare. All the girls in the hostel were locked up on that day. Apart from police in trucks, Vice Chancellor, VIPs and photographers arrived at the spot. After a series of inquiries and inspection, the dead body was taken to hospital for postmortem. We witnessed this entire event by hiding and peeping through transparent spots (we created by scratching the paints) in the window panes. My feeling at that time was that – this is not a student hostel, rather a Moghul period stable-like harem for herds of females or Chandra Sumsher period shelter inside Singha Durbar for herd of mature females.

Forget it! History of man and woman is very primitive like this.

Well, regards to Jeevan and Namaskar to PK. Please convey my sincere thanks to him, without fail, for the treats on that day. Please remind him that I am expecting his letters as he had told me he will write to me. And give him my address.

You too, please write long letters for me as soon as possible.

Your elder sister,
• Prema

N.B. Received a registered letter from Mr. Shahi. Was there some problem in registration of the land? Is it true that one should wait for six months to build house, even after the registration of the land is complete? Please do write. Where is Mr. Shahi now?

N.B. I believe you have already handed over to Chitrangda Pant. Please mention about him too. Mastersaheb, do write long letters to me as soon as possible! In a foreign land, letters are like some reliable company. So, write soon. Soon after getting this letter!

Letter – 8

BHU
7th April '72

Mastersaheb!

It's 7 P.M. in the evening. Too hot even to breathe. The table fan is blowing air towards my head. Our college has opened since yesterday morning 7 A.M. These days, traditional way of teaching by delivering lectures is none existent. Classroom with tables and chairs, instead of desks and benches, gives the impression of an office. Students and teachers exchange views and ideas, chat together, and even crack jokes in the

classroom. Relation between teacher and students is not affected by narrow mindedness or feeling of up and down, like in our country. Teachers and students are friendly and sincere to each other. Nevertheless, some discrimination between teacher and students do exist.

Yesterday and today, American documentary was on the show from 12 noon to 1 P.M. Returned to hostel at 1:30 P.M. On arriving in the room, drank some squash juice which I had purchased due to hot month. Next moment, went to mess and brought 'Puri' bread and curry to the room. After eating tiffin, read some newspaper. Beside my bed lies the bed of another Research Scholar Hema Bhaskar, a girl from Southern India. She is doing Ph.D. in Philosophy. She attends music class also in the evening. Till a while earlier, she was playing violin. She just left for Music College, now.

I was reading the latest issue of the journal 'Navnit'. It has an article on Nepal, entitled 'Our Closest Neighbor Nepal' which I did read very carefully. It is full of lies and prejudices. You know, Indian writers are addicted of thinking wrong and writing lies. Indeed, even before reading thoroughly, I had guessed that it might contain such and such type of wrong interpretations.

Well, Mastersaheb! I am enclosing the cutting of this article along with this letter. I have underlined wherever I found the things wrong or wherever I am not happy. Please forward me the

correct answers of the underlined items. Revise as necessary and let me know the true facts! Please be quick and fast without any delay in this matter! I want to dispatch to the editor of Navnit a critic of this article. Please send back this cutting along with your revision without any delay! I intend to teach the Indian author of this article a lesson.

Oh! Welsa has just entered the room about 5 minutes back. She drank a glass of squash she prepared by pouring some juice out of a bottle. Today, she got an autograph album as gift from a south Indian boy, one of her friends. She showed it to me as soon as she entered the room. Something was written in it which she read for me to listen to. Sentimental expressions! I advised her to start putting photos on it. Meanwhile, I came to know that she lost the very photo of mine. I am so disappointed. In fact, I had given that to her at her own request. Otherwise, I would not have given. She is so dry on matters like this. She was trying to cool me, perhaps, by asking me in this way, “Let’s go do the mess to drink Horlicks!” (She has recently bought a jar of Horlicks.). But I refused. Sometimes, I am very much disenchanted with such a dry person. (Perhaps, ‘dry person’ is not the correct expression for her who has aspirations. ‘Careless fellow’ may be the appropriate term.)

You may be aware that I am alone this time, writing this very letter. Yes, today too, I got a registered letter from Mr. Shahi, my husband. The letter is very romantic. Pleasing while

reading, but boring very soon. Not clear, whether true or false. It will be foolish of me to be overjoyed in his love and affection. So, I did not take his words in the letter seriously. I think I have enough patience.

I too, once, have written a letter to Welsa in a similar romantic style, starting with ‘My darling’ and including these words – “Hide this letter inside your bosom so that it can touch your sensuous heart and bring about vibrant feelings!” Actually I had written that letter in English language. What I have quoted above is a Nepali translation of a section of that very letter.

See! I am just kidding. Don’t think I mistook you as a conservative guy. You might realize that there have been plenty of romantic words for me (from my husband) and for my friend Welsa (from me), but nothing as such for you. How boring! Ha, ha, ha! Forget this!

Well Mastersaheb! Shahiji has written – “Your master jee is the only who visits me almost daily & supplies me newspapers & magazines. No one else ever visit me.” (All the words are his.)

Thank god! You have done me so many favors that I never can repay. I am unable to be relieved of the debts. I can’t do anything except chatting like this.

Mastersaheb! I do feel free to ventilate my feelings, both good and bad with you. Hope I can do so for ever. Indeed, the greatest thing in

life is a true friend with whom both good and bad feelings can be shared. I think so and I realized that this is the ultimate reality. Frankly, I had been trying to pick up a suitable girl for you. That very Welsa! But, I found myself in the wrong track as this unlucky girl is after a medical doctor.

But, the doctor hardly cares about her. Sometimes he used to reciprocate her with some warmth and empathy. This, she interprets as 'he is in love with her'. She spoils my sleep the entire night by asking my opinion on him. She wants me to explain whether he really loves her. I have already advised her that this is not love; nothing more than interesting formal talks between a boy and a girl. Yet, she is blindly in one-sided-love with him. That maybe because he is handsome and smart. Also, he is a doctor.

She will go home in the vacation starting from 7th May. The doctor is a south Indian and from the same state Kerala as she is. So, she is going to ask him to travel home together. So says she. Well Mastersaheb, I don't care what she does. She says, "This is love." But love is not that cheap. Don't you think so? I am not sure what she gets. No problem what she does! Let it be! If you can, it is better to live alone. Conjugal life has many problems.

Just look at me Mastersaheb! How I was before and how am I now! What is this life without any self-respect! Not long ago, a girl in this hostel lost self-respect and hanged herself to

death. That too needs a lot of courage. But, I am too cowardice to follow her suit. Well, forget this lest you get bored. Please write all the details about your recent activities. If you come across letters in my name, please forward me the important looking ones only.

