

Neelu Bhuman's **Love Letter/Prēma Lēkha**

a little film about a lot of things

The first thing we see is the lightly glossy white person's lips. Smile. Not a very young smile. Skin, teeth have seen life.

Cut. The smile gets cut. New shot, finger moves up. A brown finger: teasing, caressing. An intimate game. Reaching, feeling, biting, caressing, kissing.

Anonymous intimacy. Fingers, lips.

Two languages voiced over. Telugu & English in a diasporic accent. A monologue that has layers, dialogues. On screen the intimacy continues, takes the mouth by its lips, makes it listen to the touch. The glittery lips respond to the ring, the remnants of nail polish.

Both. Together. Man and Woman? Both again. Contrasted genderedness in voice & text, and action & reception. We are more than we are here: but listen! The invitation to playful intimacy works as there is no "master's voice". A silent whiteness, yet not passive. Invitations, openness, exploration, a searching with lips and tongue. The voice seduces pulls the watcher forward and sometimes holds them back. Then two hands, folding forcing the mouth; the direct transgressions of intimacy. A swallowing. A necessary swallowing. *Gattiga* hard, *mruduvuga* soft & finding the spaces through & between. A tiny grip with the teeth needs to be contrasted with the push deforming the mouth.

Moving from within the positions across boundaries, there seem to be two options of dealing with differences. The option to detach and take critical distance becomes immediately present. Weary of invasive normativities this seems often to be the better option. Negativity so rightfully heaped upon this world creates space and protection of disappointment. Negative engagement makes limits and boundaries visible and opens them up for further scrutiny.

However, as Neelu's film seems to suggest there is also another option: to combine elements of the past; the best of mother & father. Taking one's context and working through it, by listening in engagement. The little film offers no solution, but shows in this engagement there is space for exploration without normative invasion. It shows affirmation is possible & that the resulting intimacy has different stages, needs swallowing & smiles & silences in order to explore and compel us to see new forms of intimate belonging. It's lyrical, it's romantic, but it is not idealistic: it's a tactile engagement in the present, and the involved dyad gets transgressed in order to allow the emergence of new forms. As the film shows, a meeting on the surface runs deep in its tender foldings.

That is love spinning freely.

Written By
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