



Let's take a good look at this scenario that took media headlines in the open society that is Australia. Kevin Rudd, Prime Ministerial contender, four good years ago got drunk over dinner with New York Post editor Col Allan and Labour colleague Warren Snowdown. The three of them visited a strip club. According to Kevin Rudd, he was too tipsy to realize what exactly happened there. However, his political opponents tried to make up all sorts of stories-namely that Kevin had touched the girls, that he had been warned for doing so and so on. Kevin denies these acts and has been supported by Allen who described him as having "behaved like a gentleman" at the club.

Is the truth material here? I think Kevin should have



laughed it all away pointing out its irrelevance in a society that is so open and permissive as far as sex is concerned. He need not have tried to reassert his Pearl Pureheart image by saying that he had confessed the incident to his wife the next day and so on. I like his admission, however, that he was a simple ordinary bloke. Beattie went more precise by stating that the incident showed that Kevin Rudd had blood in his veins! That is the best defence. Kevin need not have claimed amnesia and I am disappointed that he did so.

The truth is immaterial primarily because Kevin Rudd was indeed behaving not as a perverse individual but as an ordinary human being as Beattie suggested. Won't you and I like to visit such a world famous strip club given we happened to be in New York; were free to wander about and had the cash to throw about? Having edged into the club would you and I not feel like leering at or even touching the exquisite nude body of the female goddess that dangles so tantalisingly close to us? Be honest!

What is wrong about giving vent and expression to sexual feelings in an appropriate way? The Aristotelian concept of appropriateness is the operative word here. Human beings are animals and one should not forget one's animal nature. Sex constitutes one of the natural and compulsive springboards of our actions. The idea that sex is sinful should never have got into our usage as it has caused immeasurable damage. In Western society, this notion originated with the Christian religion



that inculcated the great guilt among people. The basic idea is rooted in Christianity's dualism where it believed that the mind and body were two distinct entities. The soul that is manifested in the mind is spiritual and would have to go back to God if the possessor takes care not to misbehave. The body is the source of corruption. Catholics prohibit



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sexual intercourse other than when fertilisation and production are desired. It repudiates the notion that the sexual union is as an expression of mutual love that must be nurtured if one is to keep in good mental wellbeing. The Pope has banned condoms even though that may expose people to deadly AIDS.

Since Sigmund Freud, a great body of clinical evidence has been documented which suggests that the suppression of sexual impulses can cause severe pathological conditions. Probably due to sexual repression, Catholic priests have got a bad reputation for paedophile activity. There are less reports of such sexual deviation among Anglican and similar denominations because the latter allow for marriage in their priestly hierar-

THROWING MUD AT RUDD

Sex and hypocrisy in an open society

chy. In the great Hindu tradition, there is indeed an idealisation of the ascetic life and the living style of the Brahmachari thereby casting an innuendo that sex is a bodily impurity that obstructs the atman's path to Brahma. On the other hand, Hinduism has a variety of strains that complicates it. God Shiva is portrayed only sometimes as a mystic. At other times, he is shown as capable of engaging in great sexual acrobatics. Shiva is a turbulent and powerful God capable of many modes of behaviour. Remember the Kama Sutra came out of the Hindu tradition and it glorifies the art of sexual expression in a way no other book has done.

In the doctrine of the Middle Path, Buddhism is enlightened in allowing for appropriate sexual activity among laymen. Buddhists do not regard sex as per se unwholesome. However, it is well known that many Buddhist monks struggle to keep to their vows of celibacy. In Middle Eastern religious cultures, women have to go about with burkahs and they are prohibited from exposing their bodies to those other than their spouses who are known to perform orgies with them. In this way, the sexual embargo has been a source of hypocrisy in the church and temple and in society at large.

Fortunately, Australia does not have such religious rigidities as few Australians except 'ethnics' take religion seriously. Australian society, like other Western societies, is a very open and practical one. People here give expression to a great deal of sexuality to the point of being offensive to our senses. The TV channels are full of sexuality. The latest is Monday night's Channel Ten program "Californication" which shows one person having oral sex with a nun and another mimicking a clitoris

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in a vagina with his fingers. Anything that brings money gets through in the kind of society we live in. Printed media sell heavily by giving stories about the sexual deviance of famous men and women. If Nicole Kidman gets pregnant by someone other than her spouse, that's huge news and people hurry to buy the magazine that "uncovers" her sexual misadventure. Women have free dress styles that reveal their bodies. Men and women kiss and even make love in public. Brothels and Night Clubs, and pornographic magazines abound. Cures for sexual impotence are advertised widely on publicly seen billboards. Sexual infidelity is no great sin here. Local journals are full of advertisements by 'bored housewives' who want some fun while the spouse is away; by girls cheated by boyfriends who want to get even, and by other women offering quick lunch time sex-fixes and so on.

Bob Brown, Greens leader, responded to the hypocritical furore over the nightclub incident with the levity that it deserved: "Rudd, drunk, and went to a strip club", he said, "Howard, sober, went to war".

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