Your elder sister,
• Prema

Letter – 9

2nd Dec. 1983

Sri Mastersaheb,

I came, waited more than an hour and returned.

You know, everything happened in a sudden rush. I settled for Nepalgunj Campus after requesting the Dean as it became urgent for me and it would take quite longer time for here in Kathmandu. I am traveling to Nepalgunj tomorrow by night bus.

I have many things to talk about with you. But, the campus vacation starts from 30th Dec. 1983 only. I will arrive here by 9th Jan. 1984. Then I will meet you right here in Kathmandu.

Notwithstanding all this, I beg you to write me in the address of Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj. Do write in detail Kathmandu news as well as literary news, urgently.

Well, I have been writing a drama. Will make approach for publication while coming here in January. I am in need of some teaching materials for my Nepali teaching job in the campus. Please help me with notes and materials containing chronological history of writing – story, novel, drama, essay, poem, etc. Please include some helpful books as well. I will arrive here in the second week of January. That is all for today. I am in a hurry.

• Prema

N.B.

Enclosed here is a sealed letter. Please dispatch it as a registered mail. I did not have time to do it myself. I asked you to do me this favor. Please don't take it otherwise.

Prema's Thoughts on Sex

I make love to the Sun.

•

Come, make love to me!

Prema Shah was of the view that sex is not a taboo; nor was she of the view that excessive exhibition of nudity and vulgarism in the name of sexual freedom is acceptable in the society. According to her, sex is unquestionably very special part of life to enjoy; but that should be done in a civilized and controlled way. In fact, she is an open encyclopedia of sexual thoughts. Before she, no scholar of her status or higher had ever formally ventured to talk or to write on sex in a frank manner.

She has revealed her feelings honestly about her writings like this, "I have written short stories on sex. However, human values should not be evaluated on the basis of sex only." In this connection, she did not hesitate to elaborate further on sex. To those who are jealous of erotic literature and take that negatively, she has expressed her resentments in this way, "Today's writings on sex are too-old-fashioned in essence, no matter how modern they look in appearance. There are many hurdles on the path of sexual norms. The

available writings on sex are full of spoiled ideas and hatred feelings; at the same time, lack new ideas. Our attitude and aptitude towards sex should be up-to-date, intellectually mature and non-problematic. Arguments and harassments alone cannot lead to any ideal principle. Those who regard erotic writings as rude and immoral in the name of hypothetical idealism are none other than those who beat around the bush in disguise.

Prema became popular by her poems on sex. But, basically, she is a short-story teller on sex. A story teller of dignified status, she is very rebellious in writing. Her rebellious nature is focused on sex matters. Referring to her erotic writings, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha has commented, “Prema’s rebellious presentations on sex are unique and unparalleled.” No doubt, she was a scholarly writer.

Prema is in the front and foremost position among the writers who dared to write erotic literature in Nepal. Through her writings, she has indirectly portrayed the fault lines in her family, too. She was successful in presenting her feelings psychologically, in interesting manner. She was regarded as an established writer of a distinctly new genre. Many critics have openly admired her writing talent. She has been a writer famous for her qualitative, rather than quantitative, writings. Indeed, the poems she had composed are very limited. Moreover, they are devoted to love, sex, and dedication.

All my love is just for you!

Day and night,
I have seated your love in my heart
Like a diamond necklace
Symbolic of your true love.

Throughout those cold winter nights,
Embracing you in my warm lips,
I have whispered so many love songs in your ears,
Just in the hope of your arousal.

Prema had started writing right from her early student life. Actually, the first time she wrote was when she was a student in grade six. The one who had inspired her to switch over to literature was Teacher Ratna Dhoj Joshi. Because of him, she started giving exposure to compositions she had left over without due attention. By the time she did I.A. and B.A. from Patan College, she had already become a renowned writer. About the same time, she was already in contact with Purushottam Basnet. That was also the reason why she was focused on literary creations. Jaydev Bhattarai has said that she acted as an editor of a handwritten magazine 'Wookalo' (meaning, upslope) during her teen age. Later, she was engaged as a member in editor boards of 'Bihan' (meaning, morning) and 'Himani' (meaning, snowflakes) literary journals. She was the editor of 'Deurali' literary journal while she was studying in TU as a student of M.A. By this time, she had already become popular as a literary figure, not only in Nepal, but also among Nepali speakers in foreign countries.

Prema was a celebrity in literature writing, since her teen age. Her story writing entitled 'Pratikriya' (meaning, reaction) was published in 'Sharada' magazine while she was studying I.A. Following this, her articles, stories, poems, dramas, essays etc. appeared one after another in various magazines like 'Mukut' and 'Rooprekha'.

Irrespective of her several genres of writing, she was confined in the subject matters on erotic literature and nothing else. As her life was affected by her maternal-house-members, those who loved her, her husbands, and her daughter, obviously, they are reflected in her writings.

Prema never deviated from erotic subject matters and sexual norms while writing literature. Sex and sex alone was her theme of writing. In an interview with Hiranya Bhojpure and Ganesh Rasik representing Lekali Publication's 'Upatyaka' magazine, she had opined, "Sex is not the main problem in life. Actually, it depends on one's conception. It is crystal clear that the more the sex has become liberal now-a-days, the more complicated it has become. This chaos is well understood by our Sensitive Mass. Unquestionably, uncultured activities, vulgarism and moral blindness of today's youths are to blame for sex becoming so much controversial, dirty and hateful. Consequently, today's confused young generation and so called writers, who propagate obscene literature in the name of freedom from sex-taboo, are blindly following such propaganda."

Prema was a pioneer of love song lyricists too. She composed very few lyric poems; all of them were love songs. She is regarded as a contributor of love songs; and, admired and credited as such. Amid thousands of lyric poems available for interested audience, her lyric poems are ever more popular.

You don't have to pretend
To express your love.

Don't wait a special day
To consolidate your love.

Permission always granted
To welcome smiles
And
Exchange hearts.

Minds are not confined by barracks or war-fronts.
There are no territories or religions.
Devoid of geographical boundaries,
Minds know nothing except love.

Love is older than history;
Taller than tallest peaks;
And deeper than deepest seas.

Our love in our hearts,
Witnessed by both of us
Is
Nourished by warmth of the sun,
And flourished by refreshing coolness of the moon.

Flowers are blooming in rose gardens inside us.
No any restriction to explore the gardens for either of us.

Birds lured by aroma of opposite sex are flying in the sky.
Will the sky realize that the aroma the birds are lured are
Located within itself in the mind?

Mind that has turned into mountains,
Mind that has turned into oceans,
Mind that has turned into the sun, the sky and the bird
Does not understand the words in the greeting cards,
"Will you be my valentine?"

