

CityMasala Book Club

BOOK REVIEW

By: Sheniz Janmohamed



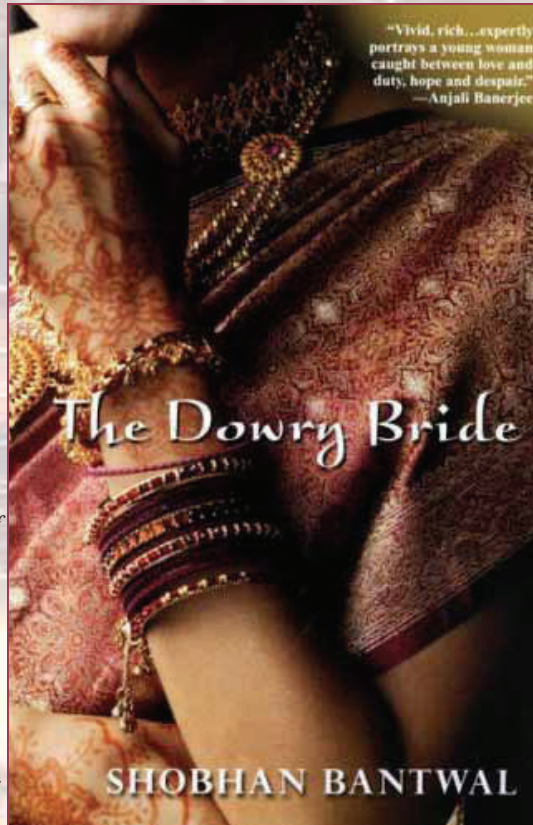
The Dowry Bride By: Shobhan Bantwal

The Dowry Bride, by Shobhan Bantwal, is a lovely romantic novel set in Southern India. It tells the story of a young bride, Megha, who discovers that her husband and mother-in-law are planning to kill her because her father has not paid dowry.

Although the novel is mostly a love story with strong romantic elements, there is a clear social message underlying the book. It raises important questions about the business of marriage, and how quickly young women can fall into unfortunate hands.

Bantwal's attention to detail is magnificent and cinematic. She is able to evoke all senses, from taste to smell, "Heaven knew what kind of filth from the streets and the private properties she'd traveled through had attached itself to her sari."

Another interesting element of the book is the glossary. Instead of having a glossary at the back of the book, Bantwal explains foreign terms within the context of the passage, so that the reader gains immediate understanding of the word used. This is extremely helpful for her readers, as it avoids confusion and allows for a



seamless following of the plot.

Bantwal skillfully balances the love story with the less romantic elements of real life, telling a tale that is believable and nuanced. She is aware of the social implications of her character's actions, and as a result, the reader does not have to exercise willing suspension of disbelief. The reader gets to know the characters intimately through their routines and habits, "Every morning around ten o'clock, Appaji came out of the bathroom wrapped in a brown towel. He combed lots of castor oil through his thinning salt-and-pepper hair. Then he systematically applied copious amounts of talcum powder to his hollow, hairless armpits." Bantwal's descriptions are visually rich and often humorous.

In the final section of the book, the author engages in an open discussion about *The Dowry Bride*. She speaks about her desire to write about the subject and how the project came about. It certainly is a fitting way to end an entertaining and informative novel!

Purchase *The Dowry Bride* at www.amazon.com.