Mind knows only this—
Love is
Neither a thing to beg for;
Nor to request for;
Nor press with.
Love does not know
Favoritism and nepotism either.

Prema's Books and 'Prema-path'

Although Prema had started writing poems while she was in class six, in real sense, her literary journey started with the literary journal 'Sharada'. She started shining after her teacher Ratna Dhoj Joshi submitted her short story entitled 'Pratikriya' for publication in Sharada. That was her first story writing. She had said that she published it again in 'Pahenlo Gulaf' after some modification or editing.

Prema was absorbed in writing erotic literature. She did write stories, poems, dramas and essays. But she became more popular in stories and poems. Particularly in story writing, she became not only popular but also very famous. Firstly, she delivered a new taste of sensuous pleasure to the society by publishing a collection of short stories entitled 'Pahenlo Gulaf' (meaning Yellow Rose) in 1966. This publication of 'Pahenlo Gulaf' is regarded as a prominent milestone in the field of Nepal's psycho-erotic literature. Next, her publication of another collection of short stories entitled 'Bishyantar' in 1971 is full of new thoughts and became equally popular as the first one.

Prema wrote 'Mummy' short-novel in 1983. This too has the same subject matter, sex education. Earlier

in 1975, a unified novel entitled ‘Aakas Bibhajit Chha’ (meaning the Sky is Divided) was published with Dhruba Sapkota as convener. Ten writers jointly contributed for this novel. They were –

1. Kedar Amatya
2. Daulat Bikram Bista
3. Dhruba Chandra Gautam
4. Dhruba Sapkota
5. Parshu Pradhan
6. Pushkar Lohani
7. Prema Shah
8. Manju Tiwari
9. Shankar Koirala
10. Shailendra Sakar

Prema had translated Hindi version of Rabindra Nath Tagore’s play ‘Chitrangda’ into Nepali. According to Purushottam Basnet, Prema herself was a good playwright writer.

Additionally, Prema’s literary publications include the following child-story collections:

1. Mantuki Bajeko Kathako Petaro (published 1981)
2. Jinki ra Joker (published 1983)
3. Indradhanush (published 1985)
4. Rangichangi Kathaharu (published 1988)
5. Ramro Kaam (published 1994)
6. Rayka Kehi Katha (published 1994)

Prema wrote the following three child-novels:

1. Rameko Katha (published 1985)
2. Manu ra Bhangera (published 1986)
3. Aanandako Aabiskar (published 1986)

Wrought mentioning here is the fact that Prema had started writing child stories since she entered the age of maturity. Apart from these already mentioned publications, she brought into publication two volumes of collection of child songs. As she became more and more dedicated in literature, she became the editor of 'Ujyalo', a child journal. Indeed, she was a great lover of children. Because of that, she established a library for children in Birgunj by the name 'Bal Sewa Pustakalaya'. Most importantly, she became a central member of Federation of Children's Association of Nepal which is an association of national level, locally renowned as 'Nepal Bal Sangathan'.

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Prema's literary personality had started burgeoning, gradually, since her school years. While writing, she had no problem in utilizing authentic words spoken in eastern Nepal. Outstandingly, her writings are representative of pure Nepali language literature. More than that, her writings are the exact reflections of what she had in her mind. That is one of the reasons why she became so successful in winning the hearts of so many readers.

Prof Dr. Basudev Tripathi, the most renowned critic writer in Nepal, is one of the keen readers of Prema's literary personality. His opinion on her is like this, "In the literary world of Nepal, a superb scholar had emerged all of a sudden. And, in no time, she disappeared."

An article by Dr. Tripathi was published in the Saturday Supplement of Gorkhapatra daily dated

Saturday, April 15, 1967. The article was entitled 'Accomplishments of Nepalese Poems and Songs in the Year 1966 : A Review'. The article included review of Prema Shah's literary creations as well. Following this review, values of Prema's poetic creations attained an all the time high record. Even before this, about the time her collection of stories 'Pahenlo Gulab' came into publication, she was already a reputed celebrity.

Dr. Tripathi, in his article, had presented his brief and weighty comment on Prema's talents, citing the following poem of hers:

In this colorful world,
I could not stay away from colors.

In this world of desires,
I could not remain desire-less.

According to Dr. Tripathi, the poetess has honestly expressed with dignity the paradoxical reality of life – love and lust, intimacy and passion. Her words are so universally true! Her rhymes are so fluent and meaningfully compact! And, her ability to reflect her passions in very articulate way is ever thrilling. He often praises her poems to this date.

Dr. Tripathi is firm on what he had opined some 50 years back on poetess Prema, but, with new explanations, additionally. The tantalizing passions of sensuous attraction between opposite sexes are expressed very artfully and forcefully in Prema's beautiful and magnificent poems. Her erotic poems are very pleasing to listen to, at the same time represent nice masterpieces of high class literature. Compared

to renowned Nepalese poets like Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Siddhi Charan Shrestha, Bhawani Bihikchhu and Indian poets like Jayshankar Prasad, Sumitranand and Mahadevi Verma the proponents of conformist styles and ideas, she has surpassed each of them with distinctly new ideas and styles of presentations. Her poems are not only new in style and ideas, but also unique, superb and brilliant from every angles. Compared to contemporary poets, she is unparalleled and thousands of miles ahead of all of them, because of her unmatched poetic talents and daring poetic subject matters.

In course of time, as her pioneering journey in the field of erotic literature prized Prema as an established ever the first erotic literature writer of Nepal, even the writers of the country who were too shy to speak on sensuous subject matters and dared not to write erotic literature, had started admiring her openly. In the prevailing trend as such, the unforgettable scholar Prof. Ghatraj Bhattarai too, in his celebrated volume *Nepali Lekhak Kosh* (Dictionary of Writers) published in 1999, did mention Prema with brief admiration words. He was brief, yet very much to the point in bringing Prema's literary talents in the spotlight in this way, "Prema is very much talented in presenting Nepali women's mental dilemma and extremities in an effective and attractive manner. No matter what she writes, story or poem, novel or anything else, Prema's frank expressions on sensuous matters are packed with natural and idealistic behaviorism devoid of any kind of artificialities."

Just five years' literary journey had crowned her as a great literary celebrity. Her poems and stories had become immensely popular within that five year time period. As early as Sept. 7, 1966, even the renowned writer Parijat, referring to Prema's story writing talent, had told this to literary figure Uttam Kunwar – "Prema's presentation of stories is on par with best story tellers in the country and abroad."

"Genre-wise, through stories and poems, Prema was specifically successful in portraying realities of her own life and her most recent experiences on irresistible sexual desires and passions." So says the great critic Dr. Tripathi, "Prema is a psycho-analyst short-story teller who tells stories focused on female actors in curious and interesting style. She has constructed a unique literary highway within 10 years of her engagement in this field. We may name this highway after her as Prema Highway in her honor. She is a resourceful dynamic pioneer in the field of erotic literature. However, entangled in complicated difficult familial circumstances, she could not continue her literary journey as expected. But whatever she did has become great contributions in poetry and story genres."

Other renowned critics also have put forward their comments on Prema. Prof. Dr. Dayaram Shrestha, the first Ph.D. holder in the country in story genre, has publicly honored Prema's erotic story writing with these words, "Story teller Prema has the talent of understanding, analyzing and appreciating sex psychology. Herself a female writer, she has realistically revealed through her stories the female sexual feelings. Despite presenting sexual feelings

openly, she is successful in presenting erotic literature in civilized and cultured manner.”

“Prema’s stories demonstrate how someone’s involuntary sexual behavior might become aggressive and even destructive. A widow wearing fancy clothes like a bride, a mistress longing fulfillment of sexual desire from a bachelor servant, a servant maid carving for intercourse with her master, and attempts by men to seduce someone else’s wives are the vivid pictures Prema has portrayed while exhibiting sex psychology, very effectively. In other words, she has given exposure to reflection of sexual desires, lying underneath suppressed mind as well as to the consequences of such hidden desires.”

“Not just the passions and emotions, her story telling talent represents a unique ideal figure of great intellectual maturity. Governing both the existing norms and challenges of changing time, she has manifested her thinking and thoughts unhesitatingly through her story writing.”

At the prime of Prema’s celebrity as a dynamic story writer in the literary world of Nepal, renowned Shailendra Sakar wrote, “Whatever Prema writes, they are focused on sex and love. But, in essence, they are not of the type of cheap romance and blind attraction. Her stories ‘Eutai Sambhogh’ (The Only Intercourse), ‘Logne’ (Husband), ‘Pahenlo Gulaf’ (Yellow Rose) and ‘Chaya’ (Acne) are the most popular ones among all the popular stories she wrote, each story burgeoning from irresistible sexual desires.”

Another critic, Prof. Dr. Mahadev Awasthi, also has praised Prema’s story writing talent in this way,

“Prema is a great contributor in modern erotic literature against demerits of traditional literature on sex, specifically – stories on sex psychology. She is a well-known expert on portraying men and women’s automatic urge for sexual activities as well as on portraying excitement of genital organs, in a non-vulgar manner. Evils, tensions, helplessnesses, and uprisings in life have also been portrayed in her stories which do not conform to old style of having to have a dominant character in each story; but, are brand new in style.”

Book reviews on Prema’s novels are noteworthy too. Prof. Rajendra Subedi has opined, “She has played a very important role in novel writing journey that are related to psychology and has achieved great success in later days of the journey.”

Prema’s books on child-literature, too, are very mentionable. Actually she was seen in this field since 1980. Once, on Feb. 10, 1996, she had told Pramod Pradhan that she had begun writing in this field due to the fact that existing child-literature were confined to fairy tales and unrealistic imaginations and are not conducive enough to nourishment and development of child psychology. Litterateur Pradhan has wrote, “Although she had started writing child stories based on folklores in the beginning, she wrote many original ones in later days. Prema’s stories aimed at teaching moral lessons and providing entertainment simultaneously are very useful. Further, they are rich in subject matters and their presentation style is simple and interesting for children.”

There have been many views, reviews, meetings and seminars on Prema's literary journey. There were many who wrote and many more who spoke on her. She was in this field for just ten years or so, but she happened to surpass even those who had dedicated the entire life. To repeat the words of the great critic Prof. Dr. Basudev Tripathi, "Prema established a unique identity in the world of Nepali literature by constructing a literary highway, say, 'Prema-path'."

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Prema's literary thinking was of a very high level. She did write many articles and booklets with different pen names in effort to earn living. But, whatever she wrote with her true name, she wrote responsibly and is of very high standard. Needless to mention, her writings were mainly focused on sex psychology.

Prema had cherished in literature without any greed. She never went after prizes or awards. But she did receive 'Maina Puruskar' award in 2012 which carried cash prize of NC Rupees 100,000. On the matters of awards, she had once told one of her close friends Dr. Dhruba Chandra Gautam the well-known novelist, "I did not anticipate any awards nor did I care about that. I am nervous about going to seminars and receiving awards. But I could not say 'no' to this 'Maina Puruskar' because of Narendra Raj Prasai and Indira Prasai as they themselves are the founders and executives of this award. They have given me recognition and have honored me. Because the Prasai couple and my teacher Basudev Tripathi offered me this with love and with honor, I have received this award, gladly.

For me, this is the award of the highest order that I have received, in terms of cash as well.”

Prema’s dedication in literary field had prized her with awards that include ‘Maina Puruskar’, ‘Mainali Katha Puraskar’, and ‘Madan Shila Puruskar’. She was honored with the title ‘Biswo Nari Nepali Sahitya Samman’ (Universal Nepali Women Literary Honor) as well as ‘Biswo Nari Nepali Sahitya Padak’(Universal Nepali Women Literary Medal). The then Royal Nepal Academy had awarded her with scholarship in the year 1985. That scholarship paid her NC Rs 1,200 per month for one year.

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Prema was mature enough early from her teen age. Literary sprouts were seen in her from early childhood. She was in contact with males as well as females. Her contact was limited with literary persons. Her intimacy with renowned Parijat was very prominent. She liked her, appreciated her and honored her. Parijat too loved her with reciprocation. Parijat always admired Prema’s story writing talents. She esteemed her not only as one of the top story teller, but also as a world class distinguished story teller.

Prema was sociable, helpful and a genius in providing honest advice to near and dear ones. Good as she was in giving names to different persons, writers used to seek her advice before finalizing title of their upcoming books. Indeed, the title ‘Shirishko Phool’ of the famous novel by renowned Parijat, who happened to be her beloved author, was also the recommendation of Prema. It so happened like this – The renowned novelist Parijat had in mind 11 titles including

‘Shirishko Phool’ and ‘Mandah Bikh’. She asked Prema to suggest the most appropriate one from the list of eleven. Thoughtfully, Prema recommended ‘Shirishko Phool’. And Parijat appreciated. It did not take long for ‘Shirishko Phool’ to become popular in Nepali literary world.

Those days, Prema was studying B.A. in Patan College. Literature made two girl students there very close. They had common interest in other matters too. Despite the fact that Prema was junior in age by almost 7 years, she was not less mature than Parijat. As she was more inclined towards literature than study, she was already an established figure in contemporary literary field. That motivated Parijat to regard Prema as her close friend and intimate advisor. Prema in turn did not hesitate to reciprocate her, honestly, with good wishes in every aspect. Earlier said, she was the one to recommend ‘Shirishko Phool’.

Regarding the title ‘Shirishko Phool’, it is noteworthy here that Prema had written a letter to Narendra Raj Prasai. Published some time later in ‘Life Story of Parijat’, second edition (2006), the letter reads thus –

Brother Narendra !

I am reminded of a past event.

That afternoon I paid a visit to her. She was sitting on the floor beside her bed. A long notebook was lying in front of her. Eleven titles were listed on it. Some of the titles were attractive, and some not. Parijat opened her

manuscript and read few paragraphs for me to listen to. Listening to what she read, I felt I was in a garden. She said, “Prema, I am thinking of ‘Mandah Bikh’ as title for this book. How do you feel?” While listening to what she read, all of a sudden, I saw the shadow of ‘Shakambari’ tree along one side of the garden. Reddish blue flower, ‘Shirishko Phool’, floating here and there in the air! That moment, I too became one of that very blue flowers. Instantly, I suggested, “Shirishko Phool is the most appropriate one.” She accepted without any delay and said, “Right! Now, it is finalized.” That moment, I could read satisfaction and fulfillment in her eyes. And, I was more than happy. A dedicated senior writer, who has been searching her own identity with her own pen, has aggrandized me, a junior, by gladly accepting my suggestion. In fact, ‘Shirishko Phool’ was already there in the list of eleven.

Brother Narendra! You have immortalized Parijat for ever like Time Capsule by writing ‘Life Story of Parijat’. Brother, please accept lots of thanks from the bottom of my heart!

Your elder sister,
• Prema

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Prema is a prominent non-falling star in the sky of Nepali literature. She has built a unique literary highway. She understood every genre of literature. Although a failure in running her own personal life

smoothly, she was very successful in literary creations. Her literary contributions are regarded as of very high standard. She is crowned as the queen of erotic literature. She rose to the top of the tallest summit. “She even created a world of her own by constructing the unique super highway of literature”, so says the great critic Prof. Dr. Basudev Tripathi. Owing to her invaluable literary creations, she has become immortal forever.

Prema's 'The Only Intercourse'

The most outstanding signature name in modern Nepali literature is Prema Shah. She is particularly popular as a writer of erotic literature. Her journey into erotic literature began with her reciting of a poem entitled 'I make love to the sun! Come, make love to me!' Elaborating on this very poem, she wrote a short story entitled 'The Only Intercourse'. This story led her to the height of her reputation.

That time, it was most unusual to dare to write with erotic titles as such. Contemporary poet Dwarika Shrestha who was seen closer to her has said, "At a time when nobody dared to talk or write on sex relationship, Prema has openly brought the matter into limelight by speaking up and by writing in a straightforward manner. Her rebellious newer views on sexual relationship between opposite sexes had stirred the society. Before her, sexual behaviors were limited to covert business. But she brought the matter in front of all in the broad daylight.

'The Only Intercourse' was published around the year 1965 in monthly literary journal 'Mukut', year 3 issue 4. The editors of Prose Section of this issue were

Purushottam Basnet and Ramesh Dhital, and that of Poetry Section were Krishna Bhakta Shrestha and Dwarika Shrestha. The overall chief editor who happened to be Prema's sweetheart was Purushottam Basnet. He had said that Prema's 'The Only Intercourse' is the elaboration of 'Come, make love to me!' by Prema herself.

Prema belonged to a separate big empire of her own, aloof. The then society as a whole was hesitant to accept her sentiments, openly. Here, one is reminded of American Psychiatrist Dr. Berkely Hill, who was the one to timely recognize the great poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota. He had once said, "A man like Devkota shouldn't have born in Nepal where he is counted as a mad person. It's a 'geographical mistake' for him to be born in Nepal instead of being born in a western country."

Prema too was blindly in Devkota's mission of 'reaching the moon, and embracing the moon'. She was a Hercules of creations and Pegasus of speed. However, only after her demise, she was understood as a farsighted literary creator. Once she was dead, everybody wanted to follow her steps. Needless to mention, her being born in Nepal was also a geographical mistake like the Devkota's. Earlier, very few understood her while she deserved to be understood. She too could not understand the sentiments of the society. But she was a patriotic figure. Upendra Ghimire, bound by rituals as Prema's true brother, has said, "The country failed to give her due recognition, so she had to move to foreign land. But her soul was always in Nepal. She was a true lover of the motherland."

Prema always thought of writing sex psychology. Early from childhood, she was mature in thinking. No contemporary writer, male or female, of her time had courage to write on sex overtly as she did. And she did so logically by writing ‘The Only Intercourse’ at the young age of 20 or so. A proponent of sex education, her doctrine has now become relevant more than ever before and need to be accepted universally. Dwarika Shrestha, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha and many others are of the opinion that whoever appeared in erotic literature in later days, they did so because of her daring initiatives. Specifically in Krishna Bhakta Shrestha’s words, “Prema was very frank on relationship between life and sex. She was never a hypocrite. She and only she was the courageous, honest, and rebellious writer of that time.”

Strangely, ‘The Only Intercourse’ which she wrote at the age of 20 or so has not been included in her collections even though it was a nice masterpiece of her creations. Now, it has been reproduced here from ‘Mukut’ literary journal with due courtesy.

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Sometimes, I wonder why everyone is so unanimous on this topic. Everybody has one voice. No doubt, there will be many culprits if they speak the truth. Isn’t this my basic right to speak the truth? If so, I am not the culprit in the real sense.

They call me loose character? Why? What are good and bad characters? Can character be measured? What nonsense! It is a big crime just because I did it outside my room or out of my house!

Whatever I do, I have to do myself. When I do forgetting myself, I am blamed on my personal freedom. I know I have to face the blame. But, I don't accept myself as a criminal. Same thing happens inside houses and no one bothers. Then, why make so much noise? What I did in the open park is virtuous. I have donated semen to virgin Miriam in the open air. I didn't stripe naked a virgin girl for the sake of adventure. Was that a crime when I accepted the reality in true form? I am not unaware of uncontrolled behavior and torture of excessively excited girls. In fact, crimes generate criminals. Those who blame me as law breaker are even big criminals than me.

Does any law prohibit sexual contact? I don't agree that sexual pride can be preserved just by covering the genitals and female breasts with some clothes. If such pride is really in existence, that should not vanish inside closed rooms where a man stripes naked a woman and vice versa. Then the question arises, why criminal charges are not filed against those immoral night birds who enjoy carefree swimming in the pool of nudity during dark hours. Our law is imperfect in the sense that – overtly, sex regulations are very strict and tight; but, covertly, very loose. This is not good.

I don't consider the behavior of a hysteric woman as a crime either, as she herself is out of control over herself, being a victim of unknown sin of the century. Just embrace her; you may feel that her loose breasts are not less hateful than soft dough of flour. Why didn't you take responsibility of that cursed youth? At least you could have tried. If she crosses the deadly river Baitarni (which everybody

has to cross after his or her death), you too may cross after her by catching her long braids of hair. Look! You didn't like what I said. But this is not justified. If I am to be punished, how long I will be jailed? Just three months! If I can give some bribe-money, no need to go to jail. Right? O.K. Thanks.

You are not happy. Oh, I don't have that much money to be freed. If I have had, I would have taken her to a good hotel. Believe or not; had I done so, I wouldn't have the opportunity to do justice to that girl who wished to be worshipped as the white image of Virgin Miriam. I couldn't let the unborn 'Yeshu' die within the womb. She needed me. She needed a single intercourse. I had wished to be able to give her as much as she would have wanted. She needed me because she didn't want to become a hen laying just the infertile eggs.

If you say this immoral, what law did I break? I know for sure that I can't rape a virgin girl inside dark room. I am scared of lusty and naked 'so called virgin girls' who behave uncontrollably. Any certificate proving them morally pure? Forget about Sita and Sabitri. Useless topic! The question here is about a single 'Yeshu'.

What I did in this open park filled with pansy, poppy and tulip is what I did in the early evening. Do you think this is robbing? I know this is not a rape. She cried and shouted. But the pain was with me. I was almost burnt in the heat inside her. Do you know how difficult is it to face the youth cursed with obstacles? I repeat this is not rape! This is the intimate intercourse of mutual wish. It is not easy to have intercourse with

a woman unless her femininity gives consent. Try to understand this!

What? Me a Don Quixote! Just like struggling with a wind mill? Well, I don't need to go on convincing. Myself a loser before you! I have already emptied myself, thoughtfully. I am not worried in the inside of me. I am impartial and that is my success.

This evening is colorful. My Meriam! You agreed with me totally. Right? Oh my hysteric girl! You know for sure that even your adventurous hero does get tired sometimes. Tired within him! I know, if you hadn't have come in front of me in this way, I too would already have had become exhausted. Since that yellow evening, I am always hurt. Not by words, but by doubts.

It's not just you My Meriam! I am already familiar with countless number of fiery vulvas. Like a sire-bull, I am duty-bound to keep on paying back the loan of semen that I carry within. See! I am a male. This is my weakness which hurts me so bad. You know, what we did is not a crime!

Care not what others say! This open park is a divinely garden. Whatever to be done here should be done as virtuous deed. Can you clear my doubt? One 'Yeshu'! Otherwise a 'Vishnu'! That will be more than enough. Cross? So, our entwined thighs are not the thighs. This is altar. Holy altar! Let's sacrifice our hurts in the calm of peaceful restlessness!

Look Meriam! We have co-operated each other, mutually. You fellows want to punish me! The release of the last drop of my semen meant one 'Bardhaman'. Bardhaman is another form of terrifying sexual

excitement of me and the virgin. I don't hide inside the room. You call this another crime? OK, I myself will undress naked. I am striping this virgin naked too! What shall you do? Arrest me? I am not a mad. You call me mad so easily? God! I am a normal man. Just the normal! What wrong did I do? Did I harm anyone? Did I say something that shouldn't be said? Truth is that my psychology is not abnormal. You can't charge me as an anti-social element either. This is the difference in our thinking.

Just think about this valley! So many here are without clothes! So many hungry mouths! So many thirsty throats! Forget about the food! Source of water is not scarce here, yet so many are dying for few drops of water. I am upset by people who get scared of swollen river; and also by people who scare others with swollen rivers. Often, I cried silently at the never quenching thirsts of human beings. Nothing except scarcity of all kinds in the luck, they are still in struggle to preserve the only thing they do have – the 'shame' or sexual pride. Do you think all the human beings can afford sufficient clothes? Forget about the innocent dumbs! Even those who craze for sleeveless do acting of adjusting the dress they wear by gently pulling here and there around sexual parts of their body. Is this the sexual pride in real sense? The pretense of a man pulling on life under compulsion to survive, like an exhausted donkey pulling big load with great difficulty, results in not better than a rotten apple. Thinking of a fresh apple? Then, in the manner the umbilicus cord in a fruit gets disconnected from the tree in due time, one should throw away loin-cloth – the only cloth in the body. Having only a nominal piece of loin-cloth in the

body is worse than not having at all! I too am a loser in front of perfect brightness. I am continuously losing for a piece of loin-cloth contributed by old and modern civilization. This is my weakness. Not that I am deviated from my principle unknowingly! I do try to offer all of me through penetrating eye-contacts with millions of eyes, till now.

I know harming oneself is illegal. Indeed I haven't have harmed myself so far. Truth is I am in favor of doing good to me as well as this girl. How practical am I? It will certainly be revealed. Maybe this is my sentiment, just that. But I am overwhelmed on it. I have consented on it. Consent to my sentiment! Oh I have become abnormal or going to be! I am mesmerized by my regrets like a musk deer gets mesmerized by the musk in its own navel.

I am confused. Born as a man, I should be strong. This is what I know. Man too is an embodiment of reality or truth. And truth may not be delicious. Bitter rather! Man trying to live a real life may encounter terrifying situations. And, new challenges test man's ability.

In the name of freezing, I have to become ice. In the name of brightening up, I have to become the sun, wholly. Inability to become so has hopelessly demoralized me. How can I become the sun without being completely naked? To become symbolic of sun, it is necessary to heat up naked and burn. Now I must present myself wholly without any trace of coverings. So sorry! Why this obstacle! Do I become a beast if I take out all the clothes to be naked? This is my pain. But, I must endure this pain. I am determined to

surrender myself in front of the altar witnessed by procession of so called civilized masses who charge me as great foolish criminal. I am inspired by what 'Yeshu' did in front of the altar before being crucified.

Come! Strip me naked! I will make love to virgin sun too in this broad daylight in front of millions of naked eyes. I am ready to be crucified after that in another cross. Then I too shall win.

Yes! I want to be naked. I don't like to remain hidden within myself. I am not interested at all in see-through dresses. Not just for the cause of being naked, but to put forward honestly the inner truth in front of all, I want to be naked. My genuine conscience tells me, the real me is the naked me. But, so far, I have failed to present the identity of 'real me'. Bitter truth is that millions and millions of moral values and beliefs have been killed. Man has denied justice to nature by concealing the real man before all including the nature.

Man is not following the natural moral values honestly. Man is not breathing naturally. Man is not doing justice even to hidden lives in wombs. Sperms too are not free. I am haunted by these cowardly sperms who are supposed to shoulder tomorrow's responsibilities. Do you support me create environment for the sperms to flow freely? If so, you, the fathers of the sperms, too must endure the heat of naked virgin Meriam and naked virgin sun. Today's intercourse will be more painful than pleasure. If you dare to endure this pain, get ready! Don't forget, you too must be entirely naked in tune with the waves of these pansy and tulips!

I can donate sperm to conceive the wombs of virgin Meriam and virgin sun by fully satisfying both of them. If I am not allowed to become naked in this path, get a cross ready for me too! I am happy and glad to follow the suit of 'Yeshu'.

I am determined to be naked, honestly. How long can I hide the ultimate truth? To follow the norms and standards advocated by those who conceal the ultimate truth of human body or who stick to loin-cloth is to hide the nature. Ready the cross! Today I will reveal the truth of nature. Right now, I will be naked in order to oppose the fake truths. Tortured fiery virgins, just a moment! Be ready to accept my nakedness! You can be pacified fully. And be flourishing with heroic issues too!

Well! Now I am naked and seated in the cross, ready to be crucified. Misguided folks! I don't like to see infertility and desertification. Start looking at your own nudity, you will be relieved!

• Prema Shah

Prema's Job

Soon after the divorce with the first husband, Prema was in search of job. She got that in his home town in Thakurram Campus as an associate professor. She was there from Feb. 4, 1977 to Jan. 13, 1978. She left this prestigious job after disputes with the Campus Chief.

She reached Kathmandu. She didn't find any job in line with her academics. It was during the year 1978. By this time, most of her friends were no more in contact. She got a small job in Patan Industrial District without anybody's favor. But, soon, she became dissatisfied in this job. So, she sought job in Everest Sheraton Hotel in Baneshor. She got it and liked it. But, in no time, she was lost to colorful hotel environment.

The colorful hotel environment in Everest Sheraton Hotel led her to second marriage. That too did not last long. Just before the total collapse of the second marriage, she gave birth to a child daughter. After the delivery of this daughter, she didn't like to stay in Kathmandu. In 1980, she moved to Jutpani in Sarlahi district along with the infant baby.

She had owned 2.5 acres of land there through Nepal Rehabilitation Company. This land is situated

in the locality where bandits from Jhinja in Dhanusa district were rehabilitated by Nepal Government. In this very land, Prema's mother had helped her by constructing a shelter roofed with clay-tiles. The mother came from Birgunj to see her from time to time. Each time she visited there, she stayed with her for few nights. "Being an area of rehabilitated bandits, it didn't sound safe enough to settle there. But, Prema did stay there due to compulsion." So said, Basudev Sharan Koirala.

Social Service Activist and Politician in the locality Basudev Sharan Koirala had become aware that a newcomer Prema, a literary figure, had been dwelling in the nearby. He went to meet her in her poor shelter. He saw everything (fooding, lodging, clothing) in hopelessly poor condition. He noticed her infant child daughter too. He was alarmed. Koirala had recalled the event like this, "I became familiar with her miserable condition. She avoided talking to visitors. She preferred to stay aloof. I was shocked to see a woman with queen-like background in such a dreadful condition. The sight of her infant child was even more pathetic."

Basudev Sharan Koirala started visiting Prema's shelter time and again. Later, she started behaving normally as if she appreciated visits by someone familiar like him. He invited her to visit his house whenever she felt like meeting some familiar ones. To help her improve poor economic condition, he even requested her to start teaching in newly established school Navjiban Vidyashram in the same locality.

Navjiban Vidyashram was founded by Prem Pradhan in his own house. Basudev Sharan Koirala was also one of the donors and founding secretary of this school. Moved by Koirala's humanly behavior, Prema started teaching in this school from the same year 1980. She taught English, Nepali and Social Studies subjects in classes up to grade eight. She always carried her infant child along with her. During winter, she went to the school wearing a black overcoat. She managed to carry her infant child in the pocket of the same overcoat.

According to Basudev Sharan Koirala, "Previously, Prema looked sad and frustrated. Gradually, she started talking openly. As she started teaching in the school, she looked somewhat cheerful. However, she was impractical in behavior. She did not try to conceal her straightforward character. She was against social discrimination 'untouchability' typical of South Asia. She was a devoted teacher. Students were happy with her. Sometimes she used to recite her poems in the school. The students liked her, but, the guardians did not."

Upendra Ghimire has said, "She was very strict. She didn't listen to others. She was sentimental too. She was hurt even by minor events. She was very friendly to those who behaved her with due respect."

Another gentleman, Meghraj Koirala the Headmaster in the same school, often admired her qualification. He has said, "She was the one to introduce English songs in the class of primary level students. The students were well disciplined while she was the teacher there. She was very dedicated. But, she should be approached in good manner, otherwise,

she won't co-operate. She was quick tempered, and also quick in cooling down. During her time, poetic seminars were held in the school every week. She herself had mesmerized all with her poems during those poetic seminars.”

Prema was hopelessly bad in money management. She was never money-minded. Whenever she encountered some poor on her pay day, she used to distribute them her money without even caring about the stock of essentials for the month to keep pots boiling. Her student Rukmini Tripathi has said, “She had the addiction of giving treats to others and feeding the poor as soon as she has had money in hand. She took pleasure in feeding the poor. She never had any saving. She was kind hearted.”

On Feb. 26, 1981, a political team comprising Nepali Congress Party's leaders— former prime minister of Nepal BP Koirala, KP Bhattarai, GP Koirala and Purushottam Basnet— had arrived in Sarlahi. They had lodged in the party's local leader Basudev Sharan Koirala's house. Prior arrangement was made such that Prema too would help in serving food to the guests. Basudev Sharan Koirala has mentioned, “That time she failed to turn up. Later, I knew that she had abstained because Purushottam Basnet (Prema's one time sweetheart) was in the list of guests.”

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Prema was interested in teaching profession at college level. With that in mind, she headed towards Nepalgunj in the 1st week of Dec., 1983. “She had started teaching there in Mahendra Multiple Campus, but, the environment there was not good for her.

Moreover, it became difficult for her to work in co-operation with local teachers within the campus.” So says Sanat Regmi. She could not continue this assignment for more than a week. She returned to the same school Navjiban Vidyashram in Sarlahi. The next month, she arrived in Mahendra Multiple Campus in Nepalgunj to finalize remuneration and other official formalities. Having done that, once again she returned to Sarlahi. Then onwards, she concentrated all her time in thinking about her own future and the future of her daughter.

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Prema was still in search of a reputed career. In the mean time she became aware of new vacancy of Associate Professor position in Thakurram Campus in Birgunj. She headed there in 1984. She made IQ preparations to appear in interview for the said post. That time Basudev Tripathi was the head of Central Department of Nepali Language in TU. He had gone to Birgunj to conduct interview for the above mentioned post. He saw Prema who had arrived there to appear in the interview along with her child. Seeing this, he had asked her, “Isn’t there anyone in the house to look after this child?” She had shaken her head and replied, “No sir, no one.”

Without any delay, Basudev Tripathi sought co-operation of all the relevant TU staff members and requested them in this way, “In the field of Nepali literature, Prema is a rising new talent, already established in new genre. Her joining TU is a matter of prestige for us all TU staffs. She happened to be a student of mine as well. I was her teacher in M.A. for

two years. I have rarely seen a talented, industrious and worthy student like her. Such a high class writer has come to appear in the interview carrying a small child with her. It will be better to check her interview in brief and fulfill the formality. Let us reserve one of the Associate Professor posts for her.” As every personnel including Dr. Mohan Prasad Lakhe, the Campus Chief, consented, she got appointed in the position of Associate Professor, very swiftly. Unfortunately, the terms (official and personal) between the Campus Chief Dr. Lakhe and her were not good from the very beginning of this new career.

The great critic Basudev Tripathi has said, “Dr. Lakhey was very particular in rules and regulations.” As Prema’s terms with Dr. Lakhe could not become cordial, she had to quit. She served in this campus for not more than six months.

Once again, Prema came back to Navjiban Vidyashram in Sarlahi from Thakurram Campus. Her daughter Jal Shah too was attending the same school as a student. Upendra Ghimire, one of the teachers in the same school and whom Prema had ritually regarded as a brother has said that Jal Shah had appeared in SLC exam of the year 1995 from the same school. After Jal Shah’s exam concluded, Prema departed from Sarlahi, saying, “Jal Shah needed to be admitted in dancing school in Kathmandu.” Then after, she never returned to Sarlahi.

Prema's Later Days and Jal Shah

Soon after Jal Shah was born, Prema got divorced from Ramesh Karmacharya the biological father. Her life became even more miserable and horrendous.

Wherever she went, she always front carried the baby on her arms in a manner not significantly different from kangaroo-care. Already lost everything she had while she was still pregnant, the baby became her everything. She had to struggle the entire life to survive for the survival of this baby. This baby was the inseparable part of her soul.

Jal Shah was pretty, lovely and cute from early childhood. Chhanda Binod Dahal has said, "She was very cute. She was symbolic of a fairy child. I had an opportunity to hold her in my arms and rest her on my lap while she was an infant child, newly arrived at Jutpani in Sarlahi."

After the completion of Jal Shah's SLC exam, Prema came back to Kathmandu and settled in a rented shelter. The daughter started playing cine-roles from young age. In course of time, the daughter became a well-known actress in Nepali cine world.

Basudev Tripathi has said, “Everytime I met Prema, I saw Jal Shah as an integral part of her body. While she appeared in the interview for the post of Associate Professor, she had carried Jal Shah too on her arms. Once she gave birth to Jal Shah, she had tried to stay away from contact with others. Later, Jal Shah rose as a top cine star fulfilling the expectations of her mother. Prema became a proud mother.”

While resided in rented shelter in Lagankhel in Lalitpur, Prema’s only responsibility was that of a respectful guardian of Jal Shah. She followed her in each cine shootings. All the members in the shooting team used to address her respectfully as ‘Mummy’ in the same manner Jal Shah did address her. This gave Prema even more satisfaction, a heavenly pleasure.

Prema’s daughter Jal Shah worked in cine world from the age of 15 till 35 and eventually became a super star. The first movie she acted on was ‘Swasthanibrat Katha’ a religious one. She acted in more than 50 films. Among all, ‘Buhari’, ‘Badalpaari’ and ‘Nepali Babu’ were the most liked by Prema the mother.

During the prime time of her life, Prema was popular by her own identity or by her own name ‘Prema Shah’. During later years of her life, she became well-known as the mother of the famous actress Jal Shah too. Jal Shah, too, followed the mother’s track by composing poems. She reached USA at the beginning of the year 2006. She took the mother Prema too to USA.

Apart from her visits to different parts of Nepal, Prema had traveled to India, Hong Kong, Thailand,

Qatar and Japan. During the later days of her life, she resided in USA with the daughter Jal Shah.

Jal Shah is Prema's daughter. More than that, she is a symbol of love, support and protector for Prema, specifically during the later days of Prema's life. Jal Shah too gave birth to a baby daughter. Prema gave the name 'Kalas' to this child. Prema's days passed-by under the heavenly sky of love of Jal (symbolic of holy water) and Kalash (symbolic of holy container for holy water).

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Renowned rebellious scholar Prema resided in Salt Lake City, Utah in USA together with her daughter Jal Shah's family. Her life there was very amusing. She was absorbed by the affection of her son-in-law and the grand-daughter Kalash. In the meantime, her health condition started declining gradually. She often told her daughter Jal Shah that she had pain in stomach.

Later, it was diagnosed that Prema had thyroid problem. When she began to experience more and more unbearable pains, she was hospitalized in ICU unit of Inter Mountain Hospital in Salt lake, Utah in USA. Her real problem was diagnosed after seven days of hospitalization only. Cancer (Non-hodgkin's lymphoma) had already attacked her. The next day she was diagnosed of this cancer, she departed towards the heaven. That day when a renowned hero in Nepali literary field had left this world for her ultimate journey was Dec. 20, 2017.

Prema died in America. But her mourning rituals were performed as per Nepali customs. Prema's

classmate in M.A., Prof. Pitambar Sharma Dahal, also had attended the mourning procession. He has said that his onetime classmate's face was very bright even during her last moments. Another gentleman Suresh Darpan Pokharel has said that she was blessed with last honor by placing Nepal's National Flag on her dead body. Finally, Jal Shah offered funeral pyre to the dead body.

Jal Shah's dutiful performance at her mother's funeral rituals signifies an embodiment of her attitude towards keeping motherland's culture alive. This deed of Jal Shah is very commendable.

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Prema's ultimate means of ventilating her sentiments was her pen. Even at the last moment, before setting course towards heaven, she had composed a poem song. This poem found in her diary is considered her last literary creation. She rose with literary creation and she disappeared with literary creation.

All the seasons are similar.
Days' daylight and nights' darkness
All are similar to mind's eyes.

This mind is
Naked, uncovered, empty
And senseless.

Mind,
Like the silence of a catastrophe,
Is
Neither birth
Nor death.

Rebellious Scholar
PREMA SHAH